

Water in its Destructive Nature: Ecocritical Reading of Emmi Itaranta's *Memory of Water*

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Keywords: Water Scarcity; Ecocriticism, Anthropocene; Climate Fiction; Environmental Memory; Ecological Precarity; Authoritarianism; Dystopia

Summary:

This article will look at how water is represented as a life sustaining and a destructive force in *Memory of Water* (2014) by Emmi Itaranta. It uses ecocritical and Anthropocene theories and concepts to examine how water scarcity is not only an environmental condition but also a phenomenon that shapes social relations, political power and ethical decision-making. The novel portrays a dystopian society in the future, characterized by environmental destruction, where access to clean water is rigidly controlled by a totalitarian regime, which creates a situation of inequality, surveillance, and social disintegration. By using close textual analysis, the article shows how water functions as a material need, as a symbolic medium of memory, as an instrument of power.

Moreover, the article discusses the intersection between environmental degradation and human vulnerability, which leads to ecological precarity. The story shows how scarcity forces people to face constrained and sometimes impossible moral decisions, and thus, redefine agency in the context of systemic constraint. Meanwhile, the novel also stresses the importance of environmental memory and thus water and landscape are the archives which keep the traces of the past human activity and ecological changes. This vision questions the anthropocentric assumptions and proposes an ecocentric vision where humans are entrenched in, and not outside, natural systems.

Finally, the article contends that *Memory of Water* is not only reflective of the current climate anxieties but also a critical intervention that bridges imagined futures and the current global inequalities. By anticipating the destructive aspects of water, its toxicity, deprivation and political control, the novel refigures water as not a passive resource but an active force which defines both survival and ethical responsibility. By so doing, it proposes a re-awakening of the ecological awareness based on the recollection, responsibility, and sustainable coexistence.

Introduction:

Water has always been known as the basis of life, supporting the ecosystems, defining the civilizations, and organizing human life. The phrase no water, no life, is one way of expressing the common understanding of its essential nature. However, in the twenty-first century this fundamental resource has become more unstable, contentious and in most places, dangerously scarce. According to reports around the world, it has been found that the level of human consumption has surpassed sustainable levels and placed ecosystems and communities at a significant risk (Liu et al., 2017, p. 545; Postel, 2000, p. 491). Even though freshwater is technically renewable, it is limited and increasing demands on global supplies due to population growth and climate change continue to strain the supplies (Gosling & Arnell, 2016, p. 371). Consequently, the concept of water, which used to be linked mostly with renewal and continuity, has now also become associated with crisis, inequality and environmental degradation.

These changes are not purely scientific or political issues but also cultural and literary. The current climate-oriented literature has been a significant trend in English writing, attempting to develop more climate awareness through various forms such as novels, poetry, and short prose. By influencing readers imagine environmental futures, climate fiction may serve as an influential part of the ecological discourse, and, more importantly, may potentially impact both the public awareness and the policy (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 474). In this sense literature does not simply mirror environmental realities but is actively involved in defining the structures according to which they are perceived and understood.

A special role in this process is played by climate fiction or cli-fi. It brings abstract scientific knowledge to lived, emotional experience so that the reader can experience environmental crisis on a human level. Antonia Mehnert states that such a literary mode provides an insight into the ethical and social consequences of this unprecedented environmental crisis and plays an active history in shaping our understanding of climate change (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 474). As Glotfelty and Fromm continue to note, these narratives serve as both reactions to the ecological emergency and as projections of the possible futures (Murugavel, 2020, p. 4). Cli-fi allows readers to grapple with the impact of environmental degradation in a manner that cannot be accomplished by scientific discourse alone.

This paper focuses on *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itaranta a dystopian climate novel which is a powerful meditation on the lack of water and its impact. The novel is set

in the future, after an ecological crisis has devastated the world, with freshwater now a highly scarce resource, under strict control by a military dictatorship. In this context, water has become more than a natural element and is a central axis on which the power, survival, and social relations are structured. Not only who lives and who suffers, but also who exercises authority and who becomes vulnerable, all is determined by access to water.

Memory of Water is distinguished, as it introduces the concept of water as a multi-dimensional force. At the one level, it is necessary to survive, to support the life of human beings, as well as the nonhuman world. In another, it comes out as a destructive factor, its lack causes drought and decadence, and its pollution brings about illness and hopelessness. Meanwhile, water is depicted as an active agent in the formation of human fate, water serves simultaneously as a medium of memory, retaining the traces of the past ecological representations.

Simultaneously, the novel places ecological crisis as a phenomenon with the greater time-span and cultural context. It depicts landscape and natural objects as memory vectors, as the carriers of remnants of past human activities and environmental changes. This focus on environmental memory is in line with wider ecocritical issues which attempt to criticize the distinction between the human and the nonhuman world. Nature and culture are not absolute and each of them is influenced by the other in complex and continuous ways (Parker, 2011, p. 440). In this regard, *Memory of Water* does not show the collapse of the environment but also addresses how the collapse is recalled, perceived and internalized.

This article engages the novel in the joint lenses of ecocriticism and Anthropocene thinking. Ecocriticism, first conceived by William Rueckert in the late 1970s (Buell, 1995, p. 13), is a critical approach that looks at the relationship between literature and the natural environment, with an emphasis on interconnectedness and ecological responsibility. The Anthropocene, in turn, emphasizes to what extent the human action has turned into a geological phenomenon that has the power to transform the planet. These frameworks as a whole offer a fruitful platform to examine how *Memory of Water* is coping with the tension between human responsibility and ecological interdependence.

To be more specific, this paper will discuss how water shortage in the novel restructures the social structures, ethical decision making process and subjectivity of individuals. It explores how the degradation of the environment intersects with the political domination to create the circumstances of inequality and what may be

termed as the ecological precarity a state in which even the survival itself becomes contingent and uncertain. It further examines the significance of environmental memory taking into consideration how the novel reflects the past as being imprinted on both material landscapes besides the natural features such as water.

Finally, *Memory of Water* does not simply fantasize about some far-off dystopian future. It echoes and amplifies situations that are already in place in most regions across the world, where water scarcity, environmental injustice, and unequal distribution of resources characterizes the day-to-day life. The novel, by balancing the world of speculative fiction and modern reality, challenges the reader to rethink his or her connection with the natural world and to question the ethical consequences of environmental degradation. It thus turns water, which is a backdrop element, into a central force, which is the one that sustains life, imposes power and when it goes wrong, it exposes the weak underpinnings of human civilization.

Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene

Ecocriticism is the study of the interaction of literature with the natural environment, and how literature creates and expresses ecological consciousness (Garrard, 2004, p. 2). It counters the anthropocentric assumptions and focuses on the interdependence on human and nonhuman systems. According to Timothy Clark, ecocriticism is essentially a reaction to the ecological crisis and is aimed at re-evaluating the role of literature with regard to ecological realities (Clark, 2011, p. xiii).

The urgency of ecocritical investigations that cannot be separated or regarded as autonomous of the ecological circumstances of the present. The excessive exploitation of natural resources has put the world under intense pressure (Mishra, 2016, p. 168), whereas the environmental crisis in the form of pollution, deforestation, species extension, droughts and floods, stresses the necessity of critical frameworks that can be used to solve environmental degradation (Glottfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xvi).

These crises are not one-dimensional phenomena but the processes that are interdependent and that demonstrate the instability of ecological systems and the impact of human intervention. Recent scientific studies further support these issues, showcasing how climate change and pollution interact in ways that continue to place more and more life on earth at risk (Christensen, 2019). In this sense, ecocriticism is not merely a form of literary criticism, but also a moral and intellectual response to the ecological turmoil of the globe.

One of the key issues of the ecocriticism is an attempt to give a voice to nature, which traditionally has been silenced by binary opposites of nature and culture (Rakwal and Dwivedi, 2020, p. 20). Ecocriticism foregrounds its agency, and its contribution to the formation of human experience, rather than treating the natural world as a passive background. Simultaneously, it considers that the demarcation between nature and culture is not definite. Nature, as Parker (2011) explains, is also culturally constructed, and so is culture influenced by nature processes; wilderness can be found even in the most distant corners of the civilization, and civilization can be found even in the wilderness (p. 440). This identification makes the simplistic dichotomies between the human and the nonhuman hard to find, and instead highlights a dynamic and entangled relationship.

Another ecocritical worldview is an earth-centered worldview, which prefigures the interconnectedness and ecological responsibility. In this sense, literature turns into a tool of promoting environmental consciousness and stimulating more responsible thinking. This worldview makes humans a part of an earth family, where morally, it is required to act on behalf of the planet instead of dominating it (Rangarajan, 2018, pp. 70-71). This kind of view directly questions the moral ineptitude, which has helped to create the environmental crisis. The problem of the current ecological crisis, as argued by Mishra, is not based on the inability of the ecosystems but the malfunction of the human moral systems (p. 169). Such a change of focus, i.e., the environmental breakdown almost literally changed to the ethical breakdown, is the key to comprehending ecocritical theory and ecocritical practice of literary works.

Although the idea of the Anthropocene is new, it presents a variation of the same concept. The Anthropocene recognizes humans as a force in the planet that is capable of changing the systems of the planet (Clark, 2011, pp. 1-2). This paradigm pre-empts the scale of anthropocentric intervention, and underlines that environmental change is not a one-off event, but rather the product of accruing human influence. The conflict between ecocriticism and the Anthropocene is therefore the difference in focus of the two schools of thought; eco-criticism emphasizes relationality and interdependence, and the Anthropocene foregrounds human agency and its world-altering effects.

This tension is clearly illustrated in *Memory of Water*. The novel suggests a future where ecological collapse is a direct consequence of human efforts, whether those efforts be wars over natural resources, and systemic ecological neglect. The environmental doom is reiteratively contextualized in the novel as a product of

historical human activity. The past-world is bleeding into our present-world, into its sky, into its dust, Noria reflects (Itaranta, 2014, p. 25). This sentence is a summary of the Anthropocene concept that human intervention leaves long-lasting material records on the planet, which determines the future and the environment.

Meanwhile, the novel reaffirms the ecocritical view in focusing on the fact that human beings and nature are inseparable. The narrator observes, "We are children of water... the time will come when our water runs dry" (Itaranta, 2014, p. 84). This statement dismisses human exceptionalism but places the human species within ecological cycles of birth and death, which echo ecocritical appeals to leave behind anthropocentric thinking.

The ecocriticism is also a prefiguration of environmental justice and the focus on the fact that ecological harm is not evenly distributed across populations of the planet (Rakwal and Dwivedi, 2020, p. 11). The water scarcity in the novel by Itaranta is not distributed equally, but is affected by the political regime of the country and its social hierarchy. This inequality is sharply put in the desperate question asked by one of the villagers: What would you have me drinking, then... air or sand, perhaps? (Itaranta, 2014, p. 135). The question reveals the lived reality of scarcity, in which survival prevails over safety, and the ecological crisis becomes a condition of everyday life.

Ecocriticism as an Interdisciplinary Approach

Ecocriticism essentially is a disciplinary approach which is informed by the knowledge gained in the fields of literary studies, ecology, sociology, and environmental science. It highlights the necessity of ecological literacy, and promotes critical interaction with political and scientific conceptualizations of environmental change (Garrard, 2004, p. 5). Instead of viewing nature and culture as two distinct systems, ecocriticism realizes them as mutually constitutive systems, which are deeply intertwined both materialistically and symbolically. In such a way, it is possible to have a more holistic understanding of how issues of environmental concern are represented, felt, and negotiated in literary texts.

Other theoretical approaches are usually influenced by the forms of ego-consciousness, but ecocriticism is based on the eco-consciousness, the focus on the earth-centered understanding of who we are, where we stand, and how we should relate to the natural world (Mishra, 2016, p. 169). This new perspective supports the notion that environmental crisis cannot be understood in terms of human-centered paradigms but, instead, must be perceived in terms of a broader level of ecological

interdependence. In this respect, ecocriticism is not just an extension of literary critique; it reorients it towards a more holistic understanding of the relationship between human and nonhuman systems.

This cross-disciplinary model is of particular significance to *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itaranta where the ecological collapse is depicted not only as physical crisis but also as a cultural and political state. The novel incorporates the environmental science (drought, water depletion, and climate disruption) into the very fabric of the life of ordinary people. This integration can be embodied in the severity of image of environmental loss: the river was nothing but a dry scar in our landscape (Itaranta, 2014, p. 18). By making environmental degradation visible and permanent, as implied in this image, ecological damage can be said to be both tangible and intangible.

Simultaneously, *Memory of Water* preempts the process of interaction between various knowledge systems in the response to ecological collapse. The scientific knowledge seems to be the hidden records, suppressed discoveries, whereas the cultural practices as the ceremony provides another, ethical, way of interacting with water. This dual view portrays the notion that, in understanding environmental crisis, more is at stake than technical solutions; there is a deeper cultural and philosophical understanding. As Noria thinks about the nature of water, it is explained as something that belongs to everyone and one, and it does not pay attention to the attempts of people to possess it and dominate it (Itaranta, 2014 p. 110). This is the statement which summarizes the conflict between nature and human power.

By questioning disciplinary limits, ecocriticism sets literature as a critical place where scientific knowledge and moral contemplation intersect. In *Memory of Water*, narrative is a way of translating the abstract processes that take place in the environment into lived experience, making ecological crisis intelligible and emotionally meaningful. This is in line with the larger role of climate focused literature that aims to foster ecological consciousness by bridging scientific realities with human experiences (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 474). The fact that the environmental degradation is not a one-dimensional phenomenon but rather a complex, interrelated process, is proved by the inclusion of scientific, political, and philosophical aspects in the novel. It is in this interdisciplinary sense that literature plays a role in not only represent ecological crisis but also in the cultivation of a more holistic and responsible environmental consciousness.

Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi)

Climate fiction or cli-fi is any literary work that directly addresses climate change and environmental collapse. Being a narrative mode, it converts a scientific discourse into a narration, transforming abstract ecological processes into a form that is emotionally and ethically accessible to readers (Adams, 2015, pp. xii-xiii). Moving data into lived experience, cli-fi allows exploring the issues of environmental crisis on a deeper level than scientific communication can allow.

Climate fiction is a literary mode that explicitly focuses on climate change, a mode that is not only capable of giving an insight into the ethical and social implications of this unprecedented environmental catastrophe, but also plays an active role in shaping our conception of climate change (as cited in Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 474). This definition highlights the dual role of this genre as both cultural commentary and critical intervention. Likewise, climate fiction has been characterized as a response to the global environmental crisis by literature, serving both as a reflection and as a prediction of ecological futures. (Glotsfelty & Fromm, 1996 p. xv; Murugavel, 2020, p. 4).

Cli-fi also fulfills an important purpose in helping the general population to comprehend the issue of climate change through its humanization. It enables readers to feel the ecological disturbance at the scale of the daily life. The use of scientifically plausible situations is common among authors to depict the short-term effects of environmental inaction. This science-meets-storytelling blend inspires environmental ethics thoughts and may even give rise to a sense of responsibility or even activism. The situation is usually put in a way that requires the character to make difficult decisions, between self-preservation and collective survival, or between economic progress and ecological sustainability. Whereas most works take up the dystopian framework, others envision the survival or accommodation. Such a balance between despair and responsibility provides the genre with both emotional depth and critical resonance (Jain, 2025, p. a635).

Meanwhile, the genre is experiencing a great deal of representational difficulties. Climate change is usually slow, diffusive, and time elastic thus it is challenging to portray it by using traditional narrative structures. Climate fiction, as argued by Axel Goodbody and Adeline Johns-Putra, has to negotiate the tension between the perceived immediacy of the narrative and the abstract reasoning of scientific explanations. Climate fiction, to put it mildly, has to negotiate the tension between the perceived immediacy of the narrative and the abstract reasoning of scientific

explanations. 234-236). Critics further argue that cli-fi is not necessarily anticipatory of human extinction, but instead its imagery of collapse of the economic and political systems that generate environmental crisis. Ecocritical, the genre is defined by a dual devotion to the utopian invention, and the apocalyptic fear, both of which are still central to its thematic identity. (Irr, 2017, p. 4).

The bigger picture of climate knowledge production and dissemination intensifies these tensions. Climate change is a notion that is constructed by scientific studies as well as contentious media discourses. The scientific discourse has now become dependent on the environment of hybrid media in which evidence is competing with misinformation, uncertainty and political rhetoric (Roslyng et al., 2025, pp.). 2-3). In these circumstances, it is specifically the cli-fi that will provide a coherent narrative space in which environmental complexities could be explored and comprehended.

Researchers also state that climate fiction reveals and breaks the cultural boundaries of envisioning the future. Using patterns of collapse, catastrophe, and survival, cli-fi codes recurrent narrative structures that lead to the conceptualization of environmental change in societies. These patterns serves as types of future-making, modeling the types of futures that become imaginable in the context of cultural discourse (Querubin and Niederer, 2024, pp. 285-303). By doing so, cli-fi will not project the future into reality but rather actively contribute to its creation on the level of cultural imagination.

In *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itaranta, the cli-fi conventions are used to show the future of drought, scarcity of resources, and ecological collapse. The novel does not show ecological catastrophe as a single catastrophic event, but it presents ecological catastrophe as a continuing state of affairs and permeates day-to-day life. This is depicted in the description like the dried landscapes where the river was just a dry scar in our landscape (Itaranta, 2004, p. 18). Lack of water is not an abrupt event but it has become normalized, which determines how characters live, think, and relate to their surrounding environment.

Moreover, the novel highlights the temporal incompleteness of climate crisis. Instead of emphasizing on the short-term effects of the current environmental irresponsibility, it highlights the long-term impacts of previous irresponsible environmental practices. As the story implies, the impact of the past-world still imposes its influence on the current meaning that climate change is an intergenerational phenomenon. It is also consistent with more general cli-fi trends to

present ecological crisis as a type of slow violence, which occurs slowly but constantly.

These narrative techniques allow *Memory of Water* to show how cli-fi can make a transition between science and human experience. It does not only bring climate change out of the abstract and globalized realms, but also emphasizes the moral and political facets of environmental destruction. By so doing, the novel demonstrates how cli-fi can be a literary genre, as well as a critical tool that can be used to address the complexities of the Anthropocene.

Water Scarcity and Ecological Crisis in *Memory of Water*

Water shortage is the main ecological situation in *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itaranta. The novel envisions a future where the freshwater resources are grossly depleted and these factors fundamentally transform environmental systems, social and political structures. Scarcity is not shown as a transient crisis but rather as a permanent state of being that controls the everyday life, human relationships and how the society is organized itself.

Here, water can be seen as a contradictory phenomenon, at the same time a life-giving and a life-destroying one. Although it is a necessity to survive, the lack of it breeds pain, inequality and disintegration of society. Due to its nature of being dynamic and unevenly distributed, as explained by Frank Rijsberman (2006), the scarcity of water is never purely natural but is, instead, influenced by political, economic, and social factors (pp. 5-6). This ecological vision of the novel has made the ecological reality of deprivation both an environmental condition and an ecological condition formed by human systems of control.

The destructive aspect of water is further reiterated by its pollution. In one of the scenes, Noria sees a contaminated source of water close to a plastic waste site: My parents had always warned me never to drink it, they said that the water was contaminated with the toxins of the grave and would make me sick (Itaranta, 2014, p. 101). This scene shows how water, which is traditionally linked to life and purity has been turned into a source of violence and sickness. Toxic water highlights the end-result of carelessness on the environment where the past carelessness of humans still chain the present.

The issue of water scarcity generates ethical quandaries. Human beings must make up their minds in opposing choices between life and law, right and wrong. These circumstances result in what can be called as ecological precarity- a condition where life is marked by uncertainty, vulnerability and a lack of agency. Scarcity, in turn, is

more extended than physical deprivation to rebrand how moral choices are made and the subjectivity of the human being.

By portraying the issue of water shortage, *Memory of Water* emphasizes the interdependence of environmental degradation, political power, and ethical responsibility. The novel shows that ecological crisis is not just a setting of human activity but a determining factor that rearranges the circumstances of existence. In so doing it follows the ecocritical point of view which is both more complex and systemic in the sense that it involves not only natural processes but also the manmade intervention.

Surveillance and Ecological Authoritarianism

Water scarcity in *Memory of Water* is not only a condition of the environment, but also a process by which the power of authoritarianism is exercised and maintained. The military regime exercises strict control over water recourses by the means of a complex system of surveillance, control, and punishment. The limitation of access to water is also closely observed and the infringement of water laws is addressed as serious crimes in this manner, ecological crisis turns into the basis of political control that will transform a natural need into a highly controlled and regulated commodity. Among the most evident forms of such control, water guards are positioned in communities and impose water quotas. Their powers are both physical and symbolic since they represent the power that the regime has to control life sustaining resources. Guards are calculatedly precise in their movements, their unmoving faces behind their blue insect hoods checking water usage and punishments (Itaranta, 2014, pp. 12-13). This is symbolic of the dehumanized and mechanized nature of the regime, implying a mechanism where enforcement is done without empathy or moral consideration. The guards are more a part of a larger system of control rather than a person.

The blue circle further explains the functioning of surveillance at the level of ordinary life. Houses that are identified with this symbol are publicly known to have committed water crimes and turned personal spaces into the place of visible accusation and social stigma. The circle was painted on the door according to the story, it is the mark of a serious crime with water as its victim (Itaranta, 2014, p. 15). This system of marking is not just a system of warning, but also a system of social discipline, which is the means of creating a greater compliance through the fear of being exposed. The home, the place of privacy and security, is where one might be put to the test and under control by the community.

These open mechanisms are not the only kinds of surveillance that are diffusing into the social fabric through networks of informants and suspicious. There is an implied or explicit encouragement of people to spy on one another and an atmosphere of mistrust prevails, tearing the relationships in the community apart. This system makes sure that the process of control is not reduced to the state institutions but becomes internalized in the society per se. As Noria slowly understands that this surveillance, she comes to the realization that the net was closing in around me (Itaranta, 2014, p. 184), and it is important to note that the net was closing in around me refers to how far the regime reaches the personal and social life. Surveillance then is not only exterior but also psychic and affects how individuals perceive themselves and other individuals.

In this mechanism, the water is converted to a tool of power. Rather than simply a natural resource it is a well of population regulation, social stratification and submissiveness. This was a water shortage which justified the authoritarian intervention and hence the regime justified its actions by arguing it was necessary to collectively survive. The novel however exposes the ethical nature of such domination and how the environmental crisis could be employed to consolidate the power and subdue the individual one.

More to the point, the ultimate result of this system will be not only social control but the destruction of opposition. Noria demonstrates all the manifestations of the ecological authoritarianism in the destiny of Noria. The fact which she chooses to keep the secret knowledge and to guard the secret water source, directly opposes her with the regime. Her actions have an ethical foundation but are outlawed within the rationality of state regulation. Her subsequent death highlights the extent of the harshness of the system and how surveillance goes beyond monitoring behavior to punishing dissent, even when the dissent is based on ecological responsibility.

The way it depicts the ecological authoritarianism and surveillance, *Memory of Water* show that the ecological degradation cannot be segregated by the political set-ups. Scarcity is not an inevitable producer of hardship, rather it opens up systems of domination which redefine human relationships and subjectivity. In this regard, this novel is a critical commentary of how ecological crisis can be used as a way of legitimizing and continuing authoritarian power, and transforming a natural need into a form of control.

Water as a Destructive Force

The representation of *water in Memory of Water* (Itaranta, 2014) is not based on the idea of water as a stable and life-giving force. Rather, it is essentially ambivalent, in that it is both life-sustaining and yet, at the same time, it is also involved in the process of its destruction. Its absence results in dehydration, collapse, and death, and its pollution in water causes disease and ecological devastation. This two-sidedness makes water a biological necessity and a devastating ecological phenomenon and in effect, the threshold between life and death is blurred.

This is a devastating element that is best illustrated in the novel by the manner in which the water systems are no longer safe and reliable. What is supposed to serve as a source of newness ends up being shaky and hazardous, a reflection of a world whereby ecological harmony has already been broken. No longer can water guarantee life but it had been a brokerage of vulnerability and precarity, and it compelled people to make choices in a condition in which survival was never guaranteed.

Nevertheless, the destructive power of water used in the novel goes beyond its physical characteristics. It operates at the level of social and psychological systems and is changing the way the communities work and how the individuals relate to others. This water shortage undermines the entire trust and brings down the distribution of water resources and their control to the minimum. In this instance, the social relations are redefined in relation to competition, suspicion, dependency rather than solidarity fragmentation and isolation.

The political control of water supports this systemic breakdown. Institutionalized shortage through regulation and surveillance. As the right to water is turned into a governance right and not a right to nature. Here, ecological crisis is turned into a social control mechanism. The destructive nature of water, however, is not merely environmental, but even structural, as it is built into the structure of the society itself. At the level of psychology, scarcity makes a profound instability. Characters must confront the pressure of survival and morality, obedience and opposition that all the time is there. Even the ethical decision-making process is further limited, since basic needs predominate over the moral certitude. In this sense, the water scarcity brings about what can be termed as the ethical erosion as the traditional modes of responsibility are jostled out by the need to survive.

Together, these dimensions prove that water in *Memory of Water* can be a symbol of power of destruction. It affects the ecological balance, political power, ethical structures simultaneously demonstrate the impossibility to separate environmental

crisis and the human systems of meaning and power. The novel, then, redefines water not just as a pressure source, but as a force that acts and creates destruction at a number of different levels of existence.

Conclusion

Memory of Water is an in-depth study of water as a life-giving and destroying power in the framework of the ecological crisis. By portraying water as not a natural resource but a central axis, the novel illustrates that power, survival and ethical responsibility are negotiated through water.

This article has demonstrated that environmental degradation in the novel cannot be discussed out of human systems of government and inequalities. Water scarcity does not only transform the framework of social existence but also creates ecological insecurity and renegotiates the moral agency in circumstances of constraint. Simultaneously, the novel accentuates the role of the ecological memory that focuses on the continuation of the past actions in the current ecological conditions.

Finally, *Memory of Water* is not limited to dystopian environment, but it is a mirror of the modern world issues. It unveils how the crisis of the environment can be used to support authoritarian power and at the same time to reveal the ethical consequences of environmental responsibility.

In so doing, it highlights the acute necessity of a renewed ecological awareness an awareness which is based on awareness, accountability and the realization of the embeddedness of humanity in vulnerable and interrelated natural systems.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: ندرة المياه، النقد البيئي، الخيال المناخي

الملخص:

تتطرق البحث الى كيفية تصوير الماء كقوة حيوية وقوة مدمرة في رواية "ذاكرة الماء" (2014) للكاتبة إيمي إيتارانتا. تستخدم المقالة نظريات ومفاهيم النقد البيئي والأنثروبوسين لدراسة كيف أن ندرة المياه ليست مجرد حالة بيئية، بل ظاهرة تُشكّل العلاقات الاجتماعية والسلطة السياسية وصنع القرار الأخلاقي. تصوّر الرواية مجتمعاً مستقبلياً بائساً، يتسم بالدمار البيئي، حيث يُسيطر نظام شمولي سيطرة صارمة على الوصول إلى المياه النظيفة، مما يخلق حالة من عدم المساواة والمراقبة والتفكك الاجتماعي. من خلال تحليل نصي دقيق، تُبين المقالة كيف يعمل الماء كحاجة مادية، ووسيلة رمزية للذاكرة، وأداة للسلطة. علاوة على ذلك، تناقش المقالة التقاطع بين التدهور البيئي والهشاشة الإنسانية، مما يؤدي إلى هشاشة بيئية. تُظهر القصة كيف تُجبر الندرة الناس على مواجهة قرارات أخلاقية مقيدة، وأحياناً مستحيلة، وبالتالي، تُعيد تعريف الفاعلية في سياق القيود النظامية. في الوقت نفسه، تُشدّد الرواية على أهمية الذاكرة البيئية، فالماء والمناظر الطبيعية بمثابة أرشيفات تحتفظ بآثار النشاط البشري والتغيرات البيئية الماضية. تُشكك هذه الرؤية في الافتراضات الأنثروبولوجية، وتقترح رؤية بيئية محورية، حيث يندمج الإنسان في النظم الطبيعية، لا أن يكون خارجها. وأخيراً، تُجادل المقالة بأن رواية "ذاكرة الماء" لا تعكس فقط المخاوف المناخية الراهنة، بل تُقدم أيضاً تدخلاً نقدياً يربط بين التصورات المستقبلية وأوجه عدم المساواة العالمية الحالية. فمن خلال استشراف الجوانب المدمرة للماء، وسميته، ونقصه، والسيطرة السياسية عليه، تُعيد الرواية صياغة مفهوم الماء، لا كمورد سلبي، بل كقوة فاعلة تُحدد البقاء والمسؤولية الأخلاقية. وبذلك، تقترح الرواية إعادة إحياء الوعي البيئي القائم على التذكر والمسؤولية والتعايش المستدام.