

An ecofeminist study of the anthropocene age in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

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Abstract

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is a dazzling postmodern work of fiction which includes six different narratives in six chapters, taking place in six time periods and locations. From the first chapter to the last, the narratives span over five centuries of human whereabouts on earth. Though disparate these chapters may seem at first sight, they are actually interrelated as a whole. In holistic terms, *Cloud Atlas* represents a brief survey of the anthropocene age, constructed directly from the human activities on this planet. To that end, ecofeminism is a sub-theory of ecocriticism which emerged within the second wave of ecocriticism. The theory mainly defends that the oppression of women and nature is interconnected. This article focuses on how Mitchell reflects women and nature in a multi-layered narrative that evolves in a course of five hundred years. Similarities between the conditions of women and the natural environment are thereby compared and exposed. While maintaining this, the article focuses on three main chapters of the novel which are the initial, middle and the last chapters. Finally, these chapters which represent the initiation, zenith and aftermath of the anthropocene age are analyzed in detail with references to the novel. Finally, it has been concluded that *Cloud Atlas* ascribes a vital role to women, within the context of the ecofeminist movement, to lead the way for the foundation of an alternative environmental philosophy which will ensure an ecocentric, new world order.

Keywords: *Cloud Atlas*, David Mitchell, Ecofeminism, Karen J. Warren, Greta Gaard, Anthropocene age, Capitalocene

David Mitchell'in *Bulut Atlası*nda antroposen çağının ekofeminist incelemesi

Öz

David Mitchell'in *Bulut Atlası*, altı farklı bölümden, hikâyeden oluşan ve altı farklı konum ve zaman diliminde yer alan baş döndürücü postmodern bir eserdir. İlk bölümden son bölüme kadar genel hikâyeye, insanlığın dünyadaki varoluşunun beş yüz yılını kapsamaktadır. Bu altı bölüm her ne kadar birbirleriyle ilgisiz görünse de bütünü itibarıyla tamamı birbirleriyle ilişkilidir. Bütüncül olarak, *Bulut Atlası*, dünyadaki insan etkinlikleri tarafından şekillenen antroposen çağının kısa bir özetini sunmaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak, ekofeminizm, ikinci dalga ekoeleştiri kuramı ile ortaya çıkmış olan bir alt kuramdır ve temel anlamda kadınlar ile doğanın yaşamış oldukları zulüm ve baskının birbirleriyle bağlantılı olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Buna ek olarak, kadınlar ile patriyarkal kapitalizm arasındaki ortak noktalar da irdelenmiştir. Bu makale, yazar David Mitchell'in bu çok katmanlı romanında kadınları, ezilenleri ve doğayı beş yüz yıllık süre boyunca meydana gelen bu kapsamlı anlatıda nasıl yansıttığına odaklanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda kadınların, ezilenlerin ve doğal çevrenin içinde buldukları durumlar arasındaki benzerlikler açığa çıkarılmaktadır. Makale, romanın ilk,

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orta ve son olmak üzere üç bölümünü ele almaktadır. Antroposen çağının temsili olarak başlangıç, zirve noktası ve sonrasını temsil eden bu üç bölüm romandan referanslarla ayrıntılı biçimde analiz edilmektedir. Çalışmanın sonunda, *Bulut Atlasının* kadınlara, ekofeminist hareket kapsamında, doğa merkezli yeni bir dünya düzeninin kuruluşunu sağlayacak, alternatif bir çevre felsefesinin oluşumunda liderlik görevini üstlenme rolünü yüklediği sonucuna varılmıştır

Anahtar kelimeler: *Bulut Atlası*, David Mitchell, Ekofeminizm, Karen J. Warren, Greta Gaard, Antroposen çağı, Kapitalosen

Introduction to *Cloud Atlas*

Cloud Atlas is a work of postmodern fiction published in 2004 by the British author David Mitchell. The novel consists of six disparate chapters which take place in six different locations around the world and in six different time periods beginning from the 19th century in the first narrative and ending in the post-apocalyptic distant future of the 24th century. Thus, spanning over a period of 500 years, the novel conveys a striking overview of humanity's past, present and possible future. Mitchell exquisitely reflects the human experience from multiple perspectives and presents his readers a brief summary of human quest on earth.

Consisting of six different chapters, *Cloud Atlas* is a work of contemporary fiction. The reason why this novel is worth studying is the very fact that the author successfully connects and combines six different narratives which seem to be irrelevant to one another at first sight. These narratives are combined to one another in a skillful and meticulous manner by the author, David Mitchell. All six narratives are divided in two parts except the chapter entitled *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After* which occupies a central and vital position to the novel's general significance.

Each chapter recounts a story in a different genre moving forward in time, chronologically, beginning from the 19th century America (Hawaii) and ending in the distant post-apocalyptic setting of the 24th century island of Hawaii, now called Ha-why. Thus, Mitchell presents an overview of human presence on earth from the early 1800s until the 2400s and openly reveals the effects of this presence on planet earth. In other words, *Cloud Atlas* exposes the results of the anthropocene age and goes further to convey the possible long term outcomes of human activity on earth. This article strives to reveal how this process is presented in the novel and to interpret the human impact on earth from an ekofeminist viewpoint. To that end, the article argues that as it is demonstrated in *Cloud Atlas*, salvation from this order of oppression will and must come through the resistance of women. Women are the ones who must organize and engage in action so as to make a difference and gradually alter the system which has been imposed on people and often claimed to be pertaining to the natural order. Thereby, women will ensure that an alternative system is established where all oppressed people are granted equal rights of recognition and all natural areas are preserved as a common heritage. Women are the foremost candidates of possess a major potential for ensuring and establishing radical change.

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* possesses a multi-layered, fragmented narrative structure. Five of six different narratives are split into two parts. All six narratives take place in a different location and time period, moving forward in time from the 19th up until the 24th century. Moreover, each narrative stands for a different genre and is written in a different style. Adam Ewing's story is written as a historical drama whereas Luisa Rey's is a crime fiction and Sonmi's narrative is an example of science-fiction. Mitchell's multi-layered narrative structure presents the readers an overview of the late

anthropocene age beginning from the 1800s. It then moves forward to the 20th century when capitalism and industrial development are in full motion and offers a vision of the future in two perspectives: the near future of extreme capitalism and the post-capitalist distant future.

This article scrutinizes three chapters from *Cloud Atlas* which reveal a comprehensive overview of the anthropocene age commencing with the age of industrial revolution, moving on to the age of extremist capitalism and ending at the post-apocalyptic aftermath of the capitalist age where humans have retreated to the island of Hawaii and regressed to a primitive civilization. Besides women, the article also focuses on exploited human beings such as people of colour, indigenous people and all natural areas that have been oppressed by patriarchal capitalism as a whole. In holistic terms, this is necessary due to the fact that ecofeminism is a broad philosophy which has evolved from women to other subjugated human beings and this movement urges them to come together and organize under the leadership of women. Due to their special bond with nature, women are the ones that will provide change.

The philosophy of ecofeminism

Ecofeminism, a philosophical theory which emerged from the second wave of ecocriticism mainly asserts that the dominance of women is interconnected with the dominance of nature. By asserting this, the philosophy goes further to argue that any feminist movement without the environmentalist cause falls short and is lacking argument in nature. Pioneer and leading philosopher of ecofeminist theory, Karen J. Warren puts forward that:

What makes ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. Ecofeminist philosophy extends familiar feminist critiques of social isms of domination (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism) to nature (i.e., naturism). According to ecofeminists, nature is a feminist issue. In fact, an understanding of the overlapping and intersecting nature of isms of domination is so important to feminism, science, and local community life that I have found it helpful to visualize ecofeminist philosophy as the intersection of three spheres in the drawing on the facing page. According to this way of visualizing ecofeminist philosophy, it arises out of and builds on the mutually supportive insights of feminism, of science, development and technology, and of local perspectives. (1997, p. 4)

Hence, it is worth noting that ecofeminism brings environmental issues together with human issues and thus, the social sphere. Thereby, it not only creates a new domain for the movement of feminism but also expands its scope by combining feminist theory with a new domain of theory, ecocriticism, which used to be considered irrelevant to this cause. Therefore, ecofeminism is regarded to be highly useful as it incorporates the natural with the human sphere and insists on the fact that environmental problems are directly connected with the women's experience. Warren specifically argues that in the Third World continents such as Africa and Asia, the bond between women and nature is still in full effect as women are the ones who are fully immersed with nature and its products in their daily struggles (p. 5). To this end, Warren moves on to provide specific connections between women and nature in terms of trees, forests, water, food, farming, toxins, environmental racism and thereby consistently conveys the relevancy of these notions with women's issues (p. 6-10).

Ecofeminists affirm that nature, herself is feminist in essence as both women and nature have various common qualities and because of this, women and environmental matters are interrelated and cannot be separated from one another. One of their most basic common features is the fact that both women

and nature are givers of life and share a mutual role as mothers. Ecofeminist Mary Mellor argues that there are two levels of connection between women and nature:

The first is a direct affinity, a physiological or psychic connection. Women 'understand' nature through their physiological functions (birthing, menstrual cycles) or some deep element of their personalities (life-oriented, nourishing/caring values). [...] The second approach sees the connection between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural world as contingent. The juxtaposition of the subordination of women and nature has occurred at a particular historical juncture, western patriarchal capitalism/industrialism. If women understand 'nature' it is because of their common experience of exploitation. (1996, p. 148)

To that end, women and nature have a bond that links them physiologically and as contingent. These qualities put nature and women in the same position against the hegemony of patriarchal capitalism. Moreover, it is also known that “before patriarchal domination of human societies, woman-centred societies existed that were more egalitarian and ecologically benign” (Mellor, 1996, p. 151). Therefore, the common qualities shared by nature and women cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, another renowned ecofeminist Linda Vance puts forward the elements of ecofeminism and asserts that it is a combination of feminism and the environmental movement (1993, p. 134). According to Vance, first and foremost, ecofeminism requires the firm resistance to all forms of oppression and authority directed to any human or non-human living being. Thus, it not only defends women's rights, but also stands by the side of all oppressed people, including those of colour and the disadvantaged ones living in the poorest regions of the planet. Ecofeminists claim that all oppressions are in one way or the other interconnected and unless all of them are eradicated, others will never achieve complete liberty. The next feature is to establish a substitute orientation and thereby maintain the new values of ecofeminism as variegation, interconnectedness, maintainability, collaboration and restoration (Vance, 1993, p. 135). The following quality is stated as:

Diversity of experience and expression, like diversity of life forms, is a necessary goal of ecofeminism. There can be no single set of answers, no one portal through which to enter. To insist on a single ideology, or a single praxis, is to deny the tremendous complexity of the problems that centuries of patriarchy have created. And it denies the dialectic realities of the complicated, interconnected life on this planet. Consequently, in some ways it doesn't matter where one's ecofeminist praxis begins. [...] The point is that we don't have to be in the same place; we simply have to be doing something, and seeing the connectedness of it all, and not undoing or denying each other's work. (1993, p. 135)

Thereby, Linda Vance insists on the pluralistic nature of ecofeminism. On the other hand, monism which had been imposed on humans by the patriarchal order for many centuries has proven to be the cause of problems due to its unrealistic structure and mentality. It is therefore that ecofeminism embraces pluralism on the ground that it can resolve persisting problems because of its democratic, realistic and tolerant spirit. Pluralism is more likely to provide better and effective solutions to environmental problems as its scope is truly comprehensive and inclusive.

Finally, the last element of ecofeminism as pointed out by Linda Vance is empathy which is considered to be an essential requirement in addressing the problem of oppression in nature. In that sense, personifying nature as female is an effective way of addressing the problems of nature. Vance states that: “Giving nature a female identity reinforces my sense of solidarity with the nonhuman world” (1993, p. 136). Through this way, not only can women identify with nature's oppression but can also reinforce the mutual bond women possess with nature and its elements. Empathy is a necessary factor

in achieving an advanced form of understanding (1993, p. 136). All in all, Vance draws a conclusion by emphasizing what the future holds for ecofeminism and its advocates by arguing that:

An ecofeminist future, then, requires us to be visionary and patient at the same time. We need to imagine far-reaching change, and to move slowly, step by step. We need to demand perseverance and dedicated effort from ourselves, and we need to understand that women are already wearied from struggle. We need patience. We cannot build a movement or a future by denouncing other women's efforts, or dismissing them as trivial. Wherever we begin, what unifies us as ecofeminists-as feminists-is a commitment to bringing together all group oppressions to fight domination collectively, because as diverse as our struggles are, the source of our oppression is patriarchal and capitalist privilege. Our goal is not to seize a piece of it for ourselves, but rather to rid ourselves of its scourge before it is too late. (1993, p. 140)

Thus, it can be defended that ecofeminism surpasses the mutual relationship between women and nature and goes way beyond this narrow area to touch upon a broader field of social matters encompassing all forms of social notions concerning race, class, gender, age and social justice. This not only indicates the interconnection of ecofeminism with social issues but also points out that ecofeminism came to being with the influence of other previously established social movements such as Marxism, feminism and environmentalism. Another renowned ecofeminist, Greta Gaard points out that:

Ecofeminism, which asserts the fundamental interconnectedness of all life, offers an appropriate foundation for an ecological ethical theory for women and men who do not operate on the basis of a self/other disjunction. In brief, this psychological-and political-construction of the self and the associated ethical system explains why ecofeminists do not find their concerns fully addressed in other branches of the environmental movement. Though some may agree with social ecologists, for example, that the root cause of all oppression is hierarchy, ecofeminists tend to believe hierarchy takes place as a result of the self/other opposition. (1993, pp.2-3)

In other words, ecofeminism tends to consider oppression in holistic terms so as to reach a more inclusive conclusion concerning the reciprocal relationship between living beings and the natural environment. Therefore, ecofeminists have engaged in activism and have maintained their position on controversial global matters such as anti-nuclear protests, women's and world famine, international women's health movement (1993, p. 4). Ecofeminists around the globe have focused and touched on a variety of topics and have committed themselves to activism in an eclectic spirit.

Moreover, ecofeminists have formulized relevancies between the oppression of women and that of the natural environment which demonstrates that issues concerning nature are essential in comprehending feminist matters (Gaard, 1993, p. 4). Therefore, ecofeminists argue that fighting against the subjugation of women alone is by far not sufficient to be able to solve the domination of nature. In consequence, the subjugation of all human beings must be dealt with equally in order to achieve an efficient solution because ecofeminism is not limited to women due to the belief that one group (women) cannot achieve liberty without the liberation of others who are in the same position. This notion is expressed by Greta Gaard:

By documenting the poor quality of life for women, children, people in the Third World, animals, and the environment, ecofeminists are able to demonstrate that sexism, racism, classism, speciesism, and naturism (the oppression of nature) are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. Instead of being a "single-issue" movement, ecofeminism rests on the notion that the liberation of all oppressed groups must be addressed simultaneously. It is for this reason that I see coalition-building strategies as critical to our success. For if one thing is certain, it is that women alone cannot "save the earth" –we need the efforts of men as well. (1993, p. 5)

Hence, all subjugated groups ought to be taken into consideration equally while acknowledging the oppression upon nature. In specific, minorities, people of lower classes, races, gender and animals are equally oppressed along the side of women and this should certainly not be overlooked. This notion shows how the philosophy of ecofeminism has evolved in time. The movement began with the focus on women and gradually extended its scope as a result of the realization that oppression is not unique to women and that for women to get rid of oppression will not provide a permanent solution to the exploitative nature of the system. In order to alter the system, all oppressed groups must be liberated. This liberation has to take place in a coalition whose pioneers are women.

In addition, within the patriarchal world order, the ones who are dominant, truly shape and determine the reality. In other words, the patriarchal order sets all male values as the basic standard that people must conform to. All those failing to conform to dominant masculine standards are shunned and deprived of their existence. People who fall in this category are not only women but also people of the working class, people of colour, minorities and other disadvantaged groups (Vance, 1993, p. 124). Thus, all cultural norms and values have been somehow associated with men and those who do not fit in are either punished or simply ignored as non-existent. As a result, women, people of colour, working class and minorities are basically not considered worthy of recognition and are in some way or the other alienated from society. Ecofeminists thus, seek to embrace all living beings regardless of their colour, religion, ethnic origin or location and the movement makes no distinction between humans and non-humans. All living beings including humans, animals and all elements of nature are of equal value and none claims superiority over the other.

Hence, in the struggle for ecofeminism, women must not rush but act in a responsible and patient way. Women must remain in full solidarity not only with one another but with all those that are subjugated, including all humans and other living beings pertaining to nature. The major belligerents are thereby identified to be patriarchy and capitalism which need to be confronted by ecofeminists.

Women & the hegemony of patriarchal capitalism

The anthropocene age is roughly defined as 'the damage' humans have bestowed on the natural environment since their presence on this planet. Since the early days of humanity, humans have altered, transformed and gradually destroyed natural areas for their own purpose and pleasure. What used to be the land to take shelter, find food, hunt and farm became the very subject of a series of plundering and organized destruction. The role of women in the society shared a similar fate as that of nature's. Both women and nature have been systematically oppressed and dominated by patriarchal capitalism. To that end, patriarchy and capitalism have had a long-lasting, mutual relationship and are both notions that have come to be mentioned together:

Whereas the concept patriarchy denotes the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression, the concept capitalism is expressive of the contemporary manifestation, or the latest development of this system. Women's problems today cannot be explained by merely referring to the old forms of patriarchal dominance. [...] It is my thesis that capitalism cannot function without patriarchy, that the goal of this system, namely the never-ending process of capital accumulation, cannot be achieved unless patriarchal man-woman relations are maintained or newly created. [...] Patriarchy thus constitutes the mostly invisible underground of the visible capitalist system. (Mies, 1998, p. 38)

Leading scholar of the ecofeminist movement, Maria Mies discusses that patriarchy provides a historical framework and solid background for the systematic domination of women while capitalism

is accountable for the recent adaptations of this oppression. Patriarchy, in a way, provides the necessary cultural framework that justifies the subjugation of women and capitalism simply transforms this into our present day. Thus, both are interrelated and dependent on one another. One cannot sustain its presence without the existence of the other. Mies' clarification for this mutual relationship is based on the fact that capitalism needs patriarchy in order to maintain its objective of obtaining infinite wealth. Patriarchy imposes a strict hierarchy on the relationships between men and women and between men and nature and other living beings. This reciprocal relation provides a backbone for the oppression of women and nature. Thus, patriarchal capitalism can be thought of, and considered as one major entity, a dominant ideological structure which is even today still in full effect.

To that end, the feminist and ecofeminist movements are obliged to confront patriarchal capitalism so as to achieve progress in the women's movement. The women's movement can not do so by staying within the patriarchal system (1998, p. 38). Therefore it needs to provide an alternative to the current capitalist patriarchal system. Patriarchal capitalism has not only created extreme power relations between men and women and men and nature but also between the affluent nations and the starving countries. This process of extreme polarization is currently in full motion as the wealthiest countries such as the USA and European countries are getting wealthier and the poorest countries, mainly in Africa and South America, are getting even poorer by the day (1998, p. 39). Mies describes the relations between the wealthiest and the poorest regions as:

These relations are based on exploitation and oppression, as is the case with the man-woman relation. [...] In this dynamic process of polarization between countries which are 'developing' themselves and countries which they in this process 'underdevelop', the rich and powerful Western industrial countries are getting more and more 'overdeveloped'. This means their development does not stop at a certain point where people would say: 'This is enough. We have enough development for Our human happiness.' The very motor driving on this polarization of the world economy, namely, the capital accumulation process, is based on a world view which never says 'This is enough'. It is by its very nature based on limitless growth, on limitless expansion of productive forces, of commodities and capital. (1998, p. 39)

All in all, the oppressive relationship between the richest and the poorest regions are no different than the relationship between men and women and that between men and nature. This relationship mainly consists of two sides: the oppressor and the oppressed and the extent of the oppression has no restriction whatsoever. Therefore, the result of this endlessly oppressive relationship is doomed to be catastrophic for both sides in a planet with limited resources. This never ending oppression neither causes happiness in the richest countries nor leads to any type of development in the poorest exploited regions of the world (1998, p. 40). As a result, the contrast between two extreme ends gets bigger by the day. While exploiting the poorest countries, the capitalist countries not only consume the limited resources but also cause irreversible damage to the natural environment. On the other hand, the only objective achieved by the capitalist groups is none else than the accumulation of wealth at the expense of damaging and destroying the balance of natural areas.

Renowned Indian environmental activist and scholar Vandana Shiva asserts that the market economy is destined to impoverish women and marginalized peoples mainly because:

The organizing principle for natural resource use is maximization of profits and capital accumulation. Nature and human needs are managed through market mechanisms. Natural resources demands are restricted to those registering on the market; the ideology of development is largely based on a notion of bringing all natural resources into the market economy for commodity production. When these resources are already being used by nature to maintain production of renewable resources, and by women for sustenance and livelihood, their diversion to the market

economy generates a scarcity condition for ecological stability and creates new forms of poverty for all, especially women and children. (1993, pp. 71-72)

Shiva emphasizes that from the market economy's routine cycle of production for maximum profit, the ones who are affected the most are women and children mainly due to the fact that an objective of infinite profit leads to the depletion of scarce resources in the underdeveloped regions of the world. Hence, the free market economy and its target of endless accumulation of wealth act as a detrimental factor on behalf of women and the native peoples of these poor countries. As a natural result of this process of exploitation, natural resources such as water, soil fecundity and genetic richness have considerably deteriorated (1993, p. 73). Thus, the main responsible for the poverty and misery of women and natives of the poorest regions is the free market economy.

Moreover, Shiva adds that the catastrophic results of the free market economy are not unique to the poorest countries of the world, but also exist in developed countries such as the US. It has been statistically proven that the poorest people residing in the US. are mostly women and children and people who belong to minorities (1993, p. 77). These statistics indicate that:

The poverty rate for white, female-headed families was 27.1 per cent; for black, woman-headed families, 51.7 per cent; and for woman-headed Hispanic families, 53.4 per cent. The impact of women's poverty on the economic status of children is even more shocking: in 1984, the poverty rate for children under six was 24 per cent, and in the same year, for children living in women-headed households it was 53.9 per cent. Among black children the poverty rate was 46.3 percent; and for those living in female-headed families, 66.6 per cent. Among Hispanic children 39 per cent were poor, and for those living in female-headed families, the poverty rate was 70.5 percent. (1993, p. 77)

Thus, it has been clearly demonstrated that whether in the wealthiest countries or in the poorest, patriarchal capitalism has resulted in the restriction and shortening of human life. It needs to be acknowledged that people living in poverty are regarded by most governments as an unnecessary excess (1993, p. 86). Shiva highlights that: "the greatest pressure on earth's resources is not from large numbers of poor people but from a small number of the world's ever-consuming elite" (p. 86). In other words, rather than the impoverished masses, the privileged few are the ones who actually pose the actual threat to world stability and to the natural environment. Hence, Shiva concludes by mentioning a possible solution to the detrimental effects on women and children in specific and adds that:

Putting women and children first needs above all, a reversal of the logic which has treated women as subordinate because they create life, and men as superior because they destroy it. All past achievements of patriarchy have been based on alienation from life, and have led to the impoverishment of women, children and the environment. If we want to reverse that decline, the creation, not the destruction of life must be seen as the truly human task, and the essence of being human has to be seen in our capacity to recognize, respect and protect the right to life of all the world's multifarious species. (1993, p. 88)

Thus, so far women and children have been considered and treated as inferior and second class by the patriarchal society whose general aim is the isolation from life. The only consequence that patriarchal capitalism has led women and children to is poverty and ruin. Therefore, the only way out of this cycle is to cherish all life and givers of life including women and all natural elements. All living beings' right to life needs to be acknowledged and respected as all living beings are equally worth of a decent life. Joel Kovel argues that patriarchal capitalism is very likely to cause an ecological disaster of global scale:

The scenario of ecological collapse holds, in essence, that the cumulative effects of growth eventually overwhelm the integrity of ecosystems on a world scale, leading to a cascading series of

shocks. Just how the blows will fall is impossible to tell with any precision, although a number of useful computer models have been assembled. In general terms, we would anticipate interacting calamities that invade and rupture the core material substrata of civilization food, water, air, habitat, bodily health. (2008, p. 105)

The collective consequence of patriarchal capitalism is likely to trigger an ecological catastrophe of unseen dimensions. While there exists many forms of scenarios concerning the apocalypse, it is unclear just how and in what ways these will exactly occur in reality (2008, p. 106). Thus, as emphasized by Kovel, patriarchal capitalism is a probable threat for a global catastrophe and this is also the message given by David Mitchell in *Cloud Atlas*.

The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing: A story of initiation

Cloud Atlas is a major narrative about oppression and dominance and this theme is visible in every story of the six chapters of the novel. Beginning from the 1800s, Mitchell presents us with a setting where the relationships between whites and non-whites, men and women and men and nature are at a primitive, low level. The Western white men's basic pursuit of imperialism had one single aim: to exploit unexplored territories and gain new lands so as to obtain material and valuables for the establishment of an industry. All Western nations have exploited and abused non-white, indigenous people for the sake of material wealth. In order to achieve this, westerners not only oppressed natives but also occupied their lands and natural areas. Adam Ewing's narrative tells the story of oppression from the perspective of a white, noble man. It is the first of the many narratives that recounts the story of oppression caused by patriarchal capitalism.

The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing is the first chapter of *Cloud Atlas* which is based on the personal writings of the quest of a noble American attorney, Adam Ewing. Ewing is on board of the ship 'Prophetess' which is on a long voyage to Hawaii. While on his journey, Ewing meets Autua, a slave from the Moriori tribe originally from a Polynesian Island who boards the ship secretly:

"My name is Autua," he said. "You know I, you seen I, aye – you pity I." I asked what he was talking about. "Maori whip I – you seen." My memory overcame the bizarreness of my situation & I recalled the Moriori being flogged by the "Lizard King." This heartened him. "You good man – Mr. D'Arnoq tell you good man – he hid I in your cabin yesterday night – I escape – you help, Mr. Ewing." Now a 28 groan escaped my lips! & his hand clasped my mouth anew. "If you no help – I in trouble dead." (Mitchell, 2012, p. 27)

As the year is 1830, there exists a high level of racism and class distinction between human beings. Autua who is a black slave on the ship regularly gets abused through whipping by his white masters. The slave comes up to Ewing, knowing from Mr. D'Arnoq's statements that he is different than all the others who act in a racist and segregationist way. In other words, Autua senses through D'Arnoq's words and Ewing's profile as a lawyer and advocate of human rights that he is the only one who can truly save him from his miserable condition. Unable to speak English clearly, Autua asks Ewing for help to escape from his miserable condition. It is worth noting that people of colour in those times were regarded as the lower races and the Western white men ascribed to themselves the role of master which they internalized as a natural right. In the following pages, Autua the slave is threatened to be shot by the crew members and asks for a chance to demonstrate his masterly skills as a sailor:

"If you are a seaman" – our captain jerked his thumb aloft – "let's see you lower this midmast's royal." [...] Autua reached the topmost yard & walked it with simian dex-terity despite the rough seas. Watching the sail unfurl, one of the "saltiest" aboard, a dour Icelander & a sober, obliging & hardworking fellow, spoke his admiration for all to hear. "The darkie's salt as I am, aye, he's got fishhooks for toes!" Such was my gratitude, I could have kissed his boots. Soon Autua had the sail

down – a difficult operation even for a team of four men. [...] He'll work his passage to O-hawaii. If he's no shirker he may sign articles there in the regular fashion. Mr. Roderick, he can share the dead Spaniard's bunk." (Mitchell, 2012, p. 36)

The crew wants to get rid of Autua mainly because he boarded the ship without any permission simply to escape from being slaughtered in the Chatham Islands. His black skin color further aggravates his unwanted presence on the ship. Whites regard other non-white humans as inferiors and they are going on this journey for the sole reason of exploitation of resources. White men's pejorative and intimidating language against the non-whites is almost as common as seeing a bird fly. However, instead of getting shot, Autua wants a chance to prove his exquisite talent as a sailor so that he can be of use to the ship like the other members of the crew and avoid getting shot or abused. The slave eventually proves his superior skills and is saved thanks to his efforts and Ewing's support. He is accepted as a crew member to the advantage of the captain who has earned a sailor he does not have to pay. However, this acceptance is only artificial and out of pure interest. The sailors accept him not with his black identity but despite his black skin. This seems more like a mutual compromise rather than a true acceptance. Autua gets to work on the ship for free and in return for his labour, he is spared and taken to Hawaii.

Meanwhile, on the Pacific Islands, there are rising tensions between two indigenous groups, the Maori and the Moriori. The Maori are described as violent savages whereas the Moriori have become the slaves of the island. It is obvious the patriarchal whites have brought oppression, conflict and destruction to all the people they encounter. Thereby, it is also revealed that Autua's forced escape from the Chatham Islands was a rightful action because if he hadn't escaped, he probably would have been massacred by the Maori along with his fellow people.

Later, Ewing gets infected by a serious disease. On the island, he meets Dr. Goose, a crazy and unreliable physician who later boards the ship with Ewing. Dr. Goose soon proves to be a dangerous figure as he reveals his motto to be: 'Eat or be eaten'. Though it may be interpreted as natural at first look, the motto acts as an ideological justification for the oppression and exploitation of all those who are considered weaker and different from the hegemonic powers in charge. Those who keep exploiting and oppressing others mention it merely as a form of justification that they use to base all their actions on. By constantly repeating their motto, they not only reveal their true intentions but also assure their own consciences.

While approaching Hawaii, Ewing's health deteriorates and Goose attempts to gain advantage over his weakness by giving him a poisonous drink so that he can steal his valuable personal belongings. However, Goose's plan fails as Ewing is saved by Autua who acts quickly to make him drink water so that he can get rid of the poison. Upon their arrival in Honolulu, Ewing is safely transferred to a hospital by Autua and Dr. Goose flees to Hawaii with the fear of getting caught. Towards the end of the second part of Ewing's journal, the noble man reflects into his own thoughts and admits that he opposes the notion that whites refer to as 'the natural order of the world':

If we believe humanity is a ladder of tribes, a colosseum of con-frontation, exploitation & bestiality, such a humanity is surely brought into being, & history's Horroxes, Boerhaaves & Gooses shall prevail. You & I, the moneyed, the privileged, the fortunate, shall not fare so badly in this world, provided our luck holds. What of it if our consciences itch? Why undermine the dominance of our race, our gunships, our heritage & our legacy? Why fight the "natural" (oh, weaselly word!) order of things? Why? Because of this: – one fine day, a purely predatory world shall consume itself. Yes, the Devil shall take the hindmost until the foremost is the hindmost. In an individual, selfishness uglifies the soul; for the human species, selfishness is extinction. If we believe that humanity may

transcend tooth & claw, if we believe divers races & creeds can share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree, if we believe leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable & the riches of the Earth & its Oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. It is the hardest of worlds to make real. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 528)

In the final pages of this narrative, Ewing openly confesses that he is against this order of patriarchal capitalism which leads to no other than a dog eat dog world where the strong crush the weak and take pleasure in doing so. It is emphasized that this imposed order of oppression has created a perception that ascribes a natural role to this structure. In other words, defenders claim that this system of oppression ought to be taken for granted as it represents and justifies the natural order. Despite belonging to the same side as the oppressors, Ewing, a philanthropist, defender of human rights and universal law refuses to go along with this and rejects it in a harsh manner. At the end, he even argues with his father-in-law who ridicules his idealist spirit:

Upon my return to San Francisco, I shall pledge myself to the Abolitionist cause, because I owe my life to a self-freed slave & because I must begin some-where. [...] I hear my father-in-law's response: "Oho, fine, Whiggish sentiments, Ad-am. But don't tell me about justice! Ride to Tennessee on an ass & con-vince the rednecks that they are merely white-washed negroes & their ne-groes are black-washed Whites! [...] You'll be spat on, shot at, lynched, pacified with medals, spurned by backwoodsmen! Crucified! Naïve, dreaming Adam. He who would do battle with the many-headed hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him! & only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean!" Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops? (Mitchell, 2012, p. 529)

Ewing's father-in-law mocks and criticizes him for resisting the system. He argues that it is futile to resist the system and all effort to revert this is inevitably in vain. He attempts to deter Ewing from taking action and warns him that he will never succeed in revolting against the system and that he will pay the price for his uprising. On the contrast, upon hearing these words, Ewing becomes even more motivated and replies by implying that he will keep up the struggle to fight and change this system of oppression and segregation. Sarah Jane Johnston-Ellis interprets this and argues that Ewing is led to question the system of values which America was founded on and goes further to imply that even one attempt can result in a noteworthy consequences (2010, p. 70).

In *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, slaves and indigenous people are not the only ones that are being exploited. Nature and all its pertaining elements suffer the same fate. With the coming of the western imperialists, a devastating disruption in nature takes place which is recounted at the beginning of the novel in the first chapter:

The first blow to the Moriori was the Union Jack, planted in Skirmish Bay's sod in the name of King George by Lieutenant Broughton of HMS Chatham just fifty years ago. Three years later, Broughton's discovery was in Sydney & London chart agents & a scattering of free settlers, wrecked mariners & were cultivating pumpkins, onions, maize & carrots. These they sold to needy sealers, the second blow to the Moriori's independence, who disappointed the Natives' hopes of prosperity by turning the surf pink with seals' blood. (Mr. D'Arnoq illustrated the profits by this arithmetic – a single pelt fetched 15 shillings in Canton & those pioneer sealers gathered over two thousand pelts per boat!). (Mitchell, 2012, p. 13)

Thereby, it is openly revealed that the imperialist settlers have disrupted the natural balance with their greedy and exploitative mentality. The westerners have spoiled nature's flow by harming the natives' crops, livestock and even wild animals. This has caused an irreversible damage in the natural environment and consequently in the lives of the native people. The damage delivered to the natural sphere continues in the following lines:

The third blow to the Moriori was the whalers, now calling at Ocean Bay, Waitangi, Owenga & Te Whakaru in sizable numbers for careening, refitting & refreshing. Whalers' cats & rats bred like the Plagues of Egypt & ate the burrow-nesting birds whose eggs the Moriori so valued for sustenance. Fourth, those motley maladies which cull the darker races whene'er White civilization draws near, sapped the Aboriginal census still further. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 13)

The natives are simply unable to understand these unprecedented interferences and are left hopeless in the face of imperialist intervention. This dramatic intervention directly influences nature and the natives' lifestyle as these are indigenous people that desperately need nature and her resources in order to survive. The imperialist interventions come as a big blow to the indigenous community. As the natural balance gets more distorted, the number of indigenous population further declines. This decline demonstrates the connection between the oppression of these people and the distortion of nature.

To that end, with the beginning of imperialist activity, oppression, exploitation and violence have become common aspects. Ewing's difference is the fact that he is a non-conformist who refuses to become a part of this rotten system. Ewing's mentality contains highly ethical principles which is also outlined by ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant whose

Own approach to resolving these contradictions is through a partnership ethic that treats humans (including male partners and female partners) as equals in personal, household, and political relations and humans as equal partners with (rather than controlled by or dominant over) nonhuman nature. Just as human partners, regardless of sex, race, or class must give each other space, time, and care, allowing each other to grow and develop individually within supportive non-dominating relationships, so humans must give nonhuman nature space, time, and care, allowing it to reproduce, evolve, and respond to human actions. (2005, p. 196)

Thus, it is imperative for humans to experience an immense transformation of mentality so as to regard and treat all other human and non-human beings as complete equals. Oppressive and discriminative attitudes must be abandoned in order for human beings to co-exist peacefully in the world. In *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, there is a parallelism between the oppression of indigenous people and the exploitation of nature. As natives are exploited and severely oppressed, so are the elements pertaining to nature. Therefore, one form of oppression is not independent from the other but significantly interconnected. Moreover, in this chapter, the initiation of patriarchal capitalism is described through *The Journal of Adam Ewing*. With the excuse of free trade and geographical expeditions, the major justifications for patriarchal capitalism have been defined and put into action by the western, white men. Through these, the white men have paved the way for a world order of oppression and violence which is designed to carry on for hundreds of years. This corresponds to the time period which marks the beginning of capitalism in *Cloud Atlas* as portrayed by David Mitchell.

An Orison of Sonmi ~451: From anthropocene to capitalocene

An Orison of Sonmi ~451 is the 5th chapter of *Cloud Atlas* and it is one of the most essential chapters which is central to the grand narrative of the novel. The narrative takes place in the dystopian future of Korea's 'Nea So Copros' state in the 22nd century. (circa 2144) The chapter is written in the form of an interview between a clone and an archivist. The protagonist is Sonmi, a young woman that is a 'fabricant' clone who works for a fast food chain called Papa Song. Sonmi, along with hundreds of other clones is manufactured to meet every single need of her employers and customers. For Sonmi and other clones, life is extremely harsh and pitiless as they have to complete a shift of 19 hours of

labour each and every single day. While on their shift, clones must put on an ever-lasting smiling face so as to please every customer.

Understanding the setting is a key element to the comprehension of Sonmi's chapter and its relevance to the grand narrative of *Cloud Atlas*. In the dystopian future of Neo-Seoul, the government is Nea So Copros and its regime is Corpocracy. Composed from the words corporatism and autocracy, corpocracy refers to an extreme form of totalitarian patriarchal capitalism. Citizens are branded, closely surveilled and are obliged to fulfil a monthly spending quota. The Unanimity and the Juche are the names of the governing bodies which impose strict regulations known as the enrichment laws to keep the system going. Moreover, a ruthless system of strata is dictated to the society which enforces a savage class distinction on all human beings. Transitions between strata are strictly forbidden and not allowed by the ruling hegemony. The downstrata are fully controlled, oppressed and oriented by the upstrata who are in complete charge of the system. This extreme form of capitalism is Mitchell's vision of a dystopian future which might be likely to come true.

Sonmi begins his confession by describing his daily routine at Papa Song:

Hour four thirty is yellow-up. Stimulin enters the airflow to rouse us from our cots. We file into the hygiener; then we steam-clean. Back in our dorm room we dress in our fresh uniform; then gather around the Hub with our Seer and his Aides. Papa Song appears on his Plinth for Matins, and we recite the Six Catechisms together. [...] For nineteen hours we greet diners, input orders, tray food, vend drinks, upstock condiments, wipe tables, bin garbage, clean consumers' hygieners and pray our honorable diners to debit their Souls on our Hub tellers. You have no rests? 'Rests' constitute time-theft Archivist! (Mitchell, 2012, p. 188)

Sonmi's condition is nowhere to be compared to any worker. She is practically no different than a slave who is forcibly given chemicals such as soap and others in order to keep her from revolting to her terrible condition. Sonmi experiences a never ending cycle of torture. She is a clone with a consciousness but unable to resist against this vicious system. Those who resist and break the enrichment laws are severely punished and exterminated upon complaint.

Sonmi ~451 is a woman clone who is oppressed, raped and exploited to the fullest extent in a systematic pattern. She is less than human in a world where humanity has died out. Despite her 'clone' figure, the fact that she is a woman is by far not a coincidence. Mitchell has specifically created Sonmi as a woman to imply women's central role in an order of extreme patriarchal capitalism. In *Cloud Atlas*, not only clones and downstrata are severely oppressed, but also the natural environment. This systematic pollution and eradication of natural areas is described as:

Nea So Copros is poisoning itself to death. Its soil is polluted, its rivers lifeless, its air toxloaded, its food supplies riddled with rouge genes. The downstrata cannot buy drugs to counter these privations. Melanoma and malaria belts advance northward at forty kilometers a year. Those production zones of Africa and Indonesia that supply Consumer Zones are now 60-plus percent uninhabitable. Plutocracy's legitimacy, its wealth, is drying up. The Juche's Enrichment Laws are mere sticking plasters on haemorrhages and amputations. Its only other response is that strategy beloved of all bankrupt ideologues: denial. Downstrata purebloods fall into the untermensch sinks; xecs parrot Catechism Seven, "A Soul's Value is the Dollars Therein". (Mitchell, 2012, p. 341)

Corporations have become so powerful that they have taken over the government in a de facto manner. All powerful corporations have managed to establish hegemony over the government with their bribes and dirty connections. With this hegemony, corporations are left unsupervised and assert full control over all economic and social activities. This lack of supervision and moral control results in the intense pollution of the natural environment. Thus, the simultaneous subjugation of women and nature does

not occur by chance in *An Orison of Sonmi* ~451. The wealthier regions of the world have consumed and fully abused the underdeveloped areas to result in a global, environmental catastrophe.

In addition, as it is dealt with in the previous chapter, oppression and domination is not limited to women in this chapter as well. The corpocracy crushes and eliminates everyone who is unable to conform to the standards set by the ruling elite. Those standards include a variety of laws one of which is that each citizen must spend a quota of money on a daily basis. The ones unable to fill the quota are punished by law. Therefore, all oppressed people: women, the elderly, minorities, the disadvantaged and the poverty-stricken are being subjugated by the ruling corpocracy. However, this chapter has a woman in spotlight. Sonmi is not only a woman clone, but also an Asian, woman clone. This highlights the fact that rebellion ought to come from and led by women's actions. This is what the author David Mitchell implies in the sub-text of *Cloud Atlas*. Selecting an Asian woman cannot be a random choice on behalf of the author. This is clearly related to the messages implied by the writer. Sonmi is specifically chosen to lead the uprising against the extremist capitalist system entitled corpocracy.

The new order of corpocracy is gradually poisoning and killing natural areas at the expense of consumption and endless accumulation of wealth. This is a vision of extremist patriarchal capitalism where exploitation, selfishness and inequality are cherished and enforced by law. This dystopian society is a place where only the fittest shall survive and fitness conforms to being white, male and belonging to the capitalist elite, or the upstrata. All the others who fall out of these qualities are not qualified to be fit and are thus candidates for natural selection. As with the earlier chapter, *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, Social Darwinism once again serves as a form of justification that in a way rationalizes and legalizes the oppression and elimination of those considered weak, in this case, those lacking financial power and conformism to the norms established by the capitalist autocracy called the Corpocracy. As the saying goes: 'the value of any soul is assessed by the dollars it possesses' (Mitchell, 2012, p. 341). As a consequence of this autocratic patriarchal capitalism, the lower classes are simply abandoned to their death:

Huamdonggil is viewed as a chemical toilet where unwanted human waste disintegrates, discreetly; yet not quite invisibly. Untermensch slums motivate downstrata consumers by showing them what befalls those who fail to spend and work like good citizens. Entrepreneurs take advantage of the legal vacuum to erect ghoulish pleasure zones within the slums, so Huamdonggil pays its way in taxes and bribes to the upstrata. MediCorp open a weekly clinic for dying untermensch to xchange healthy body-parts for euthanizing; OrganiCorp has a lucrative contract with the conurb to send in a daily platoon of immune-genomed fabricants – not unlike disaster men – to mop up the dead before the flies hatch. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 332)

Those who are not fit enough and thus not worthy of being considered a human are referred to as 'untermensch', the German equivalent for lowlife. The slums manage their way through the system by bribes and taxes as corruption is the most common element of negotiation in Nea So Copros. It is worth mentioning that in this Corpocracy, there exists no form of justice or ethical concern such as human rights as we are familiar today. Solely, those who are strong and wealthy enough and who possess the power to consume are granted the right to live a decent life. Thus, humans merit a life as long as they are able to consume. All the rest is thereby declared unfit and become candidates for euthanasia. In *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, there is a similar reference to the notion of Social Darwinism:

The first of 'Goose's Two Laws of Survival.' It runs thus, 'The weak are meat the strong do eat.' [...] Henry grinned in the dark & cleared his throat. "The second law of survival states that there is no second law. Eat or be eaten. That's it. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 508)

Goose's laws are direct references to Social Darwinism. Dr. Goose is a corrupt man driven by greed and a destructive ambition to obtain wealth at any cost. Just as with Social Darwinism, Goose offers only two choices, eat or be eaten, destroy or be destroyed. This dualist perspective justifies his stance on all his evil deeds and provides the necessary motive he needs to survive and to carry on with his corrupt actions. This artificially and forcefully created perception is a mere justification for all evil, corrupt deeds.

Social Darwinism is mainly based on the biological theories of Charles Darwin. However, despite its origin in the natural sciences, it has been popularized and abused by many others including Hitler and the Nazis throughout history. This popularization of Social Darwinism transformed the theory from its foundation on the nature sciences to completely disparate social and economic spheres. However, Darwin himself had never anticipated this to happen:

Darwin had not the slightest intention of applying his biological revelation to a field other than biology. But - and he realised that himself-his theory responded to the call of the Zeitgeist: it supplied a perfect principle of causality, a principle which many of his contemporaries elevated to a creed in the natural sciences, a creed which was quickly torn from its biological context and applied to a social and political environment. The theory of evolution, the concept of the selection of the fittest through the struggle for existence, revolutionised therefore not only biology but a society whose character became pronouncedly industrial. This variation of Darwinism has generally become familiar under the term 'Social Darwinism'. (Koch, 1972, 326)

To that end, Darwin's theory which was designed for and applied to the sphere of biology was quickly adapted and transformed into other areas. Its impact on natural and social sciences was profound but the latter, rather in a negative context as it started to serve as a means of justification for war crimes and a basis for various imperialist objectives:

Social Darwinism was dynamic in the sense that in international relations it served as a motive power as well as justification for expansionist policies; in practice this meant territorial aggrandisement, acquisition or further expansion of colonies and naturally the kind of armaments necessary to secure new gains. The alternative was considered to be stagnation and decay - a belief in change through territorial, economic and military expansion. [...] Every State had acquired a specific identity, had become a specific organism, subject to the natural laws of life and death, growth and decay. And Social Darwinism provided a plausible theory, which apparently confirmed all these assumptions scientifically. (Koch, 1972, 326-329)

Thus, the ideology of Social Darwinism was founded on the scientific basis of Charles Darwin's theories but quickly went off the rails and became the foundation of and justification for a series of actions including war crimes, imperialism, segregation, racism and massacres. It is historically known that the Nazis used Social Darwinism while conducting the horrific massacres of the Holocaust. Similarly, the Nazis used Social Darwinism as a philosophy to justify the murders of many elderly, disabled and disadvantaged people whom they thought they were simply not of any use and inferior to the society. These people included their own, German citizens. Social Darwinism provided the Nazis the credible scientific and ideological basis of the legitimization and justification of all consciously committed atrocities. For these reasons, Social Darwinism has proven to be a tremendous threat for humanity and the natural environment.

Moreover, as David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* reflects an overview of the anthropocene age, the human caused damage to the natural environment is mostly and predominantly visible in this chapter of the novel. *An Orison of Sonmi ~451* is the chapter which represents the climax of the anthropocene age. It is the breaking point of the grand narrative in holistic terms. After this chapter of dystopian science-fiction, the apocalypse occurs through nuclear disaster and the author jumps forward to the post-

apocalyptic chapter of *Sloosha's Crossin'* where humans have been forced to survive on a barren island. This global nuclear catastrophe's effects have been so destructive that the whole human civilization is now made up of a group of primitive settlers, looking for ways to survive in the midst of the jungle.

Another renowned ecofeminist, Donna Haraway points out that:

Perhaps the outrage meriting a name like Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters. [...] The boundary that is the Anthropocene/Capitalocene means many things, including that immense irreversible destruction is really in train, not only for the 11 billion or so people who will be on earth near the end of the 21st century, but for myriads of other critters too. (The incomprehensible but sober number of around 11 billion will only hold if current worldwide birth rates of human babies remain low; if they rise again, all bets are off.) The edge of extinction is not just a metaphor; system collapse is not a thriller. Ask any refugee of any species. (2015, pp. 160-161)

Haraway clearly associates the anthropocene age with destruction and doom. She emphasizes that the anthropocene age is very likely to cause a collapse of the human civilization and this threat is more realistic than is reflected in films and other works of fiction. This immense destruction is brought upon the Earth by none other than human beings themselves. Moreover, Jason W. Moore argues that the anthropocene should in fact be renamed capitalocene which:

Claims that capitalism is the pivot of today's biospheric crisis. [...] The conditions of life on planet Earth are changing, rapidly and fundamentally. Awareness of this difficult situation has been building for some time. But the reality of a crisis—understood as a fundamental turning point in the life of a system, any system—is often difficult to understand, interpret, and act upon. Crises are not easily understood by those who live through them. The philosophies, concepts, and stories we use to make sense of an increasingly explosive and uncertain global present are—nearly always— ideas inherited from a different time and place. The kind of thinking that created today's global turbulence is unlikely to help us solve it. (2016, pp. xi-1)

Moore not only asserts that the anthropocene falls short to identify the problem of the global environmental crisis but also puts forward that it is capitalism which should be mainly held responsible for the aforementioned. Thus, rather than outlining the problem in general terms as the human damage inflicted upon the environment, Moore goes even further to ascribe the problem to the socio-economic structure of patriarchal capitalism and expresses that capitalists cannot be in peace with nature as:

For capitalism, Nature is “cheap” in a double sense: to make Nature's elements “cheap” in price; and also to cheapen, to degrade or to render inferior in an ethico-political sense, the better to make Nature cheap in price. These two moments are entwined at every moment, and in every major capitalist transformation of the past five centuries. (2016, pp. 2-3)

This tendency is revealed as a major capitalist mentality which regards nature as unworthy of value as a form of justification to the deterioration and degradation of all natural elements. This justification provides the ethical and cultural background for the domination of all natural entities. Associating nature with cheapness enables capitalism to brand it as cheap and all that is cheap is thus considered worthless, thereby enabling them to become disposable. This is obviously an artificially created perception designed specifically to enter and alter the domain of the natural environment. To that end, patriarchal capitalism has come up with a justification in order to exploit and consume natural areas to its interest.

Since *Cloud Atlas* is in its grand narrative, a novel about subjugation, these themes are noticeable in every chapter of the novel, but mostly in Sonmi's chapter of domination. Sonmi's narrative is a story about violence, oppression and resistance. As it is the chapter which contains the transition from the anthropocene to the capitalocene age, it is also the one that deals with oppression the most compared to the other chapters. This is mainly due to the narrative's dystopian and totalitarian nature. In *An Orison of Sonmi ~451*, oppression is the central theme which concerns various individuals of the society such as women, workers, the poor, disadvantaged, elderly, disabled, queer and people from ethnic minority groups. Sonmi recounts her version of how this cycle of oppression began with the following words:

It is a cycle as old as tribalism. In the beginning there is ignorance. Ignorance engenders fear. Fear engenders hatred, and hatred engenders violence. Violence breeds further violence until the only law is whatever is willed by the most powerful. What is willed by the Juche is the creation, subjugation and tidy xtermination of a vast tribe of duped slaves. (Mitchell, 2012, pp. 360-361)

The starting point is ignorance that arouses fear which in its turn arouses a cycle of endless violence resulting in an order of Social Darwinism where only the strong and thus the super wealthy have the last say. This is the order that is willed by patriarchal capitalists, a world where the powerful preserve their status and remain wealthy whereas the poverty-stricken are abandoned to live on the streets and die in the sewers like insects and take all of it for granted thanks to Social Darwinism.

Later in the story, Sonmi goes to University where she receives education which will eventually cause her awakening and revolt. After that she meets Hae-Joo Im, a member of an opposition group called the Union. Sonmi joins the cause of Hae-Joo Im and decides to join their revolt to overthrow the totalitarian administration. However, Sonmi and Hae-Joo's revolt soon end up in failure. Hae-Joo is killed in action and Sonmi is arrested by the authorities. She is to be locked up and exterminated upon trial. During the interview, Sonmi confesses that the Union and the revolt were actually staged by the Unanimity who needed to create a fake enemy to consolidate its existence. When the interviewer asks Sonmi why she went along with the uprising despite she knew it was a setup, Sonmi responds by saying that her struggle and reputation will live on to inspire others to bring down this evil and corrupt order.

Sonmi's story represents the climax of oppression in a futuristic and totalitarian setting. The very fact that the depicted clones are women is by no means a coincidence. Mitchell implies the apex of domination of women, the poor, minorities and natural areas, simultaneously, at a time of extreme patriarchal capitalism. By conveying Sonmi's quest, the author also implies that women are the ones who need to stand up and revolt against this order. From an ecofeminist perspective, Social Darwinism is a true menace that is completely unacceptable and must be fought with and disposed of in order to defend the rights and liberties of all the oppressed masses including women, minorities and all of nature's elements. Sonmi's narrative demonstrates an ecofeminist struggle against patriarchal capitalism and its ideological basis, Social Darwinism. Sonmi rebels not for her own sake or for women's sake but for the sake of all the oppressed and all the victims of this cruel system including Mother Nature.

Sloosha's Crossin': A post-apocalyptic vision of post-capitalism

Sloosha's Crossin' an' Everythin' After is the only middle chapter in *Cloud Atlas* and also the only one which is not divided into two parts. It is the chapter that moves into the distant future, to the 24th

century and it is written in the genre of post-apocalyptic fiction. This chapter will simply be referred to as *Sloosha's Crossin'*. Along with *An Orison of Sonmi ~451*, this chapter is of vital importance to the grand narrative of *Cloud Atlas*. It tells the aftermath of the capitalocene age of extreme patriarchal capitalism. This narrative also marks the ending of a cycle of 500 years which begins with Adam Ewing in the 1800s, excels and reaches its peak with Sonmi's struggle and finally concludes in a nightmarish, post-apocalyptic setting of pure mayhem.

In the 24th century, nuclear warfare has resulted in a global catastrophe which has left most parts of the world uninhabitable and natural areas gravely destroyed due to ecological crisis. On the island of Ha-why (Hawaii), the protagonist, Zachry is a simple tribesman trying to survive as a goat herder while at the same time witnessing painful events such as his father being murdered and his brother kidnapped by the enemy tribe called The Kona. The story evolves with Zachry's quest for survival amidst the jungles of Hawaii.

To that end, it is worth noting that humanity has regressed into the utmost primitive conditions. The novel shifts from the advanced technological setting of Neo-Seoul to the barbaric and ruthless jungles of Hawaii. The chronology of *Cloud Atlas* moves forward in time but backwards in civilization. Humans are now living a simple, tribal lifestyle of survival. Multiple tribes compete to obtain power in a world of chaos and brutality. As it is the case with the other chapters of *Cloud Atlas*, *Sloosha's Crossin'* is another tale of struggle and oppression. As civilization regresses, the language of the people regresses along with them. The valleypeople use fragmented, ungrammatical language which makes this chapter challenging to read:

I creeped slywise'n'speedy, but late I was, yay, way too late. The Kona was circlin' our camp, their bullwhips crackin'. Pa he'd got his ax swingin' an' my bro'd got his spiker, but the Kona was jus' toyin' with 'em. I stayed at the lip o' the clearin', see fear was pissin' in my blood an' I cudn't go on. Crack! went a whip, an' Pa'n'Adam was top-sied an' lay wrigglyin' like eels on the sand. The Kona chief, one sharky buggah, he got off his horse an' walked splishin' thru the shallows to Pa, smilin' back at his painted bros, got out his blade an' opened Pa's throat ear to ear. Nothin' so ruby as Pa's ribbonin' blood I ever seen. The chief licked Pa's blood off the steel. (Mitchell, 2012, pp. 250-251)

Zachry loses his father to the Kona barbarians and cannot stop his brother from being kidnapped by the savages. While escaping from this violence, Zachry often sees appearances of Old Georgie, visions of his sub-consciousness which he associates with the devil, trying to tempt him into evil actions. The chapter begins with blood and violence.

After his escape, Zachry meets Meronym, a woman from the people called 'Prescients'. She is a 50 year old woman, sent to the valleypeople to observe them and to gather information about their lifestyle. At first, Zachry suspects Meronym to be a spy and does not confide in her but after some time, Zachry changes his mind and starts building confidence in this awkward woman. Meronym is dressed in white clothes, looking like a time traveller specifically sent to help out these people in danger. She also possesses an object in the shape of an egg, called orison which is the only technological device displayed in this chapter. Using the orison, she transfers messages from Sonmi, a woman from a different epoch, the valleypeople, especially Zachry regard to be a deity and pray to:

I cudn't mem'ry the Abbess's holy words 'cept Dear Sonmi, Who art amongst us, return this beloved soul to a valley womb, we beseech thee. So I said 'em, forded the Waipio, an' trogged up the switchblade thru the night forest. [...] The Kona'd got a hole tribe o' war gods an' horse gods'n'all. But for Valleyemen savage gods weren't worth knowin', nay, only Sonmi was real. (Mitchell, 2012, pp. 251-255)

The tribes worship a variety of pagan gods but the valleypeople have placed Sonmi at the centre of their worship. Sonmi is ascribed positive values as the giver and protector of life. While Sonmi personifies God, Old Georgie is the personification of Lucifer. Whenever the valleypeople run away from Old Georgie, they seek refuge and comfort in Sonmi. However, Meronym tries to persuade Zachry that Sonmi is not a God, but a woman from an earlier time period. She also confesses that earlier civilizations have destroyed the earth and caused all this to happen:

Valleysmen'd not want to hear, she answered, that human hunger birthed the Civ'lize, but human hunger killed it too. I know it from other tribes offland what I stayed with. Times are you say a person's b'liefs ain't true, they think you're sayin' their lifes ain't true an' their truth ain't true. Yay, she was prob'ly right. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 273)

Meronym is doing her best to expose the valleypeople to the objective reality but due to their primitive mental state, they find it very hard to comprehend and acknowledge these facts. Meronym approaches Zachry because she feels that he has the capacity to comprehend her and adapt to radical ideas. Meronym indicates that civilization is established and eventually destroyed by human insatiability. Humans are the major belligerents of one another and of all non-human beings. Later on, in another instant, Zachry and Meronym discuss about what it means to be civilized and savage:

So, I asked 'gain, is it better to be savage'n to be Civ'lized? List'n, savages an' Civ'lizeds ain't divvied by tribes or b'liefs or mountain ranges, nay, ev'ry human is both, yay. Old Uns'd got the Smart o' gods but the savagery o' jackals an' that's what tripped the Fall. Some savages what I knowed got a beaustome Civ'lized heart beatin' in their ribs. Maybe some Kona. Not 'nuff to say-so their hole tribe, but who knows one day? One day. "One day" was only a flea o' hope for us. Yay, I mem'ry Meronym sayin', but fleas ain't easy to rid. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 319)

Thus, civilization and savagery lies within each human being. All humans have the potential to be civilized and savage at the same time. Their choices largely determine the outcome of their actions. This is a struggle between the civilized and the savages, in other words, the oppressors and the oppressed.

Finally, Meronym saves Zachry from a fatal Kona attack and takes him away with her to Prescience. Meronym fulfills her role as the saviour of Zachry:

A bleaksome'n'dark choice to settle, Zachry, she replied. Stay in the Valleys till you're slaved. 'Scape to Hilo an' stay till the Kona attack an' be killed or slaved. Live in backwilds as a hermit bandit till you're caught. Cross the straits to Maui with me an' prob'ly never return to Big I no more. Yay, that was my all choices, no frettin', but I cudn't settle one, all I knowed was that I din't want to run away from Big I without vengeancin' what'd happened here. (Mitchell, 2012, p. 315)

Meronym offers Zachry a choice to stay in the valley and become a slave like anyone else or escape with her and never come back. After some reflection, Zachry takes the second option.

From an ecofeminist point of view, it needs to be pointed out that in this post-apocalyptic tale of oppression, the true saviour is a woman called Meronym. Considering that, in this primitive and violent setting, all forms of savagery including killing and cannibalism are committed by men. Under these circumstances, a woman assumes the role of a liberator and provides salvation for Zachry.

This is highly symbolic for David Mitchell who has placed women and the oppressed at the very centre of his grand narrative. Mitchell implies in the subtext of the novel that men will cause the downfall of the earth and women will become the saviours. In a world that is ruined by patriarchal capitalism, humans continue to oppress one another, in different ways. Even a global disaster has not been able to

alter and transform human nature. Zachry's 24th century dystopian tale is no different than the story of Adam Ewing which took place in the 19th century. The Maori tribesmen were slaughtering the Moriori in the 1830s and despite 500 years that have passed, the only change that took place was in the tribes' names. There is practically no difference between the Maori and the Kona. Sonmi's portrayal as a deity is highly ironic. While living a miserable life of a fabricant clone in the earlier chapter, she is idealized into a goddess by the primitive valleypeople in *Sloosha's Crossin'*.

Moreover, the actual whereabouts of Meronym are not revealed in this chapter. Questions like who she is and where she comes from are left open. Considering the complex, fragmented postmodern structure of *Cloud Atlas* and the various connections between the chapters, it can be inferred that Meronym is the reincarnated version of many pioneer women who lived hundreds of years before her time. These women include Luisa Rey and Sonmi from the previous chapters. Meronym incorporates qualities such as inquisition, justice and uprising that other women possessed. The chapter draws to conclusion with Zachry suspecting Meronym of being Sonmi:

Zachry my old pa was a wyrd buggah, I won't naysay it now he's died. Oh, most o' Pa's yarnin's was jus' musey duck fartin' an' in his loonsome old age he even b'liefed Meronym the Prescient was his presh b'loved Sonmi, yay, he 'sisted it, he said he knowed it all by birthmarks an' comets'n'all. Do I b'lief his yarn 'bout the Kona an' his fleein' from Big I? Most yarnin's got a bit o' true, some yarnin's got some true, an' a few yarnin's got a lot o' true. The stuff 'bout Meronym the Prescient was mostly true, I reck'n. See, after Pa died my sis'n'me sivvied his gear, an' I finded his sil-v'ry egg what he named orison in his yarns. Like Pa yarned, if you warm the egg in your hands, a beaustome ghost-girl appears in the air an' speaks in an Old-Un tongue what no un alive und'stands nor never will, nay. (Mitchell, 2012, pp. 324-325)

It is obvious that Zachry ascribes supernatural qualities to the device known as the orison. What appears to be the confession of a fabricant slave in the 22nd century has somehow survived up to the 24th century and has come to be regarded as a holy relic. The chapter ends with Meronym and Zachry escaping away from the valley, leaving the Kona behind. Zachry saves himself from the ongoing slaughter, setting off to unknown lands under the guidance and leadership of Meronym.

Overall conclusion

Having analyzed the three main chapters of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* from an ekofeminist perspective, it can be asserted that all three chapters in specific and the grand narrative in general deals with ekofeminist issues of oppression caused by patriarchal capitalism. The author skilfully conveys a survey of human oppression in the anthropocene age in three stages: the initiation stage with *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, the capitalocene age with *An Orison of Sonmi ~451* and the post-capitalist age with *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Everythin' After*. *Cloud Atlas* is an unconventional tale of 'globalization' which is:

Simply the latest stage of Western colonialist imperialism. We need to see these current patterns of appropriation of wealth and concentration of power in the West, now especially in the hands of the elites of the United States, in this context of more than five hundred years of Western colonialism. (Ruether, 2008, p. 95)

The novel's grand narrative conveys its readers about the initiation, development, climax and possible results of corporatist capitalism on nature, women and all oppressed people. Since this article only concentrates on three chapters of the novel, it needs to be confirmed that other chapters are relevant to this issue as well. *Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery* is another chapter that takes place in the 1970s and conveys a story of crime/detective fiction. This chapter's significance concerning the

depiction of the anthropocene age is the fact that it portrays the developing stages of corporatist capitalism when nuclear power plants were newly established and ascribed great value by the ruling elite.

In each and every single chapter of *Cloud Atlas*, the common theme behind every narrative is oppression and exploitation. Mitchell implies with the grand narrative of *Cloud Atlas* that throughout the ages, humans have been involved in an endless, repetitive cycle of oppression which has inflicted great damage on women, people of colour, minorities, the impoverished and all non-human living beings including Earth's natural areas. The sole responsible for this damage is none else than patriarchal capitalism which is held responsible in *Cloud Atlas*.

In addition, as put forward by the ecofeminist movement, the oppression of women is directly linked to the subjugation of all people, non-human beings and natural areas. It is worth noting that the destruction of natural areas goes hand in hand with the domination of women. In the 1800s, imperialism and the industrial revolution were developing at full pace. At the same time, women and non-white, indigenous humans were being enslaved by patriarchal capitalists. In Sonmi's narrative of the 22nd century, it is the peak of capitalism where the oppression of women and nature reach a record high right before global nuclear catastrophe. Finally, in the middle and last chapter, it is the aftermath of the capitalocene age when humans have degenerated to primitive instincts of survival. Once again, oppression and murder are a common sight. The following sentence sums up the whole novel: "The weak are meat, the strong do eat" (Mitchell, 2012, p. 508).

However, in the post-apocalyptic chapter of *Sloosha's Crossin'*, it is a woman that saves the protagonist from being slaughtered by savage tribesmen. Sonmi and Meronym's presence in *Cloud Atlas* refer to the exceptional role of women in the struggle against patriarchal capitalism. Sonmi's uprising against the totalitarian system and Meronym's guidance shed light on darkness and imply that salvation will be delivered by women. The day of salvation will also be the day of rejuvenation for the natural environment.

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* openly demonstrates that the domination of women and other oppressed groups of people goes parallel with the domination of nature. The novel begins with the period around the industrial revolution, escalates towards the zenith of patriarchal capitalist rule and ends at the aftermath of global cataclysm caused by this order of violence and doom. Amidst all the chaos, women inspire hope and push for radical changes within the system. Mitchell implies that only women have the power and strength to push for radical change in order to maintain a peaceful, harmonious existence for all human beings and nature. Patriarchal capitalism oppresses people by claiming their repressive actions on forcefully created ideologies such as Social Darwinism which has historically proven to have disastrous results on all humanity and nature. This oppressive and autocratic order must be disposed of in order to establish an equitable society with justice and equal opportunities for all individuals.

On the whole, it is fundamental to establish a new environmental philosophy under the guidance of the ecofeminist movement. This environmental philosophy will pave the way for a new world order where violence, oppression and killing are things of the past. The occurrence of the coronavirus pandemic has clearly exposed that the negative impact of anthropogenic climate change is beyond acceptable limits. With major cities around the world turning into ghost towns due to quarantines and industrial activity coming to a serious halt, nature is reclaiming her original position and restoring herself back to her

unspoiled state. Humanity is at the verge of entering a new phase and at this point we must come to reflect deeply and decide whether we want to leave a better Earth behind or not. To that end, the new phase of humanity ought to be one guided by ecofeminism so that women can take their place as leaders of developed countries and implement policies which ensure the foundation of an equitable society for all human beings and a peaceful coexistence with nature that will lead to the establishment of an ecocentric world order.

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