



## Overlapping Traumas: Revisiting Trauma in Post-apocalyptic World of Anna Kavan's *Ice*

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### Abstract

This article offers a critical exploration of Anna Kavan's *Ice* which includes a literary representation of trauma and its correlation with the concept of post-apocalypse. Establishing a preliminary dialogue between post-apocalyptic and trauma narratives, it investigates the individual and post-apocalyptic trauma both separately and holistically through a single text. The abandonment trauma and the traumatic glacial apocalypse create an interrelated discourse of post-apocalyptic trauma that encompasses changes on the protagonist of the novel and collectivities. Following Hobbesian discussion of social contract together with Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, apocalyptic trauma and its symptoms are traced as disturbing demonstration of humanity's primitive urges in the absence of social, religious, political, and moral orders. The analysis of the protagonist's unrelenting quest and obsessive psychology through Lacanian concept *objet a* allows the discussion to diversify to address the individual trauma. Instead of casting Kavan's novel as purely trauma narrative or post-apocalyptic account, this article reads her novel in a focused attentiveness to analyse different types of trauma and their merge with each other.

**Keywords:** Anna Kavan, *Ice*, Trauma Narrative, Post-apocalyptic Narrative, Post-apocalyptic Trauma.

## Örtüşen Travmalar: Anna Kavan'ın *Buz* Romanındaki Kıyamet Sonrası Dünyada Travmayı Yeniden Ele Almak

### Öz

Bu makale, travmanın edebi temsilini ve kıyamet sonrası kavramıyla ilişkisini ele alan Anna Kavan'ın *Buz* adlı romanının eleştirel bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Kıyamet sonrası ve travma anlatıları arasında bir ön diyalog kurarak bireysel ve kıyamet sonrası travmayı tek bir metin üzerinden hem ayrı ayrı hem de bütünsel olarak incelemektedir. Terk edilme travması ve travmatik buzul kıyameti, romanın baş kahramanında ve topluluklarda değişikliklere sebep olan kıyamet sonrası travmaya dair birbiriyle ilişkili bir söylem yaratmaktadır. Golding'in *Sineklerin Tanrısı* adlı romanı ile birlikte Hobbes'un toplumsal sözleşmesi üzerine gerçekleştirilen tartışmanın akabinde, kıyamet travması ve semptomları, sosyal, dini, politik ve ahlaki düzenin yokluğunda insanlığın ilkel dürtülerinin rahatsız edici bir göstergesi olarak ele alınmaktadır. Kahramanın amansız arayışının ve takıntılı psikolojisinin Lacan'ın *nesne a* kavramı üzerinden analizi, tartışmanın bireysel travmayı ele almasına izin vererek çeşitlenmesine olanak tanır. Bu makale, Kavan'ın romanını salt travma anlatısı ya da kıyamet sonrası

anlatım olarak ele almak yerine, romanı farklı travma türlerini ve bu travmaların birbirleriyle iç içe geçişlerini analiz etmeye odaklanmış bir dikkatle okumaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Anna Kavan, *Buz*, Travma Anlatısı, Kıyamet Sonrası Anlatı, Kıyamet Sonrası Travma.

## INTRODUCTION

James Berger has dubbed the term post-apocalypse as “a study of the ideological and psychological forces that direct the apocalyptic fissions and fusions” (Berger, 1999, p. 8). From Berger’s theoretical conceptualization of the term, it becomes evident that there are some specific parameters inherent in the study of post-apocalypse to catch the identifiable generic elements among the terms of trauma, apocalypse and post-apocalypse. Accordingly, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic literary works, in which mass death plays an active role, inspire the analysis of not only physical but also psychological disruption through description of the continuation of the most horrific traumatic event. They also blaze the trail to examine the stragglers of the post-apocalyptic world who have a psychic need for the idea of survival and are left alone with the existential experience of despair or turmoil. In this way, the post-apocalyptic narrative builds a bridge with trauma narratives since the traumatic experience is also “a confrontation with a shocking and unexpected event, which could not be fitted into prior frameworks of understanding. Not fully integrated at the time that it occurred, the event remained unchanged and returned, in its exactness, at a later date” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 140). The trauma becomes the apocalypse here because it is the event that will evoke unexpected, profound, and inexplicable horror in the character. The post-apocalypse represents the belated nature of the trauma since the dreadfulness of the occasion becomes incomprehensible during its occurrence, the magnitude of it starts to be grasped after the event, and the reaction happens. Almost all the characters’ reactions, symptoms and struggles against the situation occur in the post-apocalyptic world. Based on such an association, we read the wound of the apocalypse with the aid of the post-apocalyptic narration and the word trauma.

Anna Kavan’s phantasmagorical novel, *Ice*, a work in which I intend to deal with the point where apocalyptic narratives intersect with trauma narratives, gestures toward a sphere of knowledge that allows me for analysing the novel at these points. The traumatic separation experienced by the main character will allow me to evaluate the narrative as a trauma narrative on its hook since the novel includes a gut of determinant elements and events such as hallucinations, dreams, and obsessive quest related to this individual trauma. Nonetheless, the point that allows this trauma to deepen and attain a distinct dimension is that the individual trauma experienced by the protagonist appears when a collective trauma about the apocalypse occurs in the post-apocalyptic atmosphere. In this way, the storyline allows the novel to be evaluated from multiple perspectives, either through trauma or post-apocalyptic narrative, and together. Moving from this point, I will seek to remark on a resonance between trauma and post-apocalypse in which each speaks and addresses the devastating blow, aftermath, and survivals. The article aims to address the idea of apocalypse as trauma which from time to time manifests itself through the vague character experiences and the narrator’s delusional mind that make it difficult to understand different types of traumas within the novel.

### **Disintegration of the Collective Unity: Post-apocalyptic Trauma on a Collective Basis**

Anna Kavan’s novel, *Ice*, envisioning a creeping eco-catastrophe or a nuclear winter under the tutelage of an oneiric, surreal and unsettling atmosphere remarkably illustrates the blow of the apocalypse against the sense of unity and coexistence of the collectivities. The world’s defeat by “a conquering force intent on destroying humanity, it is neither good nor evil, dealing death without moral imperative” (Walker, 2012, p. 228) both induces radical changes in the morphology of life and becomes an initiator of endless traumatization, fears, havoc, moral recklessness and meaninglessness. The blow of the ice leading bereft of the earth of warmth and transforming it into an arctic terrain is not just a powerful one-shot blow but a succession of ongoing blows. The ice disaster deprives everything with its constant destructive moves, causing quarrels, wars, thefts or murders among the survivors of the apocalypse and leaving a huge existential dread of disappearing of order and needs. Since “the individual character of cities and countries is wiped out, the achievements of humanity and the diversity of nature are

eradicated" (Walker, 2012, p. 228), the idea of ongoing life becomes bound up with the very act of destruction. The world where "*the collapsed signifier announces itself through a series of uncanny, experiential effects*" (Orpana, 2019, p. 9) not only lowers the chance of long-term survival but also prevails a stifling anxiety, dilemma and psychological outcomes. Thus, the repetitious process of glacial catastrophe yields an intense experience of traumatic haunting both for the protagonist and other survivors of this horrific shared experience.

The sense of the pervasiveness and inescapability of the apocalyptic nature of the ice causes an anxiety-producing condition for sustaining life and keeping mental health stable. On the one hand, all essential commodities are in short supply such as "*the fuel shortage, the power cuts, the breakdown of transport*" (Kavan, 2006, p. 30); on the other hand, deprivation of personal safety, gruesome killings, prevailing chaos, and political skulduggery produce deadlocks for characters. In this regard, "*paramount value is placed on the figure and the testimony of the one who has experienced, who has passed through and emerged from an event seen as both catastrophic and revelatory*" (Berger, 1999, p. 47) since "*what survivor has survived is some trauma endowed with cultural significance—some apocalypse*" (Berger, 1999, p. 47). The survivors of the frostbitten apocalypse or the witnesses of it do not mutate like Tatyana Tolstaya's characters in *The Slynx*, nor does cannibalism not emerge among them as in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*, but they carry out similar brutality and aggression in their nature. Since they feel utterly weak in the face of a force threatening their life, their "*psychological responses to such trauma include terror, loss of control, and intense fear of annihilation*" (Brison, 2002, p. 39). The gangs of fugitives powerfully convey such responses in the novel by having "*a senseless mania for destruction, for tearing to shreds, smashing to smithereens, trampling underfoot*" (Kavan, 2006, p. 114). These groups, who want to protect their existence with the mentality of plunder in the face of famines that arise, perform horrible acts to not die of hunger, as their name suggests. They embrace nonsense or collective madness, which is a deterrent to reaching any cohesive structure. They become hordes of ruthless and savage bad guys who contribute to the savagery of the apocalypse in surviving countries by ramping greed, cruelty, and selfishness among the people. Thus, the collective structure disintegrates and the characters part of that structure "*mob loot and murder and refugees savagely kill in their panic and desperation to survive*" (Walker, 2012, p. 228). Moreover, the simple rushes of the pre-apocalypse and the futile efforts in the flow of life have now left their place to the acute anxiety brought by extinction and real efforts to preserve their existence.

Alongside the gangs of starving fugitives, the black tunics take place in the novel as a reflection of the grief, despair and existential depression of the characters. The narrator describes them: "*The men's black tunics were variations of those I had already seen, and most of the wearers carried knives or guns. The women also wore black, producing a gloomy effect. All the faces were blank and unsmiling*" (Kavan, 2006, p. 39). The fiendish-looking stragglers evoke evil, dark, and depressed feelings under the pessimistic atmosphere of the apocalypse. For Kavan's characters, "*the life experiences that precipitate psychological damage become conflated and confused with its manifestation; physical experience becomes a model for the experience of psychological trauma*" (Walker, 2017, p. 380). While the knives in their hands are a kind of sign of their defence mechanisms against hazardous circumstances, the gloomy and sullen expressions on their faces convey not only their traumatic situation but also their ontological concerns. Other than these groups, different kinds of enemies, such as saboteurs, spies, and gangsters, fuel the malignancy by doing all sorts of scoundrels in this time of disorder. In the time of the ongoing exposure to uncertainty on both the deprivation of the basic needs of life and the dangers posed by external factors, characters are in a mood of anxious waiting because "*as with all ecocatastrophe writing, the story's apocalypticism presumably aims to disconfirm itself, to communicate the misery of the tribals over against the insistence on the impossibility of communication*" (Buell, 2001, 232). The characters know nothing about what to do, what to believe, and what will happen next. They get stranded in the hub of a collapse, surrounded by suspense, hazard, and bereavement though they are presently rescued from the glacial apocalypse. Indeed,

*if the defeated lack the resources, physically, mentally, and spiritually, to reconcile their new existence with that which they have lost or to forge ahead to rebuild their society, the alien nature of the world altered by trauma causes an existential crisis for both the individuals and the societies wounded by disaster.* (Collins, 2014, p. 466)

With such an unbearable tension in the air, almost all they do is break away from the sense of unity, lose value judgements, call into question the meaning of the world itself, and struggle with the constant blows of the glacial catastrophe. In other words, this hub's physical, mental, and spiritual lack of resources leads to *"the outbursts of irrationality and existential crises, which seem proportionate to the irrationality of the event itself"* (Front, 2021, p. 255). While collectivities only wallow to forge ahead or conform to their new existence, the shared and constantly reactivated trauma provokes them, and the traumatic existence of the ice becomes an inextricable component of their current world.

Kavan's characters adopt manners at least as reckless, violent, and immoral as William Golding's characters on earth, without order and absolute authority. William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* narrates the struggles of a group of young schoolboys on a deserted island and explores the meaning of being a community, lack of order, and authority in the desolation of that island. Even though the boys try to fulfil some of the conditions of the social contract that will save them from the state of nature by setting rules and creating a sense of collectivity, it seems *"without an 'absolute sovereign' to control our desires, human beings all will live in a constant 'state of war', which is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'"* (Hobbes as cited in Al-Zamili, 2015, p. 156). There are no adults to serve as civilizing impulses on the island, just as there is no sovereignty of God or ultimate flawless order to save humanity from its corrupted civilization in the post-apocalyptic world of Kavan. The characters are in the position to endeavour salvation in the worst-case scenario rather than being directly part of it. Moreover, the laws also no longer work and there is not a robust authority that operates systematically to prevent the groups that wreak havoc with frenzied destructiveness. There is no sign of recurring crises of ice to a halt, there are no improvements in remission of the universal unrest and even *"the killing of police and soldiers, with retributory executions, had become commonplace"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 110). Even though the so-called authoritarian structures continue to exist on the peril of the world system, they adopt Orwell's Big Brother-like policies which lead people to an oppressive, misleading, and deafening condition instead of creating order and a sense of collectivity. Namely, the world of *Ice* becomes *"beset by lawlessness and militarism; its landscapes are damaged by conflict and its inhabitants profoundly unsettled"* (Walker, 2012, p. 225). In this case, characters remain in the state of nature, have no idea of goodness or virtue, and unleash their primal urges.

Both Golding's and Kavan's characters become savages after descending into depravity and atrocity, the former because of a plane evacuation in a war, the latter because of the glacial apocalypse. By killing Piggy and setting the forest on fire to hunt Ralph, Golding's boys *"fully, relapse to primitivism and sensational barbarism"* (Giri, 2019, p. 54) as much as Kavan's gangs of fugitives. Kavan's black tunics wear black and mask their faces with blank and sullen expressions, manifesting *"a continued existential crisis from which one does not recover, but yearns for the end instead"* (Front, 2021, p. 271). Golding's boys do body painting, wear masks and put the blood of the boar they killed on their faces manifesting *"a developing symbol of the boys' fall from civilisation into savagery"* (Hawlin, 1995, p. 129). Characters in both works show us a disturbing demonstration of what humanity can do under extreme circumstances where there is no social, religious, political, or moral organisation to protect them. As there is no absolute authority in Kavan's godless apocalypse to cease the characters or no sense-making paradigm to comfort characters who feel lost in that frost, they become stuck on the hook of destruction and traumatization. In other words, the collectivities *"in the tragic apocalyptic narrative is unable to affect the outcome or progress of tragic time, which is 'predetermined and epochal'"* (Watkins, 1988, p. 178) and they are left to wait for their end, helpless in obscurity and deprived of everything.

Ultimately, such an incomprehensible event has happened that capturing the spectrum of it, healing the wound it inflicted at both personal and collective levels, and bringing together the dispersions in the social fabric necessitates enormous energy. *Ice* might allow us to reconfigure the apocalyptic event as a traumatic one but it almost does not leave any space to work through, heal or affirm resilience since

*the characters cannot work through the trauma, remaining arrested in the past event and the present anticipation of the ultimate annihilation while the future horizon becomes obliterated. The traumatic experience begets endless pain and results in political disengagement or violence, instigating the dissolution of the fabric of society.* (Front, 2021, p. 254)

Even though the characters stagger from a huge catastrophic event and struggle to endure severe physical and psychological blows of this catastrophe, they are still unable to adapt to the traumatic events and get stability or continuity collectively. Instead, they welter in a continued ontological crisis, apocalyptic sentiments and a near-insoluble state of social disruption. Within a broad understanding, they keep fighting against the ontological sense of homelessness, the strangeness of the universe, appalling impersonal perils, the fraught tension of the post-apocalyptic world, and the malevolent intentions of unknown others. In a sense, they alter their “defensive patterns, which brings them through a process of resituating themselves in relation to their traumatic experience and society” (Balaev, 2014, p. 140). Nevertheless, they still do not know how to retain and preserve sanity against the ravages of time and gravitate to barbarism while life turns barren and cuts off from the community. The thread which connects them becomes an overarching story of declining mental health in the absence of any meaningful moral, political and social order and eventual involuntary confinement to a post-apocalyptic world.

### **Fusion of Post-Apocalyptic Trauma with Individual Trauma**

An apocalypse having a domino effect can induce similar or more in-depth wounds on the integrity of an individual who is the backbone of the collective affiliation in addition to the wounds it inflicts on the collective unity. Anna Kavan introduces such a plot, addresses the apocalypse by focusing on the individual experience and traces the post-apocalyptic world through that individual who has a traumatized psyche. Kavan juxtaposes the traumatic separation of the narrator from the glass girl with humanity’s extinction trauma or the global trauma of the ice. Along with this juxtaposition, she turns the narration into a generic template to explore both the post-apocalyptic and individual trauma. According to Hove, Kavan, who witnessed the times when world wars performed a small-scale rehearsal of the apocalypse on the earth and studies related to the human psyche gained great prominence,

*felt that it was precisely in these times in which ‘rational’ civilization had wreaked enormous havoc on the world that the unconscious needed to be explored further. This conviction was based on the belief that the unconscious can elucidate the world of consciousness and possibly even offer an explanation as to how.* (2017, p. 366)

Moving from this mentality, Kavan structures the post-apocalyptic world within the boundaries of the unconscious and shifts the focus to the psychological aspects or deeper into the protagonist’s inner world in the *Ice* rather than the exterior environment. In structuring the narrator’s life story around recollected traumatic scenes, the narrative demonstrates how the narrator’s consciousness becomes bilaterally impaired by the devastating events in his private and public life. When the bruise of fear, horror and anxiety of the post-apocalyptic world besets the narrator, he is already under the siege of his traumatized past with the glass girl.

The traumatic histories of two lovers are revealed as soon as the narrator steps into the area to do research on the emergence of a mysterious danger. His traumatic memories or past with the girl become reactivated, and his urge to see her automatically kicks in as he says, “she became an obsession, I could

think only of her, felt I must see her immediately, nothing else mattered" (Kavan, 2006, p. 12). The power of the setting manifests itself at the point of reminding the experiences and arousing feelings about the traumatic past since "*memories (...) may erupt automatically if there is any reference to the traumatic event or something (a sight, a smell, a sound) associated with it*" (Sacks, 2012, p. 290). The place becomes the perceptual space of narrator's trauma, a reminder of desertion, a broken relationship, and a lost connection. As he gets the environment or time to contact the girl, the narrative echoes his internal ideas about several events that happened earlier between them or his current feelings towards the girl. In lieu of forgetting the traumatic past, he remembers and preserves it with all its vitality;

*I had been infatuated with her at one time, had intended to marry her. Ironically, my aim then had been to shield her from the callousness of the world, which her timidity and fragility seemed to invite. She was over-sensitive, highly strung, afraid of people and life; her personality had been damaged by a sadistic mother who kept her in a permanent state of frightened subjection. The first thing I had to do was to win her trust, so I was always gentle with her, careful to restrain my feelings. She was so thin that, when we danced, I was afraid of hurting her if I held her tightly (...) By degrees she lost her fear of me, showed a childish affection, but remained shy and elusive (...) Her affection perhaps was not altogether pretence, although she deserted me suddenly for the man to whom she was now married.*  
(Kavan, 2006, p. 14)

These favourable feelings of the past are replaced by sadistic, possessive, psychosexual sentiments towards the girl after the sudden abandonment. While his aim to shield her from the callousness of the world due to her fragility turns into "*the arousal brought about by her vulnerability*" (Walker, 2012, p. 201), his gentleness to erase her fear switches to "*the pleasure taken in her fear and anguish*" (Walker, 2012, p. 201). His malevolent feelings appear not only as psychosexual sentiments but also as wishes for the girl's harm, and these feelings become activated in physical and emotional abuse. This incoherent shift in the narrator's emotional, behavioral and thought processes reflects "*the ways traumatic experience restructures perceptions, as well as the ways meaning and value are constructed after the event*" (Balaev, 2008, p. 162). Along with the precipitation of past meaning or perception schemes, the narrator steps out of pure, affectionate or sensitive lover and takes the role of "*a sadistic fantasist and a storyteller—a Marquis de Sade recounting his perverted fictions*" (Walker, 2012, p. 215). However, the narrator, as a sadistic fantasist, sometimes finds himself torn between his desire to dominate, save, protect and hurt her. In this regard, his "*subject position is more complex and flexible; principally he is voyeur, a mere bystander, but at times he plays a part in the action and at others he appears to experience the sensations of both victim and persecutor*" (Walker, 2012, p. 194). Namely, the boundaries between lover, protector, sadist or persecutor become blurred, and he carries out conflicting intentions towards the girl. These roles that the narrator embraces manifest his split into before and after trauma and reflect his attempts to restructure the post-separation pain and emotional devastation.

The protagonist's failure to grasp his abandonment for another man while having the intention to marry results in an obsessive psychology that makes him stuck in the traumatic, primal scene of losing, searching, and finding the glass girl. As "*the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time*" (Caruth, 1995, p. 4), the narrator finds himself repeatedly wandering from the same path and losing his way, which means he attempts to grasp the case of abandonment "*only belatedly, in its repeated possession*" (Caruth, 1995, p. 4). He becomes unable to incorporate the traumatic experience into a meaningful context, does not entirely comprehend the violence of the event or the reality of the separation. At this point, the delayed or unmourned pain of separation sets the stage for the re-enactment of trauma and flaunts its deeper effect of it in the post-apocalyptic world. Especially when the glass girl embraces constant acts of disappearances, abandonments, rejections or escapes after their reunion in the post-apocalyptic world, these acts create an anxiety-producing condition of possibility for complete loss or absence. Whenever the glass girl disappears, a sense of loss caused by her absence in the narrator's life

becomes evident, and in this way, she enacts her position as a lost object, an object of desire or a missing person for much of the novel. Schreiber describes Jacques Lacan's ideas on this topic as follows:

*a person or subject seeks or desires an object, presumably to fulfil a drive. However, the object necessary to gratify a drive is only ostensibly that object of desire because the subject actually engages in the pursuit itself rather than in the gratification of a need. This pursuit, then, focuses on a "lost object," and the fantasy regarding a subject's relationship to this objet a supports the identity of the subject. (...) Lacan defines this objet a as the representation of desire outside of the symbolic and imaginary networks. That is, the objet a represents a lack, what is missing, what is impossible to attain. (Lacan as cited in Schreiber, 1997, p. 482)*

In addition to Lacan's ideas, Bracher also describes the objet a "*functions as the ultimate object around which the drive turns and upon which fantasy is constructed*" (Bracher as cited in Schreiber, 1997, p. 482). In this sense, the glass girl functions as the ultimate object around which the narrator's desire for "*her childlike innocence and vulnerability*" (Walker, 2012, p. 201) turns and upon which his fantasy is constructed. He becomes driven by the desire to reach or have this innocent or vulnerable girl in his life, and the girl as a desired but unattainable object embellishes his fantasies. Even in his hallucinations, "*the lost object of his desire appears "as a helpless victim, her fragile body broken and bruised," the envisioning of whom elicits sadomasochistic pleasure*" (Orpana, 2019, p. 6) and "*the narrator pursues this vision of jouissance throughout the novel in the figure of a thin, albino woman, named only 'the girl'*" (Orpana, 2019, p. 6). The soft and frail body of the girl with the unique image of albinism attracts the narrator, and this sensual attraction to the transparent skin and white body emerges as sexual or sadomasochistic fantasies.

The narrator remains in thrall to his fantasies or in "*the interminable pattern of replay he and the girl are locked into*" (Walker, 2012, p. 228), and conducts a consistent quest for the girl until the moment of the yielding. In this process, the desire to attain her causes a regenerative power that controls his actions and holds his attachment to her. Whenever the girl disappears in the dangers of the post-apocalyptic world or suddenly vanishes from the narrator's life either because of her vicious marriage or because of violent acts of the warden, the narrator gets the feeling that "*once again the urgency of the search had reclaimed me; I was totally absorbed in that obsessional need, as for a lost, essential portion of my own being*" (Kavan, 2006, pp. 32-33). By assuming the function of filling the lack in him, he is engaged in the compulsive acting out of the trauma that keeps him working obsessively in the pursuit of the girl. Namely, "*the depressed, self-berating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is possessed by the past...and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object*" (LaCapra as cited in Shostak, 2019, p. 67). However, a game of disappearance and quest played by the narrator and the girl helps him to master or manage the escapes of the glass girl and her lack in his life. Namely, periodically re-enacted search for the lost object keeps him believing that "*one day the lost object will be found, future will exist and mourning and reparation will be possible*" (Fodorova, 2004, p. 111). After his repeated pursuits in the horrendous post-apocalyptic landscape with numerous hardships and adventures, he reaches the goal of his quest and reunites with the glass girl. Just as Freud's "*grandson's fort/da game as an effort to master grief over separation from his mother through repeated re-enactments of the loss of an object that served as a symbolic substitute for her*" (Shostak, 2009, p. 68), the repeated re-enactments of the searches and disappearances enable working through the lack of the glass girl and attaining her. In this sense, the girl does not appear as a complete loss or absence since she represents a desired object for the narrator to fulfil his sexual or sadomasochistic drive and adorns the narrator's fantasies.

The narrator not only struggles to overcome the abandonment trauma and the sense of loss but also struggles to overcome the cold of ice, its destructive moves and the existential dread of the post-apocalyptic world. Namely, "*the subterfuge, betrayals, thefts and murders that his pursuit of the girl necessitates as he navigates the war-torn landscapes of an unravelling planet*" (Orpana, 2019, p. 8) force him to feel that he is also part of the post-apocalyptic world. In the place where almost all the opportunities



of the pre-apocalyptic world are still available and the contrast with the other side of the world induces a mad gaiety, the narrator experiences an epiphany that he is not independent of the apocalyptic occurrences that have surrounded the planet. He confesses that *"I could not remain isolated from the rest of the world. I was involved with the fate of the planet, I had to take an active part in whatever was going on"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 128). The sub-tropical city represents a symbolic place for the narrator, a place with which he once knew and lived and one that enabled him to engage with that past. However, he knows the temporality of this symbolic place, realizes the surroundings or atmosphere fallacious and cannot help feeling the bitter truth in the world; in other words, *"temporarily rescued from the freezing nightmare of the approaching ice, he is struck by a 'shock, the sensation of a violent awakening'"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 7; Walker, 2012, p. 195). In this case, Kavan permeates a particular atmosphere of the peril of the apocalypse and crams the protagonist in the nightmarish topography of the ice through *"isolated castles surrounded by dense foliage and impenetrable woods or abandoned houses inexplicably encircled by flotillas of ice and snow or, the exact opposite, houses in the tropics oppressed by an unbearable suffocating heat"* (Sweeney, 2020, p. 653). She also intensifies the impact of the apocalypse in the collision of the apocalyptic landscape dominated by visual disharmony with the unharmed images of the past world's tranquillity, beauty and nature. At this point, the landscapes or settings become alienating forces placed upon the narrator since sustaining any meaningful connection between disparate places, from the tropics to glaciers and dealing with the vagaries of memory to juxtapose the past and present surroundings becomes challenging.

Right after the stimulating and alienating impact of the discomfiting environment, a number of statements or events reflect how the glacial post-apocalyptic world elicits a great deal of psychic effect on the narrator. First, in his visit to the lemurs on the island inhabited by the Indris, he expresses how the frozen universe leaves him depressed and preoccupied with the sense of something frightful to happen not only to himself but also to surviving humanity. He senses the impossibility of escape since the earth is irreparably damaged, and a stifling anxiety about its existence prevails. Beyond feeling despair or apprehension, he also claims *"to think of the ice coming nearer all the time was very disturbing"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 47). The nerve-racking suspense and anxious mood lead to an existential dread born from not knowing what to do, what will happen and the mass ongoing execution. The impending and global collapse expectant to unpredictable dangers, unstable conditions, and many other negatives *"increases the anxiety one feels both because of the evident, often overwhelming pain of the survivor recalling and even returning to the position of helpless victim"* (LaCapra, 2014, p. 92). Thus, the narrator feels his desperation and inadequacy about this glacial post-apocalyptic world all in its nudity. Second, in his participation in the military operations, he is still in this suspended state about something fearful to happen, but jarringly he also discerns *"an emotional blockage. I recognized it in others besides myself. In suppressing food riots, our machine guns indiscriminately cut down rioters and harmless pedestrians. I had no feeling about it and noticed the same indifference in everyone else"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 137). The continuation of these destructive acts in this ramshackle world transpire to mean nothing especially when the snow is *"spreading a sheet of sterile whiteness over the face of the dying world"* (Kavan, 2006, p. 160). In this sense, the narrator scans

*the surrounding world anxiously for signs of danger, breaking into explosive rages and reacting with a start to ordinary sights and sounds, but at the same time, all that nervous activity takes place against a numbed gray background of depression, feelings of helplessness, and a general closing off of the spirit, as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm.* (Caruth, 1995, p. 184)

Thus, while the presence of feelings such as ambiguity, anxiety and tension leave the narrator on alert, the feelings such as emptiness, numbness, and callousness pacify him. The coexistence of these two controversial emotional groups tellingly illustrates the emotional turmoil created by the post-apocalyptic trauma on the narrator.

Aside from the depression, anxiety and numbness, he also becomes haunted by the horrific visions of disasters in universal destruction. The terrible scenes of the geography of fear and anxiety, namely the deeply unrealistic atmosphere of the post-apocalyptic terrain and the anticipation of death due to the ever-moving apocalypse, foster the narrator's dreams. Since even a "lucid, sane, and fully conscious may have hallucination when they feel that death is near" (Sacks, 2012, p. 302), it seems impossible for the narrator not to dream, who encounters many life-threatening events and tries to survive in a world where an occasion about death and decimation happens every minute. The horrific visions of the post-apocalyptic world echoing the extremity of psychological disturbance or dread are powerful enough to haunt him even in his wakefulness and merge with his hallucinations about the glass girl. In this sense, the disturbing remains of the abandonment trauma inscribed in the narrator's memory become explored through the complex interrelatedness of the powerful and inevitable apocalyptic forces in which he is caught up. Thus, it becomes challenging to determine where the individual trauma begins and post-apocalyptic trauma ends when the boundaries between the individual and the post-apocalyptic trauma conflate or blur in his hallucinations.

The visions of the approaching, shattering or swallowing ice not only take centre stage in most of the dreams and delusions of the narrator but also become structured around many images of the glass girl in which she is relentlessly pursued, surrounded, excruciated and consumed by the ice. We see this merger even in the narrator's first hallucination regarding the girl on his way to attend the invitation of the girl's painter husband;

*An unearthly whiteness began to bloom on the hedges. I passed a gap and glanced through. For a moment, my lights picked out like searchlights the girl's naked body, slight as a child's, ivory white against the dead white of the snow, her hair bright as spun glass. She did not look in my direction. Motionless, she kept her eyes fixed on the walls moving slowly towards her, a glassy, glittering circle of solid ice, of which she was the centre. Dazzling flashes came from the ice cliffs far over her head; below, the outermost fringes of ice had already reached her, immobilized her, set hard as concrete over her feet and ankles. (Kavan, 2006, pp. 13-14)*

These riveting descriptions display how the girl "shares the aura of the unearthly, cosmic fantasy" (Walker, 2012, p. 219) and accompanies the revolving images of ice in his mind. This fine-grained narrative not only creates a parallel between the ice and the girl but also makes visible both the contrasts and similarities regarding the protagonists of the two traumas that ruin the narrator's life. The narrative "emphasizes the contradictory substance of ice; the advancing ice cliffs are impervious vehicles of devastation while the girl embodies ice-like frailty, liable to break or melt away" (Walker, 2012, p. 219). To put it differently, the ice, as the agent of the apocalypse, represents the rigidity, coldness and destructiveness of its substance, while the girl portrays its melting, unresisting and crystal side. Even the adjectives used in this quotation for the ice, such as solid, hard, and concrete, as well as the adjectives for the girl, such as slight, bright and spun, confirm Walker's statement about the representation of the structure of ice. As the other side of the coin, the girl embodies the ice-like frailty not only with her appearance shaped by silver-white hair, pale, translucent skin and her brittle bones but also with her fragile, sensitive, timid and childlike personality. In this framework, the ice makes the narrator flee from itself with its persistence, destructiveness and harshness, while the glass girl makes the narrator pursue herself with her fragility, sensitivity and need for protection. In other words, while the ice signifies tormentor and pitiless destruction for the narrator, the girl signifies rescuer and precarious fragility. The novel offers a story where pursuit and escape co-occur, an obsessive chase on the one hand and a deadly global escape on the other. The narrator becomes crushed by blows from opposing sides of the same matter and stuck in a double-sided trap. In this sense, the glass girl and the ice seem to be wound and symptom that disrupts and haunts the narrator as well as being both real and imagined.

## CONCLUSION

In its broad approach to Anna Kavan's novel, *Ice*, this article has sought to reorient critical approaches to her work and to draw fresh consideration of Kavan and her fiction as being concerned greatly with the significance of various workings of mind. The trope of trauma in Kavan's novel provides a different repertoire of discussion for post-apocalyptic literature since it enables the story to be handled with a multi-perspective approach. While the novel seems to focus on individual trauma, it is communal in its apocalyptic implications on the background. Kavan's apocalyptic plotting in this novel, set in time of widespread social change spanning all over the world explores the psychological and physical impacts of such change on both ordinary people across the course of their lives and the protagonist having individual experiences in this magical atmosphere. Key to this exploration is their traumatic experience through apocalypse which Kavan uses to connect the interior and subjective life of her protagonist with the broader state of apocalyptic universe covered by frost. In this way, she draws together the comparative mutability of the physical, psychological universe, the survival and an obsessive quest for a girl.

As this article has argued, *Ice* embeds its consideration of the concept of trauma with constant moves of glacial apocalypse reflecting the continuation of terror, cruelty and existential dread on the characters who are not only as a witness to a great collapse but also as the stragglers of that demolition. Here, it becomes evident that characters such as gangs of starving fugitives, the black tunics, and gangsters play an overt part in representing collective trauma or post-apocalyptic trauma since they reflect the alienation from the collective consciousness, the potentiality of becoming threat to each other, and the obscurity of social predictability. Kavan's characters who suffer existential distress in this makeshift world and who are as muddled as to what to do as Golding's characters cannot be able to work through this post-apocalyptic trauma in existential crisis and ongoing disorder at a collective level. Thus, the overall effect on Kavan's portrayal of these communities and their actions in this period of continual flux for whom no sense of permanence or security will be immediately forthcoming ends on a note of uncertainty.

Put succinctly, not being a boilerplate post-apocalyptic account, Kavan's *Ice* not only allows the greater traumas of collectivities to be recognized but also the study of personal histories to be explored in the same plot structure. The narrator's double status as the primary survivor and witness of apocalyptic trauma shapes the novel's treatment of the individual and collective experience and gives an expressionistic dimension to the horrifying consequences of the fraction of the ice sheet. The narrator's early abandonment trauma, his incomprehensibility of the event and his delayed reaction set the stage for exploring the world's post-apocalyptic trauma. The structuring of the novel's narrative in this way provides us to explore both personal suffering and global cataclysm. Particularly, the narrator's hallucinations, dreams and fantasies shaped around the glass girl pave the way to explore not only his wounds but also his remedy. Following Lacan's discussion of *objet a*, the narrator's obsessive pursuit and psychology about the girl is understood as an effort to master pain over abandonment or to work through the lack of the glass girl and to attain her. The narrator's individual and post-apocalyptic trauma becomes worked and reworked recursively along with hallucinations, dreams, pursuit and reunion. At this point, *Ice* embodies multiple and contradictory meanings with a plot constantly having mutating interpretative frames and invites us to conceive numerous what-if scenarios. In this way, the various traumas of the characters represented in the novel become part of Kavan's larger understanding of the unconscious or traumatized mind in the process of continual and irrevocable apocalyptic change.

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