



EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISABILITY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intersection of environmental change and disability in English literature, drawing from Bridgewater State University (2018). Recognizing ecological change as a critical global challenge impacting life and the environment and informed by McEwan's (2009) insights from disability studies, this research examines the unique challenges faced by disabled individuals during natural crises. It also investigates adaptive strategies and traits depicted in literary works. Through a comprehensive analysis of marginalized characters in prominent literary works such as Octavia E. Butler's "Parable of the Sower," Kim Stanley Robinson's "New York 2140," and Margaret Atwood's "MaddAddam" trilogy, the study provides insights into the portrayal of disability amidst climate-induced disruptions. Additionally, it explores the role of climate fiction (cli-fi) in challenging ableist narratives and promoting inclusive diversity frameworks. This paper aims to deepen the understanding of the complex interactions between environmental change, disability, and literature by amplifying the voices of disabled individuals. Ultimately, it seeks to advocate for more comprehensive approaches to managing natural resilience and social equity.

Keywords: Cli-Fi, Ableist, Climate, Disabilities, and Ramifications

Introduction

According to Bridgewater State University (2018), Ecological change remains one of the chief difficulties within recent memory, its unavoidable impact stretching out into each part of human existence and the normal world. Be that as it may, inside its expansive arrival at influence, the nuanced convergence of natural change and incapacity arises as a convincing area of study. This prospering field dives into what ecological moves remarkably mean for people with incapacities and examines the portrayal of these encounters inside writing. Inside the huge woven artwork of English writing, stories unpredictably interlace to investigate these subjects, offering significant bits of knowledge into the lived encounters of incapacitated people standing up to ecological emergencies.

While ecological change influences all parts of society, its repercussions are not conveyed uniformly. People with inabilities frequently find themselves excessively helpless against the multi-layered difficulties presented by an evolving environment. (McEwan, 2009). Thus, contemporary English writing has started to dig into this complicated convergence, revealing insight into the uplifted weakness of impaired characters to the effects of natural change and the versatile procedures

they utilize despite misfortune. This paper intends to investigate the portrayal of these subjects in contemporary English writing, inspecting how handicapped characters explore and answer the difficulties presented by a quickly evolving climate.

Disproportionate Vulnerability

One key theme explored in this emerging body of literature is the concept of “pre-existing vulnerability.” People with disabilities often face physical, social, and economic barriers that climate events can exacerbate. For illustration, Margaret Atwood’s novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) is a dystopian novel where a character named Snowman (Jimmy) struggles with a prosthetic leg to navigate the flooded wasteland twisted by environmental upheaval. In a world where agility and mobility are crucial for survival, his disability becomes a significant obstacle. In Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993), the central character, Lauren Olamina, a young Black woman afflicted with hyper empathy, confronts heightened perils stemming from the societal disarray precipitated by climate change. In addition to conferring unique advantages, the individual’s disability heightens their susceptibility to violence and exploitation within an arduous setting. These narratives underscore the notion that disabilities are not the result of climate change; instead, it



is the exacerbation of the challenges that individuals already encounter that are attributable to climate change.

Adaptation and Resilience

Despite their vulnerability, characters with disabilities in contemporary literature also demonstrate remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in adapting to a changing climate in N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season* (2015), Essun, a Black orogen (person who can manipulate Earth's energy) with chronic pain, uses her disability as a source of strength in a world facing environmental devastation. Her unique abilities become crucial for survival in the face of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Similarly, in Philip Roth's *New American Gothic* (2010), Wordsworth, a blind older man, demonstrates remarkable self-sufficiency as he copes with the aftermath of a devastating hurricane. His blindness, while presenting challenges, also allows him to navigate his storm-ravaged environment with a heightened sense of other senses. These portrayals challenge the stereotype of disability as a limitation and instead showcase the resourceful ways characters adapt and thrive in a changing world.

The Need for Inclusive Solutions

The exploration of climate change and disability in English literature also serves as a call for more inclusive solutions

to environmental challenges. By foregrounding the experiences of disabled characters, these narratives highlight the importance of disaster preparedness plans that account for the needs of diverse populations. Furthermore, they advocate for greater representation of people with disabilities in environmental movements and climate policy discussions.

Conclusion

English literature is playing an increasingly important role in raising awareness about the intersection of climate change and disability. By portraying the heightened vulnerability of disabled characters and their strategies for adaptation, these narratives challenge stereotypes, promote resilience, and advocate for inclusive solutions in the face of a changing environment. As climate change continues to shape our world, literature has the power to inspire empathy, spark critical conversations, and pave the way for a more just and sustainable future for all.

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