

Exploring Environmental and Ecological crisis in Charlotte McConaghy's novel *Migrations*.

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Abstract:

Charlotte McConaghy's novel *Migrations*, which can be considered as a cli-fi novel, unfolds against a backdrop of climate change and environmental crisis, offering a poignant exploration of humanity's impact on the natural world. This seminar paper delves into the novel's environmental themes, employing ecocriticism as a lens to understand the intricate relationship between characters and their surroundings.

Franny Stone, the main character, sets off on a voyage filled with both environmental and emotional turmoil. We examine Franny's attempt to trace the last Arctic tern migration from an ecocritical point of view. Her voyage serves as a metaphor for a larger human struggle with ecological responsibility, and the book makes us consider our own responsibilities in light of today's environmental issues.

McConaghy weaves an intricate tapestry of human-nature connections, portraying characters as intertwined with the ecosystems they inhabit. This analysis employs ecocriticism to dissect how the author navigates themes of loss, resilience, and the consequences of environmental degradation. Franny's commitment to the terns becomes a metaphor for our collective responsibility toward endangered species and threatened environments.

The novel *Migrations* offers a compelling narrative that goes beyond the traditional bounds of storytelling. By applying ecocriticism, we gain insight into the novel's profound environmental commentary. McConaghy's work challenges readers to confront the urgency of environmental issues as well as ecological imbalances making *Migrations* a powerful literary contribution to the ongoing discourse on our relationship with nature.

Key words: Cli-Fi, Ecocriticism, endangered biodiversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Charlotte McConaghy's novel *Migrations* serves as a powerful examination of environmental destruction and human accountability through an ecocritical perspective. The story centers on Franny Stone who embarks on a mission to follow the final migration of Arctic terns in a world experiencing widespread extinction. This journey underscores the severe consequences of climate change while exploring the deep connection between nature and humanity. Analyzing the novel from an ecocritical point of view reveals the intricate relationship between ecological disasters and personal grief. McConaghy's vivid depiction of a deteriorating planet acts as a compelling call for immediate environmental action.

2. METHODOLOGY

The roots of eco-literature can be traced back to the early works of the American transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau. Their works paved the way for celebrating each and everything in Nature and advocated a spiritual aura to the Natural World. They believed that a deep connection with Nature will make our life richer and more meaningful. Their writings have initiated an eco-literary movement that continues to evolve today.

The emergence of modern Ecocriticism can be traced from late 20th century. This period marked a urgency for environmental concerns, the development of various ecological philosophies and a need for literature's engagement with growing ecological problems

3. CLIMATE FICTION

Climate fiction is a new branch of literature that deals with the effects of climate changes on human as well as non-human society. Authors use literature to explore implications of climate change, global warming and the resultant imbalances in ecosystem. This genre deals with rising temperatures, melting ice caps, floods, water pollutions, deforestation, soil erosion, extreme weather events etc. This type of stories help to invoke a clarion call for the humanity to think about the urgency of mitigating climate change and inspire a strong need for sustainable practices. Cli fi fiction also considers the serious subject of species extinction due to human interruption into their ecosystem. Due to this there is the loss of biodiversity. Authors also take into consideration the ecological imbalances, the importance of conserving the endangered species and moral dilemmas surrounding human interaction with wildlife.

4. MIGRATIONS

The very first line of the novel *Migrations* foretells what it is going to narrates to the readers. The animals are dying. Soon we will be alone here. (3) Charlotte MacConaghy's *Migrations* is a beautiful novel about a woman who is always running from her childhood, her mistakes in life and also from her memories. Now she is undertaking a migration from Greenland to Antarctica along with world's last flock of Arctic terns who is having their final migration.

At the outset of the novel , Franny Stone is ready to follow the last migration of arctic terns. She approaches the captain of the last boat who might take her onboard to follow the birds. She manages to persuade Ennis Marlone to let her join the crew of the boat named Saghani by telling him that she will show them where the fish are. The ocean's fish are like any other species on earth are disappearing or already gone. Just we have been steadily killing off the animals of the land and sky, the fishermen have fished the sea almost to extinction.(6). Franny's conversation with the fisher crew reveals more about the pathetic condition of the sea. She indicates that fishing is a dying trade. The ocean is nearly empty. You have taken and taken and now there is nothing left . (17) *Migrations* can be termed as a dystopian novel. Every so often we are reminded of how our planet has transformed. It gives us a vivid picture of how we will be left very soon with no animals on the world. It talks about how species after species being declared first endangered and then officially extinct. (24) There are no more monkeys in the wild, no chimps or apes or gorillas nor indeed any animals that once lived in rainforests. The big cats of savannahs haven't been seen in years, nor have any of the exotic

creatures we once went on safari to glimpse. There are no bears in the once- frozen north, or reptiles in the too hot south, and the last known wolf in the world died in captivity last winter. There is hardly anything wild left, and this is a fate we are, all of us, intimately aware of. (24) Franny describes about her view of a sea gull squaking and caterwauling in the sea , a scene that she watches for long time until it disappeared from her view as they have become a rare view now.

Through the words of Franney's husband, the ornithologist Niall Lynch, we get a terrifying picture of the present animal world which is gradually vanishing from the earth: With the burning of fossil fuels we changed the world, we have killed it. As the climate grew hotter and the sea levels rose, the Bermuda petrels were washed from their burrows and drowned.....polar bears are gone, thanks to that rise in temperature. Sea turtles have gone, the beaches where they once lay their eggs eroded by those rising seas. The ringtail possum which could not survive temperatures above thirty degree Celsius was decimated by a single heat wave. Lions perished in never ending droughts, rhinos were lost to poaching. And on it goes . (44) From the words of Niall it becomes so evident that the government is also indifferent towards the disastrous condition of our planet. Once there were glorious winged beasts that roamed in the sky- world, and now they are going.....they are being violently and indiscriminately slaughtered by our indifference. It has been decided by our leaders that economic growth is more important. That the extinction crisis is an acceptable trade for their gree. (167)

As the novel moves forth the reader gets more drastic pictures like the pollution of sea. As we draw close enough to see, I realize that it is an

enormous island of plastic and there are fish and seabirds and seals dead upon its shore. (1) The menace of wilderness haunts the north. When Franny visits Yellowstone she hears songs of birds. A world without wilderness is not only a practical problem to be solved, but a human tragedy. McConaghy has a keen sense of knowledge about the web of interconnectedness that the humans have created to support their own wellbeing and advancement.

As it demonstrates what is at risk and how the world will alter after the animals are gone. In elegant and evocative prose, *Migrations* is the best kind of environmental fiction. It is powerful and melancholic how these losses are interwoven more gradually throughout the novel and included as part of the main plot. A narrative of sadness, the fading away of the birds. The fading away of animals. How lonely it will be when it's just us. (62) Born in Australia with an Irish mother, Franny has always been a wanderer, driven by abandonment and loneliness as well as by the feeling that she doesn't belong. Franny Stone is at the same time fragile and tough. She can keep up with sailors, drink hard, dive in frigid water, and comply with the crew's strict requirements while pursuing her dreams. Along with being a prisoner of her past traumas and haunting memories, Franny's fascinating and frequently turbulent background is woven into the story as it follows the Sagle voyage south.

The novel is undoubtedly an eye opener to the depletion of fish population. It is overfishing which leads to the decrease in fish community. It has a drastic effect on the food chain. It also give way to the loss of keystone species that play a critical role in marine ecosystems which can result in certain species becoming

dominant and disturb the natural balance. This results in species extinction.

As an animal lover and a vegetarian Franney is not at ease to be on board in a fishing vessel. Am I really going to stand here and watch as these creatures are slaughtered? she asks herself when the harvest begins. How are they different from the birds, whose lives I might very well give my own to protect?(82)

The language of *Migrations* is beautiful and poetic, expressing a deep respect for nature. Franny is deeply affected by the loss of her contribution to the planet's devastation and its consequences. When one of the crew in the fishing vessel describes Franney's weariness she thinks in a very poignant way: It's not life I'm tired of, with its astonishing ocean currents and layers of ice and all the delicate feathers that make up a wing. It's myself. (101)

5. CONCLUSION

Migrations is a beautifully rendered story of a woman's journey through a world in which we've lost the animals we still, in the real world, have a chance to save. In her acknowledgments, McConaghy writes, I want to acknowledge the wild creatures of this earth and say that this book was written for them out of sadness and regret for those that have been wiped out and for love of those that remain. I truly,

deeply hope that the world without animals depicted in *Migrations* does not come to pass. (260)

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