

Determinism and Voluntarism in Steve Waters' The Contingency

Plan: An Eco-Critical Reading

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Abstract

As the twenty-first century starts to evolve, literature urges its endeavours to depict the realistic problems that the contemporary man may encounter. Thus, theatre which is considered as an essential figure in discussing mankind's issues takes its role to establish the reasonable base for the environmental problems to be shown. However, depending on the theoretical investigation, the present study is tracing different aspects related to both philosophical terms of Determinism and Voluntarism. Moreover, climate change is considered as a universal issue in the contemporary world, it is dependent on the mankind's understanding to the critical situation of their existence. The research is based on the objective eco-critical reading of Steve Waters' Book, The Contingency Plan. The mentioned book embraces a vivid depiction the apocalyptic vision for a near future atmosphere in the United Kingdom, by this the playwright employs a variety of techniques to contribute a stage presentation of the pure dualism between man's efforts and nature's cataclysmic responses.

Keywords: Determinism, Voluntarism, Climate Change, Apocalypse, Ecocriticism

1.Introduction

The first decade of the twentieth-first century is characterised as the starting point in the era of ecocriticism. Performing arts in multiple ways and various parts of the world, specifically in Europe, reflected the shift which took place in mankind ecological awareness. Some works presented animals and other creatures as equal to humans, others were more deep in their ideas and mirrored science in relation to real-life disasters. Of course, there is a distinction between American and British strategies to address the situation on stage or in the text itself. The American's path showing the problem is tended to be more emotional, while British literature is clearly factual. Thus, each author attempts to use the techniques which he sees appropriate to a particular culture. Relatively, Hanna Helavuori, the director of Theatre Info Finland, expresses the relationship of her community towards nature in literature, she concludes that "Finns want to experience theatre outside, in the nature's embrace – despite the rain, the wind, the cold, and the mosquitoes" (2012). This leads to the same point that there is a gradual global development in the way that people look to theatre, especially that type of drama which seems incomplete to audience without nature.

While analysing literary texts, ecocriticism is highly concerned with the evaluation of scientific information. The environmental awareness shown in the text may offer the reader a reasonable idea about how the author observes real-life circumstances. Thus, it is essential to investigate context scientifically, including discourses, natural reactions of environment, and of course, expectations about near future results. Moreover, almost all literary works that reflect global warming issue, especially the recent ones, are based on intellectual characters that appear ready to change and support planet to recover. This increases the enhancement to create a balance between rationality and emotions in the context. Literature, especially in such genre, needs to make readers feel responsible and a part of the problem, thus they may initiate an action, the readers' emotions also supposed to be affected by results that appear in the plot to exclude routine and flatness of repeated representation of science and facts. Thus, ecocriticism can be related to different approaches in analyzing literary works. In this article, the researcher presents an eco-critical reading with the support of two important notions that can be obviously seen in 'apocalypticism.'

Broadly known in theology, apocalypticism is the term that describes the extending belief that God designed a predetermined end to the existence of humans on earth. Due to the religious heavenly scripts, it is revealed that the "apocalypse" is imminent; the long struggle between the two powers of good and evil is in progress. This idea represents a significant component, especially in the three monotheistic faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, as well as Islam (McGinn,2000, P.ix). Distinctively, the concept of the apocalypse can be viewed in different ways depending on the certain religion or even specifically in doctrines (White, 2000). With different signs to apocalypse, the twentieth first century carries a portending for both groups of believers and non-believers that an immense and indistinguishable change is about to happen. This led to an extensive emergence of multiple groups of "apocalypticism believers." Such aspect refers to the fact that although they all contemplate the possibility of climatic events, yet they never attempt to speak with a consolidated voice nor engaging with the political system similarly.

Apparently, apocalyptic thinking presents clear information about almost every main aspect of the global life in the current decades of twenty-first century. The themes and images of the apocalypse started to become more considered as a staple of common culture. Apocalypticism categories have united in order to contribute in shaping the significance of social controversy. In addition to that, the wide and various expectations formulate different views related to discussions of the state of both economy and environment. Thus the ideology of apocalypse promotes complex fundamentalist roots in the major religions, including their sectors. It also motivates the extremist political movements to elevate and spread across the globe (DiTommaso, 2020, P.316).

However, the replete disastrous planet is haunted by the vicious revolution of spectres that apocalypse carries. Political departments and cultural representatives are covered with rhetoric speeches to address the factors of apocalypse. This carries an accurate invitation for scientists to take part in the confrontation against the end of their world. In addition, environmentalists poses a considerable role in this defensive war. The mission is to enlighten normal people and raise the awareness of what may happen at the unquestionable catastrophic moment in the history of both humans and their planet. Certainly, the discourse varies in offering different subjects to discussion and global awareness, yet the community of scientists consensus agree

that the most unique form of such discourses is the one concerned with ecological system collapse (Lilley, et al, 2012, P. 29).

Concerning its first forms, Coogan and Chapman refer to the fact that apocalyptic literature started as prophetic scripts that provide humans with an idea of predestined end of their life on this planet. The various texts, heavenly sent in a hand of a messenger or by an angel revelation to people, are differently organised in order to meet the acceptance of each culture (2019). However, the apocalyptic literature flourished after the World War I, and its authors took in consideration the focusing on devastation of human and nature. The discussion of such topic became wider over the 20th century and preserved its continuity to the 21st century. With the television documentary programs, apocalypse got considerable attention from normal people, and especially those who are interested in the connection of religion and new styles of life. Due to the acceleration of generations expanding, the planet and the nearly collapsed environmental system obliged people to have thoughts about how their existence will come to an end.

With no doubt, the apocalyptic literature reflects the image of deterministic conception to the end of civilizations. The human actions towards environment give the opportunity to these eschatological beliefs to come sooner in the frame of reality. Thus the use of determinism represents a key figure in this kind of literature (Goff, 2014, P. 65). To a great extent, the element of determinism in apocalyptic fiction is rather related to the lack of resources, technical collapse, and scientific inadequacy. This perception provides a special interpretation to the essential philosophical understanding of determinism. In an apocalyptic story, especially the modern written ones, the fatal end needs to be more secular in order to carry a rational justification for the audience who most probably believe in reasons rather than revelations.

On the other hand, voluntarism which philosophically tends to be identified as the systematic dominant role of will which is assigned to the intellect. This means that voluntarism represents an obvious oppositional view of human authority in decision making, although the two terms may sometimes overlap as Sasha Lilley suggests (2012). In its new form, the catastrophic scenario of an apocalyptic literary work may portray the notion of voluntarism as an activist attempt to recognize the reasons behind the main problem which causes the disaster. Thus, scientifically, the activists may obtain a reasonable opportunity to suspend and control the environmental total collapse.

Constantly, the two conceptual terms of determinism and voluntarism prove to be complementary with the ultimate consideration to their contradictory meanings (Lukács, 1972, P.4). In the perspective of modern apocalyptic literature, both can be included to show the essence of dualism as clearly as possible. Depending on the philosophical understanding of the two concepts, people may recognise the significant purpose of a human being life as well as discovering the importance of shared responsibility of existence, which can be obtained by the accurate employment of voluntarism.

Moreover, apocalyptic literature authors take into consideration that creating a character of revelation represents a major theme. The secular fiction plots replace this element of with scientific revelation of facts rather than depending on heavenly scripts or messengers. In this case they stand as a source of interpretation of factual visions and knowledge. Along the sequence of events, the audience come to conclude that the current situation is previously revealed in detail. Not only this, but the source of knowledge also presented threatening and calls for universal collaboration. Apparently in some works, the catastrophic problem of apocalypse seems impossible to end. The destination of mankind is inescapable, in other words, human beings are going to meet extinction sooner or later. This means that the revealed text, or scientific threatening in secular works, is being fulfilled. Consequently, the employment of revelation technique is supposed to be related to the deterministic thoughts over the events of the literary work.

Inevitably, the eruption of struggle during an apocalyptic climax obviously takes place between both good and evil, as represented in the recent novel of *Angels and Demons* written by Dan Brown. Usually, the conflict occurs over the use of power, thus it reflect the notion of "dualism." This may also refer to dualism of optimism and pessimism, since apocalyptic fiction tends to be rather pessimistic about the possibility for a positive change opportunity. For some periods of time, confident characters may feel unable to react to the situation. Dualism may refer to other different shapes of conflict such as ethical movement versus ignorance of the common people (Yar, 2015, P. 6).

Steve Waters' *The Contingency Plan*

Born in the city of Coventry, United Kingdom, Steve Waters studied playwriting to teach the same subject for several years after graduation with master accreditation degree (Waters-Essential Drama). Waters wrote numerous articles in politics of global issues to various major newspapers including The Guardian. In addition, he contributed academic essays to other publishers such as *The Blackwell Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama* and *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*.

This study is concerned with the analysis of Waters' book of two plays, *The Contingency Plan*, since it addresses the most dangerous problem facing the human race ,especially, scientists and policy characters around the whole world. It is possible for the audience to see the plays separately, i.e. each one has its complete plot, yet Michael Billington (2009) insists that they both give a total value while premiered as a pair. The storyline of the contingency plan stands in the frontline of global warming stage. Charles Spencer, a reviewer for The Telegraph, points out that the play is obviously the first British play to address the climate change issue and relate it to the portraying of political agendas and scientific assessment (2011). Having a considerable knowledge in political sections, Waters attempts to convey the message of tired of threatening calls by scientists.

The First Play: *On The Beach*

Summary

The play is set on a wide marsh where a retired glaciologists, Robin, and his wife, Jenny, spend their routine daily life waiting for their son, Will, to pay a visit. As usual, Robin opens his day observing nature around with his tripod telescope. In the first act of the play, Will, who works now with the governmental research members of climate change, comes to see his parents accompanied with his Civil Servant girlfriend, Sarika. From the very beginning of their meeting, Robin and Will seem to have endless wrangles, while Jenny insists on the use of kind-hearted language while speaking to her only son. The story-line continues, Will informs his father that he is employed in the ministry where Collin Jenks is a responsible scientific advisor. Feeling frustrated, Robin attempts to convince his son to collaborate in the job with Jenks and government,

Sarika offers Robin an invitation to return to his past field and support young scientists with experience. He offensively refuses, thus the couple leave to continue the mission in the side of politicians. In the second act of the play, the consequence of events takes place, rapidly, in the same land after months. Robin removes the flooding barriers surrounding his home, surprised, Jenny perceives that her life has come near to its fate. During the evacuation process, police and civil servants would not be able to reach the land since Robin blocked the road. His intention becomes obvious to his wife that he aims to assure his thesis and threatens to the government. The play ends with a black shutdown, revealing that Will's parents are overwhelmed by the sea.

Starting from the book-covering page, it obviously appears that the title of Water's book directly contemplates the expectations of the future which embraces an apocalypse in its horizons. On front page of the cover, the painting delivers an apocalyptic eventuality to the great emblematic towers of London. Those historical monuments are overwhelmed with the flooding as a result of the sea-level problem aggravation. The title of the book is written in a font which embodies protesting banners style. Moreover, the titles of the first play suggests the geographical point in which United Kingdom locates. Thus, the title of the first play can be conceived as a predetermination or an introduction for the coming warnings.

Over the various traditional and religious contexts of apocalyptic literature, the universal history is portrayed with an exposition of in a linear direction towards a predetermined point of eschatology (Collins, 1998, P.40). In addition to the secular revelation basis, the deterministic feature represents a central and redundant standard in that kind of fiction which is related to the unavoidable apocalypse. Likewise, it witnessed gradual changes in order to fit the current secularization of ideas. In some parts, the dialogue in *On The Beach* concentrates on the unsuccessful attempts to know some facts about the rapid climate change and its unpredictable future impacts. This assures that sincere scientists, seculars and believers, share a considerable agreement that the future of existence is destined to a catastrophic end. Repeatedly over the play, Robin mentions that the hardworking efforts done by politicians, "lairs," and some scientists, "fools," makes a nil result as a revolutionary resistance in the opposition of natural disasters.

ROBIN: But I couldn't stop thinking about that warming, doing the maths, if this much heat generated this much ice loss, generating ocean warming, more ice loss, reduced reflectivity, more warming, more heat, more ice loss, sea-level rise, more ice loss, more heat, more ice loss, more sea, less albedo, more heat..(I,i).

The various discussions about climate change and its consequences reveals the fact that these characters, as well as others away from the stage, are trying to create a reasonable opportunity to make a difference in the face of the cataclysmic end that threatens them along with humankind. This can be vividly considered as a portrayal of voluntarism, which in its essence means the will to create a hope in order to change a universal aspect into a better situation. Of course, this can be achieved by the presence of a real collaboration of several entities that can be regarded as global powers. Recalling the limited presentation of activist characters, the playwright conveys the scientific arguments' message to his audience, consequently, he elaborates on the aim that the apocalypse problem as well as its factors must attain a universal knowledge. In this threatening play, normal people are given the opportunity to observe how humans stress their gradual impact constantly with a noticeable carelessness to the results on the planet. Vividly, the two main characters in the play, Robin and Will, envision the upcoming influence of mankind upon the place they exist on. Over the deliberate father-son dialogue, it can be recognised that the author intentionally elaborates on specific secular elements that evoke the catastrophic essence of apocalypse. The upcoming part of this research is considered to be a continuous analysis for the second complementary play of the book. The main and subsections may highlight a similar style of discussion, yet the essential dramatic techniques and presented themes conserve the credibility to be analysed in detail, due to the different elements of apocalyptic literature which Waters offers.

The Second Play: *Resilience*

The second play in *The Contingency Plan* offers a deeper representation to the climate change issue with a different reference to its consequences while including a direct political implication. In this second complementary part, the events evolve to encompass the scientific negotiation

with political characters, which may offer audience another chance to touch Waters' credibility. Different techniques are employed in an intention to avoid the routine in a similar dialogue patterning. Again the playwright uses his own strategy in portraying politicians as decision makers to take responsibility in achieving consistency for a better human life. As a matter of fact, theatre is highly supposed to be a direct instrument where language and debates are included. Nowadays playwrights conceivably attempt to convey the crucial message of human existence on stage by the complicated literal discussions. With an extensive political expertise, Waters' portrayal of politicians offers a extremely vivid idea about how the politicians deal with mankind during a critical period before the disaster. Another idea the play elaborates on is the sacrifice of life in order to elevate the motivation of decision taking inside others. This might not be adequate to a considerable number of audience, yet it arouses an essential understanding that , for some, life can be unaccepted at any moment of full despair.

Summary

The play continues its events at an April Sunday daytime after Will and Sarika leave Norfolk and arrive to London to offer the advisory support in the Whitehall room due to the catastrophe in Boston. Among the characters who work in the same place, they meet with Colin Jenks who must obviously considered as an old friend to Will's father, Robin. After long arguments in the first act, it becomes clear that the room is filled with rotten political self interests. Tessa, the right-wing minister of resilience, requests an obligatory signature from Dr. Will Paxton to initiate the evacuation process. After months of enormous hard-working and warnings from Will and Sarika, the second act of the play carries the revealed event of a cataclysmic surge of tidal waves to descend on various cities of the United Kingdom. Coincidentally, another climax of political disorder occurs between the two rival ministers of resilience and climate change, Tessa and Christopher. Tragically, the final moments of the play declare that Robin and Jenny are almost overwhelmed by the sea-level formidable waves, eventually the uncontrollable storms demolish the fortuitous barriers of London.

From the discussions above, it is noticed that *On The Beach*, certainly in its first act, initiates portrayal of the sea-level raged storm in Boston. The uncontrollable waves of flooding cause serious damage to humans and buildings as a result of the critical collapse in ecosystem. The first act in *Resilience* tracks the same storyline to illustrate the preparation and response from the human side. The interactions in the two scenes vary in the same ration between mankind and environment. Political characters, advised by the new scientific system which is represented by Dr. Will Paxton, decide to take action in order to prepare for the presupposed confrontation with natural disasters. With limited accomplishment in the necessary predisposition, Will reassures that the catastrophe is unavoidable, yet some procedures may offer an opportunity to save lives to a final survival. Communication and technical collapse comes as a result to the nature response, people, especially the four characters in the play are divided into two sectors in their manner towards environment, yet the both sides agree that environment severely suffers a critical point which may develop to an absolute apocalypse. Relatively, Boles focuses on the fact that the play reflects the devastating scenery of environmental repercussions represented in the rapid overwhelming of the unprecedented storms and waves (2019).

Moreover, another idea the playwright aims to present is the inconstancy of nature response. During the climax of the scientific-political argument to convince Christopher to take action, Will replies that this moment of flooding penetration into the human built barriers represents the "unpredictable element" of natural reaction. Since environment encompasses all things together, including mankind's scientific development, eventually it cannot be contained in the man's full understanding and definitive control. Reciprocally, this notion is implied in the reflexive meaning of voluntarism, which is concerned with the idea that man has a limited ability to control his natural surrounding environment (Macauley,2009, P.38).

The hardworking of scientists in response to the critical natural crises may be partially rewarded with a sense of success, yet people in authority need to offer the highest mount rate of valuable support during the climax of the problem in order to achieve a consequent survival opportunity. Thus, the contingency planning needs to be earlier prepared for by government. In relation to this point, Eriksson and McConnell elaborate on the fact that contingency planning can be successful in case it is determined in the pre-catastrophe stage, otherwise it may be too late to provide the fruitful result of its essence (2011). In addition to other themes, the playwright concentrates to

show that the negligence of governmental policies towards the environmental degradation represents another prominent idea. The natural collapse in the play comes contingently with the same moment of ill-prepared planning and apathetic procedures. An obvious threatening to governments to take responsibility can be concluded in this area of the presented literary work.

It is noticeable that the first play, *On The Beach*, points almost all its concentration to nature with a remarkable limitation towards the political depiction. On the other hand, *Resilience* shares a greater quota of its concerns to politics. It is salient that the play has two central thematic poles, one is nature response representation and the other is political adherence discovery. Moreover, the role of nature in *Resilience* is not concerned with various issues such as pollution and emission, yet discussion is restricted to global warming impacts and how to react in response to the massive environmental disasters. This obvious shifting in essential points can be easily considered as an attempt to enhance variety, thus audience may not face similar events which creates an atmosphere of repetition and cyclical routine.

Being in responsibility, the presence of both politicians and scientists provides a considerable form of coalition of the two major powers holding direct influence towards mankind existence. Thus, the climax of the play indicates that apocalypse is urgently imminent as a result to essential factors, since the extensive damage to ecosystem has obviously existed (Boles, 2019). In addition to the embodiment of apocalyptic threatening, Christopher uses the name of Nostradamus (French philosopher that studied the classical prophecies and astrology) in order to label Will Paxton as an apocalypse seer who always attempts to warn decision makers to take action before the disaster, this comes as a reasonable reference for the traditional determinism.

The purposefully selected title of the play suggests the extensive understanding of environmental state in the recent decades. Taking place in the near future, this allows the playwright to show that the government established new ministries for *Resilience* and *Climate Change*. The first ministry is supposed to deal with crises before they occur, yet the only plan they consensually offer is evacuation during the catastrophe. The other ministry, which is obviously fluctuated in terms of leadership, appears as an inconsequential as if it has lost its role in the climate change suspension. The unreliable voluntarism roles of the governmental representatives are shown to be discussed on stage. Thus, Waters, in his play, is essentially aiming to urge the people in responsibility to take their real reactions into a deep consideration.

Injustice towards nature can be conceived as one of the important mutual characteristics of ecocritical and apocalyptic criticism. Environmental dystopia is supposed to be depicted in various works that deal with the man's negative impacts which initiate a catastrophe. Some works depend on an explosion which is caused by the humans' use of nuclear weapons, others come as a result of ill-preparations of some figures who took responsibility on their own shoulders to prepare for the protection of their people. The contemporary style of living can undoubtedly be considered secular. This provides Steve Waters with a strengthening opportunity to use the scientific arguments as a central technique in order to show a considerable awareness in the field of natural environment. Similarly to the first play, the discussions in *Resilience* give audience the sense of reliable touch in the play, this means they can adopt the essential responsibility towards nature and attempt to prevent natural disasters with their better interaction. Moreover, the consequences of Waters' work may also be seen in the way he portrays the political disorder and how the two wings challenge each other in their ill-treatment towards environment. In addition to that, the selfishness can be obviously witnessed in both characters of ministers in *Resilience*.

In the apocalyptic scenarios, the protagonist is highly expected to be a literate man, a social service member, a doctor, or a professor. Moreover, over the reading of its two acts, *Resilience* shows that characters are highly educated and intellectual. The creation of such characters represents a critical challenge to the author. This kind of scientific-based apocalyptic predicting works demands an elevated intelligence from the playwright. Steve Waters has consulted thirty-five glaciologists and oceanologists working in the British Antarctic Survey in order to have a satisfactory understanding to contribute *The Contingency Plan* (Bottoms, 2012), which with no doubt encompasses a deep and extensive contemplation of the apocalyptic disasters that nature carries as a reaction to human's abrupt acceleration in global warming. These two related characteristics of awareness and intellectuality person can be recognised as an obvious attempt to strengthen the major features of the play as an apocalyptic one. It is seen that Waters depends on the use of the activist-protagonist technique in *On The Beach*. In *Resilience*, the playwright continues to show that the voluntariness is led by such intellectual people. This type of figures has a social tendency which certainly offers another chance of public acceptance to the facts discussed in the context, otherwise the politicians' rhetorical speeches may influence people

negatively not to take action towards global warming problematic results. the activist protagonist technique shares its reflection with the New Man character in expressionism, which is demanded to be intelligent and affective. The activist character of a new man protagonist has a great sense of courageousness, that he may act depending on his own ethics and principles. Moreover, a new man is supposed to take actions and decisions at critical points, even though this may be a risky or fatal. This element is widely used to achieve the influential impact on audience's trustworthiness, thus Waters applies those different characteristics to create the character of Will which can easily be recognised by audience as an authentic scientist who aims to preserve humanity form fatal catastrophes.

The sever overwhelming floods depiction offers another influential feature to increase the state of panic during unavoidable disaster, thus the ambiguity of natural reaction may attain its extensive chance to appear abruptly during the contingent planning by both scientists and ministers. The gradual loss of coastal areas vividly shows that the administration power has an only single solution, which is urgent evacuation. This illustrates that man powers has limited control against natural ambiguous responses towards unsustainable environmental degradation. Again, this evokes the central meaning of a restricted voluntarism, the theme of determinism appears clearly in the last part of the play. The mixture of both deterministic thoughts and voluntaristic efforts can be undeniably perceived from the play, as if the writer aims to include them both and then gives the chance to determinism to defeat its philosophical opponent. Adopted by the good part of in the play, scientists, the deterministic predictions may initiate another philosophical discussion based on the events. The brighter side of voluntarism which belongs more to politicians can be considered as an attempt to indicate different philosophical basis to the apocalyptic representation on stage.

2.Conclusion

After the detailed reading of The Contingency Plan, the research has passed through a variety of concluded aspects related to the eco-critical principles and apocalyptic literature characteristics. Philosophically, the text employs a variety of terminology. The two complementary plays highly include the contemporary form of dualism in their essence. Compared to the traditional element

of dualism, which is a representation of good and evil in an apocalyptic confrontation, the contemporary framework employed by the playwright is highly extensive due to the different and developed mentality of the audience i.e. this wide border of dualism comes as a result of the variety of life in the twenty-first century. The secularization of dualism and other elements grants a credible attempt to achieve the appropriation of a rational public view for the problem. In both plays, dualism is supposed to be central in order to depict the oppositional thoughts of science and politics, as reflections to good and evil. The representation of dualism also varies to include other contrapositions between pessimism versus optimism, determinism versus voluntarism, and anthropocentrism versus ecocentrism. However, the text evokes the essential concept of determinism, which represents an obvious reference of free-will limitation. In both plays, the scientific arguments are implied to discuss the catastrophic warnings about the apocalypse, this offers a reasonable elaboration on the deterministic thoughts that come in coincidence with environmental awareness. In comparison, the employment of voluntarism, which refers to the united efforts to achieve control against natural disasters, is also intentionally contained in both plays in order to contribute a state of equalization attempt by the author. Finally, different from other linear apocalyptic literary works, the deterministic thoughts come to finish the storyline in order to offer a vivid image of the cataclysmic apocalypse.

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