



# **Affective Ecocriticism: From Environmental Crisis to the Crisis of Environmentalism**

Duygulanım Ekoeleştirisi: Çevre Krizinden  
Çevrecilik Krizine

**Sezgin Toska\***

## **Abstract**

This article discusses the crisis that environmentalism is currently facing and delves into the challenges it confronts in galvanizing people, authorities, institutions, and organizations to effectuate change. Despite environmentalism's success in raising awareness about environmental issues, it has fallen short of achieving the desired level of action. A proposed approach known as "affective ecocriticism" has been suggested in response to this issue. This approach involves identifying and addressing the affective elements influencing an individual's reaction to environmental concerns. The article recognizes the potential for individuals to develop desensitization or feelings of being overwhelmed due to the extensive volume of data and the magnitude of ecological destruction. Additionally, it acknowledges that environmental concerns can be perceived as abstract, leading individuals to disregard or evade them. By comprehensively understanding and

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\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü. İzmir-Türkiye/ İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Department of English Language and Literature. sezgin.toska@ikcu.edu.tr. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6539-1220

deliberately addressing these emotional obstacles, the ecological movement can progress towards effective solutions that prioritize the welfare of the Earth and its inhabitants. To invigorate environmentalism and overcome its limitations, affective ecocriticism and ecofictive narratives are posited as viable alternatives. Ecofictive narratives can establish a personal connection with the audience, kindle a sense of inspiration, and highlight individuals who serve as models for positive change. The article emphasizes the significance of employing affirmative emotions and fostering a sense of community through storytelling to engage individuals in environmental issues.

**Keywords:** *impact, affective ecocriticism, eco-narratives, environmentalism, environmental issues*

## Öz

Bu makale çevreciliğin şu anda karşı karşıya olduğu krizi ve aynı zamanda çevreciliğin insanları, yetkilileri, kurumları ve kuruluşları bir değişim gerçekleştirmeye teşvik etme konusunda karşılaştığı çıkmazı tartışmaktadır. Çevrecilik, çevre sorunlarına ilişkin farkındalığı artırmadaki başarısına rağmen istenilen eylemlerin gerçekleştirilmesi hususunda aynı başarıyı gösterememiştir. Bu sorunların çözümü noktasında “duygulanım ekoeleştirisi”si olarak bilinen bir yaklaşımın ne kadar ve nasıl faydalı olabileceği göz önünde bulundurulabilir. Bu yaklaşım, bireyin çevresel kaygılara tepkisini etkileyen duygulanımsal unsurların tanımlanmasını ve çözümlenmesini gerektirir. Geniş veri hacmi ve ekolojik yıkımın büyüklüğü nedeniyle bireylerin duyarsızlaşma veya bunalmışlık hissi geliştirme potansiyeli olduğu kabul edilir. Bununla beraber, çevresel kaygıların soyut olarak algılanma potansiyelinin olduğu ve bireylerin bunları göz ardı etmesine veya bunlardan kaçınmasına yol açabileceği de kabul edilir. Bu duygusal ve duygulanımsal engellerin kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılması ve bu farkındalık ile ele alınması sayesinde ekolojik hareket, dünyanın ve sakinlerinin refahına büyük önem veren etkili çözümlere doğru ilerleyebilir. Çevreciliği canlandırmak ve sınırlamalarının üstesinden gelmek için duygulanımsal ekoeleştirisi ve ekokurgusal anlatılar geçerli alternatifler olarak öne sürülür. Ekolojik kurgu anlatılar izleyiciyle kişisel bir bağ kurabilir, ilham duygusu ve kalıp metinleri ateşleyebilir ve olumlu değişim için model görevi gören bireyleri ön plana çıkarabilir. Bu bağlamda söz konusu çalışma, bireyleri çevre sorunlarına dâhil etmek için hikâye anlatımı yoluyla olumlu duygular ve duygulanımlar kullanmanın ve topluluk duygusunu geliştirmenin önemini vurgular.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *duygulanım, duygulanım ekoeleştirisi, ekoanlatılar, çevrecilik, çevresel meseleler*

## Introduction

In addition to natural disasters and ecological and environmental crises, environmentalism itself is now in a crisis. The environmentalist struggle has recently shown significant efforts and successes in informing people about environmental issues and keeping them on the

agenda. Nevertheless, this success of environmentalism in informing and making related events visible does not adequately demonstrate the desired success in mobilizing people, authorities, institutions, and organizations to effect change. In this respect, the environmental struggle has entered a deadlock, even a vicious circle. Although more informative efforts bring certain dynamism and mobility to the battle, they do not achieve the same level of action led by people. Therefore, environmentalism needs to address its own precarious state by first becoming aware of this crisis it has fallen into, second, identifying and investigating its causes, and third, looking for ways to overcome it. In this context, affective ecocriticism<sup>1</sup> might be a way to reinvigorate environmentalism. Moreover, it might offer a path forward for the shortcomings of environmentalism. In this respect, examining the crisis experienced by environmentalism through affective ecocriticism and ecocritical narratives will help to reveal the different dimensions and dynamics of this crisis.

Since the early years of environmentalism, it has strategically based its struggle on raising awareness. Informing people about environmental issues was one of mainstream environmentalism's most important action plans. Environmentalists have prioritized informing or even warning people about natural disasters, ecological degradation, pollution, and environmental problems. They hoped that through their awareness-raising efforts, people would become aware of these issues and start to take care of them, and, as a result, they would take action. Hayrettin Karaca, known as Toprak Dede, one of Turkey's leading environmentalists and one of the founders of the TEMA Foundation (The Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats), has encapsulated this global strategy of environmentalism as follows: "Knowledge, Interest, Reaction"(Karaca & Hristidis, 2008, p. 412). The underlying logic of this three-pronged strategy is that environmentalists will inform people about environmental issues. Then, the people informed about these issues will become interested in them, and eventually, they will be able to take action on these issues. From the inception of modern environmentalism, environmentalists' motivation to mobilize people on environmental issues has been to inform them. These strategies, which environmentalists insist on and follow, have successfully attracted people's attention. Moreover, unfortunately, environmentalists' projections of increasing environmental issues such as desertification, drought, species extinction, extreme weather patterns/events, pollution, and so on have been realized. Scientific-based and regular public disclosure and presentations have an essential place in achieving this success, creating a public discourse on environmental issues, and increasing public interest in them. At this point, environmentalists can expect that people will at least acknowledge their arguments. In this respect, pursuing information delivery to an even wider audience has made perfect sense. However, despite these successes in informative efforts, it seems that environmentalists still face some problems in mobilizing the public about environmental issues. As they attempt to inform and rally new people to their cause, they have come to realize that those they have previously reached out to are hesitant to take action and make changes that will benefit the environment. It is crucial for environmentalists to continue to find new ways to engage and motivate the public to take action for the good of the planet. Although the predictions

of environmentalists, unfortunately, come true at a rapid pace, though they provide more scientific information on related issues and develop interpretations through these scientific data, it seems that they do not elicit enough of a reaction from the public. In this context, it is evident that something has gone wrong in the assumption that more information will lead to more action. In fact, according to this strategy, every new knowledge of environmental issues, every new forecast, every new projection, every new warning, and every new danger should have strengthened public support. Former Environmental NGO leader Rex Weyler described this unaccountable situation:

People in the ecology movements are aware that today, with far more environmental groups, we actually have less wilderness; we have more environment ministers, conferences, and “protected areas,” but we have fewer species; we levy more carbon taxes yet produce greater emissions; we have more “green” products yet have less green space...The testimony of our collective failure blows around us like a chilling polar wind...After a half-century of environmentalism, we must admit that the world is less sustainable than in 1962. Why? (Weyler2013:189)

Weyler’s statements of failure make clear that environmental organizations and environmentalists, as well as politicians, executives, and practitioners, should question themselves once again regarding how much they have a share in the formation of this situation. In this context, it is possible to think that most of the solution plans put forward by politicians, implementing authorities, and environmentalist non-governmental organizations struggle to go beyond the greenwashing effect. Moreover, current public support has been neutralized under the influence of greenwashing, which has recently become dominant in the environmental struggle and especially in the search for solutions, and even this support is sometimes pacified due to futile and superficial attempts in the name of environmentalism. This puts into question how sincere and genuine the suggested solutions are. Therefore, it is not difficult to think that one can actually implement only limited environmental struggles and solutions for the benefit of the environment. While taking into account the fact that some environmental organizations and environmentalists may deliberately contribute to the occurrence of this situation, it should also be considered that some genuine efforts on behalf of the environment may result in supporting this dilemma as unpredictable and unintended consequences of their other well-intentioned actions. Since the dominant economic, cultural, and political systems are effective as an all-pervading force, environmental stances that make people feel better with globalization and new technological capacities seem to be increasingly inadequate. As Braidotti offers in *The Posthuman*: “Globalization means the commercialization of planet Earth in all its forms, through a series of inter-related modes of appropriation” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 7). In this way, superficial, make-up-like attempts are shown as actual environmentalist stances, and the destruction created by human beings is rendered invisible. Furthermore, the desired environmentalist stance is turned into a commodity and discredited by the same systems. The cunning aim here may be to ensure the continuity of environmentally destructive systems under the name of ‘environmentalism!’

### **Conceptual discussion of the crisis of environmentalism**

Recognizing the crisis of environmentalism, it is essential to approach environmental issues through affective<sup>2</sup> lenses in order to make significant progress in the field of environmentalism. This involves acknowledging and attending to the emotional weight that these concerns bear for individuals on a personal level. By recognizing that our reactions to environmental issues are often intertwined with our personal convictions and principles, one can better understand and address the underlying emotional factors at play. This underscores the need for an affective approach. By acknowledging these affective issues and addressing them, environmentalism may move towards effective solutions prioritizing the planet's and its inhabitants' well-being.

There are several concepts and preferences that deeply affect our response to the situation. These include psychic numbing<sup>3</sup>, the overwhelming amount of data, the sheer scale of ecological degradation, the abstractness of environmental problems, and the ostrich effect. One of the biggest challenges that people face when trying to tackle environmental problems is to have a psychic numbing that environmental issues can be overwhelming, both in terms of the sheer amount of data that needs to be processed and also in terms of the scale of the ecological degradation that people are facing. Thus, it is expected to become desensitized to the overwhelming data regarding ecological degradation. Additionally, many people find it challenging to connect with environmental problems on an emotional level, as these issues can often be quite distant or abstract from our daily lives and difficult to understand. There is also the issue of the "ostrich effect," where people bury their heads in the sand and try to ignore the problems right before them. This occurs when people avoid dealing with environmental issues because they feel a sense of inefficacy. It can seem overwhelming and leave them feeling hopeless, hindering their ability to find solutions and make positive changes, leading people to avoid and ignore all of those together. Additionally, fear mongers, who use fear as a tactic, can also contribute to this feeling of being overwhelmed, apathetic, and indifferent. Furthermore, the scientific community, in taking an anthropocentric or androcentric approach to environmental issues, may prioritize the rational over the emotional, thereby contributing to this phenomenon. However, both reason and emotion are necessary for creating effective solutions. All of these factors can make it challenging to engage people in the fight for the environment and even cause people to ignore the reality of the situation. This is why taking a step back and viewing these psychological concepts and preferences through affective lenses is essential. By renewing and revisiting them, one can discover new ways to approach environmentalism and make a genuine impact. Discovering ways to connect with the problems at hand and genuinely feel their effects is crucial. Doing so can enhance and reinvigorate our environmental efforts and create a brighter future for us and the planet.

Looking at the crisis of environmentalism through affective ecocriticism challenges the recent trend in environmental studies that focuses heavily on big data. The general population is constantly producing or being impacted by data without even realizing it. Consequently, environmental concerns have primarily been addressed via numerical information. While data can provide valuable insight into the extent and the gravity of

environmental concerns in determining the importance and scale of environmental issues, relying solely on numerical information can have both advantages and disadvantages. Paul Slovic and Scott Slovic discuss the benefits and shortcomings of big data expression in their introduction to *Numbers and Nerves: Information, Emotion, and Meaning in a World of Data*. Two distinctive features stand out in their discussion of the concept of psychic numbing produced by environmental struggle. First, they explain the combined utility and insufficiency of quantitative sampling: “we require data in order to describe such phenomena as contamination, genocide, species extinction, and climate change. But the data alone, while bolstering the authority of journalists and scientists, tend to wash past audiences with minimal impact” (Slovic & Slovic, 2015, p. 1). Environmentalists can increase their credibility and emphasize the importance of environmental issues through data-driven arguments. However, relying heavily on quantitative data may limit their impact on their target audience and those they have already engaged with. It is essential to consider the potential adverse effects of this approach. Their second point introduces a sort of this negative affect: “anything that happens on a large scale seems to require that we use numbers to describe it, and yet the numbers are precisely the mode of discourse that, in most cases, leaves audiences numb and messages devoid of meaning”(Slovic & Slovic, 2015, p. 2). It is important to consider the psychological challenges of addressing environmental issues, mainly when dealing with large-scale problems. In the context of the environmental movement, the point here is that people are psychologically prone to losing interest when faced with a great scale number of events. Focusing on major and holistic environmental problems such as global warming and melting glaciers can also create another perspectival disadvantage for environmentalism. It is possible to see the reflections and traces of this and similar discussions in Timothy Morton’s Hyperobject conversation regarding the scale and disadvantage perspectives. Morton, who offers that people are dealing with something that transcends the human scale, especially on ecological issues, defines the hyperobject as:

In *The Ecological Thought* I coined the term hyperobjects to refer to things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans.1 A hyperobject could be a black hole. A hyperobject could be the Lago Agrio oil field in Ecuador, or the Florida Everglades. A hyperobject could be the biosphere, or the Solar System. A hyperobject could be the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth; or just the plutonium, or the uranium. A hyperobject could be the very long-lasting product of direct human manufacture, such as Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism. Hyperobjects, then, are “hyper” in relation to some other entity, whether they are directly manufactured by humans or not. (Morton, 2013:1)

The extent of ecological degradation and environmental pollution is much greater than what people can perceive, understand, and internalize. These issues are primarily quantified through numbers, which can lead to a rapid disconnection from the reality of the situation for many individuals and may result in an abstraction of environmental issues. As Bill McKibben notes, “... We face the biggest single thing human beings have ever done, so big as to be almost invisible” (Atwood & McKibben, 2011, p. 4). Environmental problems,

whose scales go far beyond what people can grasp and make sense of, give the impression that they encircle people from all sides in the sense that people are trapped in them. The vast scale of environmental issues can be overwhelming and may make people feel trapped. It may feel as though these issues are all-encompassing and inescapable. On the other hand, the overwhelming and vast scale of environmental issues can make them seem abstract and cause psychic numbing, making it difficult for people to fully comprehend the impact of these problems and even their actual existence, leading to a sense of detachment and denial. Environmentalists and the public should be aware of how (big) data can numb them to environmental issues. To combat this, affective strategies should be incorporated alongside traditional approaches to strengthen environmentalism.

Along with the Slovic's main points on the reasons behind psychic numbing, the constant repetition of information and news, including topics like global warming, melting glaciers, forest fires, pollution, fish deaths, floods, and drought on environmental concerns, can contribute to this phenomenon. Furthermore, the use of repetitive language, figures, and discourse in discussions of environmental issues can also lead to a decline in public engagement.

Additionally, the constant barrage of environmental issues can make them seem mundane, which can weaken the public's response to them. A much greater number of people's exposure to similar information will also make them more likely to lose interest in these issues. A large amount of publicization of similar types of environmental problems with similar numerical data carries the risk of the routinization of related issues. It may cause people to get used to these events with psychic numbing. This sense of apathy, coupled with anti-environmentalist challenges, poses a risk to the public's awareness and sensitivity towards environmental issues. Even if they are based on updated identified figures and numbers based on newly discovered data, using numbers and statistics alone to communicate information about environmental issues with similar contents can lead to a sense of detachment and apathy. To effectively engage and increase awareness, it is crucial to incorporate relatable content and personal connections. By tapping into people's emotions, individuals can develop a deeper connection with environmental issues. Instead of presenting environmental information solely through numbers and data, sharing news and stories that evoke an emotional response can be more effective in raising awareness and inspiring action. Without this approach, even widespread coverage may seem like just another meaningless statistic: a number without any real impact.

The overwhelming amount of data about environmental destruction, including climate change, global warming, species extinction, drought, floods, pollution, and poisoning, in addition to developing psychic numbing, can also lead to a paralyzing effect. This information overload can make environmental issues seem even more complicated and daunting, causing people to feel powerless and unable to take action. Heather Houser's book *Infowhelm* (Houser, 2020) delves into this issue and explains how the flood of information can hinder people's ability to make meaningful contributions to the fight against environmental problems. Despite individuals' concerns and desire to address environmental issues, the sheer

amount of information can impede active participation and make it seem impossible to make a difference. The disempowerment caused by this overwhelming data can create a false sense of inefficacy called pseudo-inefficacy, which has also been explored in Slovic's work<sup>4</sup>.

People may think that environmental issues are bigger than they are, and they may believe that there is nothing they can do in order to cope with these ecological issues that are too big to resolve. Thus, they may feel that they are no help in the environmental struggle by feeling hopeless. Renee Lertzman claims that people's inaction on ecological problems is not related to their lack of concern, but some psychoanalytic issues impede their capacity to translate that concern into action. She argues, "In fact, people can care a whole a lot and still do very little because a deep sense of fear and anxiety underlies our concern for the future. And what we learn from psychoanalytic research and practice are the ways in which fear and anxiety can contribute to paralysis..." (Lertzman, 2015: 5). Therefore, especially the distressful information emphasizing only the ecological problems and the large scale of these problems may be discouraging and paralyzing. The public, especially individuals, may think their contribution would not be meaningful in the face of such complex and great-scale environmental issues. This can also reveal a kind of pseudo-inefficacy. Reinforcing the idea that the public and individuals are powerless to act on these issues. Any potential solution to a problem of this scale and complexity requires enormous challenges, transnational consensus, and radical shifts in economic, cultural, and political systems. This problem's large scale-in terms of time and scope- causes individuals to think that these problems have reached an irreparable and hopeless point. Therefore, taking action on these issues can seem futile.

Along with the psychic numbing and paralyzing effect, there is a concern that presents environmental information mostly through numbers; negative statistics reinforced with pessimistic tables have been known to have adverse effects on people, leading to a phenomenon known as the ostrich effect. This kind of detrimental effect on individuals causes them to feel overwhelmed too and disregard the issue at hand. Even environmentalists themselves can be impacted by this approach. In certain situations, providing additional numerical data to individuals already struggling with the effects of psychic numbing, paralyzing feelings, and a sense of helplessness may reinforce the belief that environmental problems are becoming increasingly hopeless. This can cause individuals, including environmentalists, to feel more pessimistic and desperate about the situation. In fact, under these circumstances, presenting more numerical data can even backfire by creating more fear and making people even more apathetic. This situation may pose a similar risk for the target audience intended to be reached and consolidated. Kristin Haltinner and Dilshani Sarathchandra argue that; "climate change skepticism and denial is, at least in some cases, a form of an exaggerated ostrich effect, whereby adherents are so driven to avoid learning about a specific problem; they actively seek to construct an alternative, safer, narrative. Given this predisposition, attempting to challenge such skepticism with information is counterproductive" (Haltinner & Sarathchandra, 2018, p. 2). When people think that environmental issues have reached a point where they are irreparable and where there is no hope, they may experience some feelings such as eco-anxiety, discrepancy, despair, ecological grief, and distress. These ambivalent feelings of



environmentalists, as well as the public, trigger hopelessness, powerlessness, and inaction. In this respect, scientific knowledge, especially more information shaped by numerical data, may cause people to flee to safer ports rather than mobilize them to effective remedies.

Hence, it's noteworthy that an abundance of scientific knowledge has the potential to unite deniers, skeptics, and environmentalists in an unfavorable manner. Rather than promoting action, it could lead to inactivity among all parties involved, including environmentalists, skeptics, and deniers. Furthermore, from this perspective, it's essential to recognize the continuous hazards linked to the ongoing environmental crisis. Many individuals depend on science to tackle environmental issues and believe it will provide solutions. As a result, some individuals rely on science to alleviate environmental problems, just as others assume that future generations have the capacity and motivation to resolve them. However, these attitudes can lead to neglecting the significance of taking immediate action and externalizing environmental problems onto science and future generations. Providing more information may offer environmentalists, deniers, and skeptics a sense of relief and a way to avoid ecological responsibility. Accordingly, Paul M. Kellstedt et al. point out that people who trust scientists, media, and policy experts on global warming and climate change are less concerned about these problems. They do not worry about the risks of environmental degradation and believe that scientists will somehow be able to create technical devices to solve any problems caused by global warming and climate change (Kellstedt & others, 2008, p. 121). It is necessary to understand that spreading solely scientific information can adversely affect people's actions. The conflation of fear-mongering tactics with the information mentioned earlier has the potential to elicit inactivity and the ostrich effect. Similarly, externalization narratives that create a sense of escapism can also result in inactivity, especially for those who prefer safer narratives. Sometimes, people are given information that suggests there are always more resources and technological advancements available, which can make them feel like they do not need to worry too much about environmental issues. Trusted sources like scientists, the media, and politicians can reinforce this attitude. The level of trust that people have in sources such as science, media, and policy experts can also play a role in this phenomenon. Additionally, the cornucopian<sup>5</sup> approach to science, which suggests that technology can solve all environmental problems, can make people feel nonchalant, overly optimistic, and unmotivated. It's also important to acknowledge that some individuals may find comfort in narratives that feel safe, especially if they have experienced the ostrich effect before. However, it is vital to keep in mind that these externalization narratives can lead to inactivity due to excessive optimism and nonchalance.

Sometimes, even with good intentions of protecting the environment, the information provided and the way it is presented can actually hinder progress by discouraging action. Even though science, information, and data can be environmentally friendly, they can create inactivism and opposition to environmental causes in addition to anti-environmental ones. This impasse also calls into question information production systems by earth-centered, environmental, and eco-friendly approaches, as well as anthropocentric science and data production systems. Anthropocentric science and data production systems prioritizing human interests over nature have been found to cause environmental destruction. If these systems continue to produce

more science, technology, and knowledge without being questioned and reformed, they could hinder efforts to protect nature, however new and updated they are. Depending on how well people think through scientific ideas and how people interact with them, science has the potential to have a significant impact on people's capacity to handle important issues, notably environmental ones. It may be necessary to analyze closer the scientific and academic discourse that develops that is not in line with an environmentally friendly mindset. However, it is worth noting that a hierarchical, dualistic, and authoritarian way of thinking is harmful to both nature and humankind. Furthermore, in this mental environment, these innovations continued to be seen as the fulcrum at the expense of nature. In fact, it has been noticed that those things that harm nature are given favor in each decision that needs to be made.

Additionally, these disassents have evolved to create so-called binary oppositions such as culture/nature, civilized/savage, science/art, reason/emotion, male/female, mind/body, general/particular, global/local, first world/third world. The concept of nature is often connoted with a subordinate or secondary position in these oppositions. These oppositions often prioritize one side over the other. While some preferences and methods on the former side of the binary oppositions are lauded, others on the latter side of the binary oppositions are defined as undervalued relations, traits, concepts, and virtues and cause people to contribute to the misuse, even exploitation, of nature. Thus, they somehow have also managed to reason and justify nature's misuse, abuse, and exploitation as much as nature's use in this process. This intellectual environment separates reason and emotion prioritizing the former over the latter as the only reliable source to seek truth. This has led to a lack of trust in emotions and a focus on reason as the sole criteria for decision-making, especially on issues concerning nature and the environment. As a result, nature has been both used and abused in this process.

In contemporary scientific discourse, the epistemic values of the discipline are often based on a quantitative approach that prioritizes numerical statistical data while overlooking emotional factors. While this approach has its merits, it can also be limiting when it comes to comprehending and explicating natural phenomena. The complexity and intricacies of natural phenomena cannot be fully encapsulated by statistical data alone, and the emotional and affective dimensions of human-nature interactions cannot be ignored. Therefore, to develop a comprehensive understanding of natural phenomena, it is crucial to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach that acknowledges the significance of emotions and affect in scientific inquiry.

Affective Ecocriticism, exploring the potential tropes present in ecofictional narratives, particularly those that tap into the affective dimension realm, may help reignite in reinvigorate the environmental movement by appealing to both the conscious and subconscious minds. Such narratives that elicit an emotional response can be analyzed through affective theories in ecocritical analysis to understand better how they contribute to the environmental crisis and resonate with readers through their capacity to address the affective faculties.

The negative emotions and feelings that arise from and also refer to the victimization of people and nature due to environmental crimes can be useful in addressing the

overwhelming, science-based, and rationalized nature of environmental issues. By providing concrete examples of the consequences of these crimes, negative emotions have the potential to illustrate environmental problems as tangible and embodied examples, countering the numbness that often results from abstract discussions of the topic. Although negative emotions and affects are usually viewed in a negative light due to their association with ideas of dominance, subordination, rape, and devaluation in environmental conservations, they can still be utilized to argue that both humans and nature suffer from environmental crimes. In fact, these emotions can be leveraged to create a more tangible and relatable argument for the harm caused by environmental crimes. Unfortunately, people tend to lose touch with ecological disasters quickly, making it challenging for them to comprehend the severity of the situation. However, ecofictive narratives have the potential to evoke emotions and connect with people on a personal level, providing a more personalized understanding of ecological issues through their affective power. By tapping into our emotions, these narratives can help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and concrete realities, making these issues more accessible and relatable. On the other hand, positive and motivating affects and emotions have the ability to transform the relationship between humans and nature in a constructive manner, altering traditional connotations as one of the major challenges facing environmentalism is the failure to translate theories and knowledge into desired actions. This approach, providing inspiring and motivating affects and emotions, has the potential to overcome inaction and facilitate the necessary steps towards environmental protection.

### **Analysis of ecofiction in the light of Affective Ecocriticism<sup>6</sup>**

Environmental problems can often appear abstract and difficult for people to understand or take action against. However, ecofictive works have the potential to weave these issues into relatable and understandable narratives, thus preventing them from becoming abstract. By doing so, they can create an emotional connection to environmental problems, which helps avoid psychic numbing and motivate people to take action. Additionally, ecofictive works can break down complex environmental issues into manageable pieces, preventing feelings of overwhelm, paralysis, and ostrich effects. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge the role of ecofiction in preventing negative effects of environmental issues and promoting actionable responses to these issues.

*The Glass Factory* by K.H. Wishnia (2001) provides a salient example of the transition towards a more unified view of nature and human beings. It provides examples and insights that could aid in overcoming the multifaceted challenges associated with this pressing matter of environmental issues and how to address them properly and efficiently. The central plot of the novel centers on the critical topics of hazardous waste management, political malpractice, and homicide. The protagonist, Filomena Buscarsela, has linked Morse, an industrialist with an influential financial domain, to deceitful undertakings, crooked politics, and poisonous waste elimination. As the story unfolds, it is disclosed that his cutting-edge facility on Long Island is the source of water pollution.

The novel provides an insightful example of the shift towards a more cohesive perspective between nature and humanity. Within the story, mother Buscarsela, the main character, offers a profound quote: “If you stare long enough, things begin to come alive. You see more than just water, carbon, minerals, green stuff. You see yourself. It’s what we’re made of, too. In the same proportions, the planet has” (Wishnia, 2001: 228). This quote highlights the idea that nature and human beings are not two separate entities but, instead, have a close relationship. Conventionally accepted doctrines and teachings often emphasize the separation between humans and nature, which leads to the abstraction of nature’s destructions, disasters, environmental problems, and pollution. However, in *The Glass Factory*, the heroine takes a contrary stance and suggests the existence of human nature unity underneath with a philosophical approach that can help address nature destruction and environmental issues. By emphasizing the unity of nature and humans, *The Glass Factory* offers a crucial example in addressing the interconnectedness of human beings and environmental issues. This view can also help to break down the barriers between humans and nature, which can make it easier to address environmental problems and promote a more sustainable future.

The issue of environmental pollution-human unity/connection can be highlighted in ecofictive works, in addition to the philosophical expression of nature-human unity. *A River Out of Eden* by John Hockenberry (2002) explores the toxic connection between humans and the environment at a somatic level in the Columbia River region. The novel examines the impact of dams on the native people and the environment, with a focus on the endangered salmon and the somatic connection between pollution and humans. The novel also sheds light on the ramifications of dams and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation on the community and ecosystem, highlighting the impact of environmental problems on human life at an individual level. The novel helps to transition from generalizations to more specific individual-level discussions about the impact of environmental problems on human life:

There were to be more children than just Sammy. A daughter, Delia, had lived for a few days before dying of complications of severe birth defects. Another boy, Timothy, was stillborn. Rebecca was wounded and deeply suspicious of these failed pregnancies. They made her feel as though she was an instrument for detecting nuclear events, as though the plutonium in their lives had invaded her womb. She thought her husband had barely noticed her pregnancies or how badly they had ended. (Hockenberry, 2002: 167)

At this juncture, the relationship between women and nature encompasses not only the conversion of the abstract nature-human amalgamation into a material reality but also the revelation of the universal trajectory of this amalgamation at a particular level through the agency of toxic substances. Expressing environmental problems in this way helps to save global environmental pollution and environmental issues from a level that can exceed people’s perception. In addition, it is ensured that these issues are presented to people in a concrete and particular way. This gives readers the opportunity and ability to perceive and internalize these concrete and particular environmental problems and think with their own scope and capacity. Presented in the context of affective approach, the abuses and destructions of nature and women go beyond just being a philosophical discourse and can turn into practical

examples with such trajectories. This can once again strengthen the necessity of addressing environmental problems in more concrete, visible, palpable, and perceptible dimensions.

Nevertheless, environmental issues can often be challenging to understand and perceive, even when they are specific, particular, and concrete. Sometimes, discussing and specifying environmental issues is not enough to make people comprehend their gravity; people need to experience the direct effects of environmental destruction to comprehend its impact fully. Those who work in illegal or legal toxic dumping jobs, whether knowingly or unknowingly, may not realize that their actions harm the environment. They may remain unaware of the environmental problems and pollution that they contribute to and may think that the destruction they cause to the environment will not affect them. This is because they perceive environmental issues and pollution as abstract, isolated, and separate from their own and other people's lives, too. Environmental destruction may not matter to them if they are not negatively influenced by environmental issues. However, even if they know the environmental degradation, they may still think that they or others will not be affected by the destruction they experience or witness in person. However, things can become a little more complicated when the actions they take one way or another affect them and, moreover, their favorite and beloved ones, as stated in *The Last Good Chance* by Tom Barbash (2002). The novel is about Jack Lambeau, a city planner from New York, who is tasked to restore the harbourfront of his hometown in Lakeland. But toxic waste left from the industrial past was dumped carelessly in the same area. To get rid of the barrels, the mayor asks Jack's brother to dump them on nearby farms. The decision causes severe environmental consequences such as those Jack's brother Harris's little daughter is suffering from:

"My baby girl's got some growth problems."

"How's that?"

"Slow development. Low blood counts. The doctor said Marla might have been exposed to chemicals. He asked her what kind of work her husband did, and did she wash his clothes for him". (Barbash, 2002: 286)

This novel may help to reveal that emotional and affective features can play a vital role in helping people internalize the consequences of environmental issues and make people comprehend their gravity. The novel depicts that individuals who are exposed to environmental pollution, whether by choice or not, are the ones who bear the brunt of its harmful effects. Curiously, those least culpable for causing pollution are often the most impacted by it. Nevertheless, using emotional features and instruments to portray the negative consequences of pollution on vulnerable individuals can be crucial in making the (so-called) invisible environmental pollution more concrete and its effects more tangible. Therefore, ecofictive narratives through the capacity to affect people profoundly, highlighting the emotional toll of pollution on vulnerable individuals can inspire people to take greater responsibility for their actions. Ecofictive narratives effectively convey the human toll of environmental destruction by highlighting the impact on mothers, siblings, children, and babies. By depicting their personal illnesses as a direct result of ecological problems and the portrayal of mothers, siblings, children, and babies as ecological victims, narratives establish a vital link between

the destruction of nature and the corresponding damage to humanity. Additionally, these portrayals personalize the abstract and generalized notion of environmental ruin, making it more tangible, specific, and relatable at both the individual, the group, and community levels.

Affect theory is a valuable tool in ecocriticism that goes beyond empathy and sympathy to understand and analyze environmental concerns. While portraying close relatives as ecological victims and addressing personal illnesses caused by environmental problems can activate feelings of sympathy and empathy, it is important to acknowledge the broader scope of affect theory and its applications in environmentalism. By exploring the various ways in which affect can be used to comprehend and address environmental issues, a more sophisticated and holistic understanding of the intricate dynamics between humans and the natural world can be developed. In human interactions, there tends to be a collection of numerous little inputs like affect that can have various outcomes depending on the situation, timing, and location of these inputs. This is often the first step in which affect theory distinguishes itself from emotion. Affect is not restricted to just empathy and sympathy, despite those being the aspects that are commonly seen in these types of environmental narratives. However, the primary goal should be to generate affects that can mobilize people in a way that contributes to environmental activism. Emotion and affect should be treated as separate concepts in this context. Affect cannot be directly defined like a conventional grasp, but it holds the potential to impact in different ways and arises through direct activating forms<sup>7</sup>.

*With Malicious Intent* by M. T. Kingsley (2004) may exemplify the incorporation of affective elements in ecofictive literature. The novel is about an environmental lawyer, Rebecca Boudreaux, who fights against Triple R, a hazardous waste company. She represents the residents affected by the company's illegal disposal of dangerous wastes that jeopardizes the health and safety of nearby communities. During the case, Rebecca discovers falsified reports and toxic pollutants, making the case more complicated as the book also highlights the challenges faced in environmental lawsuits. By holding significant potential for catalyzing transformative processes within individuals and groups, this work serves to demonstrate how ecovictims and their kin can progress beyond passive expressions of grief and move towards actively effecting change. It is posited that the inclusion of emotional components like sentiments and affective states can be pivotal in instigating such a transformation. This motif of affect-driven metamorphosis is a recurrent theme present not just in this book but in various ecofictive narratives. The way the novel describes the community's history and the determination of its members to combat ecological devastation and its repercussions is a clear example of how affective factors can be a powerful motivator for action. This is an important reminder that affective elements are not just expressions of despair but can also be powerful motivators that inspire positive change:

After all, nearly every one of them had someone in their family who had suffered illness or died for reasons that could not be clearly defined by the doctors. In fact, Billy's two-year-old daughter, Ruby, had died last year because of a rare brain tumor – well, rare in the world at large, but seemingly not as unusual in this part of Louisiana. In fact, Clark's own cousin, who also lived near Clark and Billy in Ascension Parish, had recently died of a strikingly similar affliction. (Kingsley, 2004: 52)

Despite the palpable anguish, agony, and melancholy experienced by the affected parties, as well as the overwhelming sense of negativity and hopelessness systematically instilled by perpetrators of environmental crimes, these characters in the novel come together. They take action to do something in order to prevent similar losses from happening in the future. However, they know they cannot bring back what they have lost; they gain strength from all these affective elements and use them as a driving force to take action. It is noteworthy that affective elements constitute one of the most critical points in taking action to do whatever they can without hesitation. In this context, the attitude of families driven by affective factors and willing to take immediate action regardless of the cost is crucial. This attitude becomes more meaningful when considering that nature has been deliberately excluded from our existence, both in terms of philosophy and society. Additionally, there have been organized endeavors to minimize the physical damage, complications, and contamination that result from this lack of connection. These efforts align with the dominant perception and attitudes towards nature. They also involve the manipulation of time in an attempt to convince people that these problems are not pertinent to the present but rather something that future generations will have to contend with. Consequently, these issues are being passed on to future generations as their own burdens to bear. However, the issue of environmental problems has transitioned from being a distant concern for future generations to an immediate crisis that requires concerted attention and action from people today, especially when the closest family members are suffering from them. Since the issue of environmental problems has become more pressing than ever before they are no longer ignorable. At the U.N. Climate Change Summit, former President Obama made a point by referring to a governor's remarks; "We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it." So today, I'm here personally,...to say that we have begun to do something about it" (Obama, 2015). The examination of ecocriticism from an affective perspective reveals the intricate relationship between humans and nature, which is a complex and dynamic one that can be viewed from different perspectives, such as a fate or a partnership as portrayed and personalized in ecofictional narratives. Despite their symbolic or indirect presentation of environmental issues, such narratives can raise awareness of environmental concerns. However, due to their affective nature, these narratives can also foreground the issue of ecovictimization. A contemporary or transformative affective ecocritical approach can be employed to transcend this negative theme, which sheds light on positive and hopeful expectations in the fight for the environment. By incorporating both positive and negative trajectories of environmental issues, a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis can be attained under this perspective.

Upon initial observation, the affective components of ecofiction may appear to only contribute to the internalization and adoption of environmental issues through negative themes functioning merely as a means of increasing environmental awareness through pessimistic depictions. However, these elements possess the capacity to fulfill a much broader purpose. Specifically, they can serve as a pivotal instrument in not only emphasizing the devastation and agony brought about by environmental deterioration, but also in eliciting affirmative and

hopeful sentiments previously disregarded within the environmental movement. It becomes apparent that affective components serve as the foundation when examining the motives and timing of individuals who take action for the environment in literary works. This is similar to what is seen in real life, as Ulrich Beck points out in his work:

Parents whose children suffer attacks of pseudo-croup bang their heads against the walls of scientific denials of the existence of modernization risks. All those who have seen the way their child hacks and coughs at night, living in bed, eyes wide with terror and fighting for air, can only speak of infinite fear. Now that they have learned that pollutants in the air threaten not just trees, soil, and water, but also infants and young children, they no longer accept the coughing fits as acts of fate. They have joined together across Germany in more than 100 citizens' initiative groups. Their demand is, 'Reduce sulfur dioxide instead of just gassing about it!.' (König, Der Stern, April 1985) (Beck, 1992: 61)

People's perceptions of environmental issues can change drastically when they experience the loss of their loved ones due to environmental issues and witness their suffering firsthand. Such events can create a deep emotional connection to the issue at hand; when they feel deeply connected to their fate and grief, they may begin to view environmental issues in a different light. Affected individuals may develop a newfound perception of environmental issues, recognizing the devastating implications they can have on both human life and the natural world. Their experiences transcend mere numbers or intricate legal maneuvers, statistical data that can be manipulated and legal constraints that allow for some amount of poisoning and destruction in the environment. These individuals may view such information as masking and disguising strategies that do not accurately convey the actual dangers of environmental issues. In their eyes, the loss of loved ones and natural beings is a clear indication that action needs to be taken, regardless of any fabricated logical or so-called reasonable justifications that may be presented. They believe that ecocriminals often use such tactics to obscure the gravity of the situation and that the loss of human and natural life is a call to action that cannot be ignored. Such tricks may not keep them inactive when people are sure and wholeheartedly feel and believe that they are losing their loved ones as well as natural beings; that is why people can stop harmful actions now.

This ecofiction book titled *The Silent Justice* by William Bernhardt (2000) provides various instances of such an attitude. The novel explores the struggles of families who have lost their children to leukemia and their fight to hold the responsible parties accountable for their actions. In the novel, families who have tragically lost their children between the ages of 8 and 15 to leukemia take action to punish those responsible for it. Families who do not have the necessary and sufficient means and strength for such an arduous struggle, nevertheless, even if they know how little their chances are, they want to try even the slightest opportunity that they can get. This is because of the deep sadness of losing their loved ones in a horrible way, which urges them to do their best in this challenging struggle as well as they have still some hopes. Despite their previous failed attempts, these families affected by the rare leukemia disease are determined to move forward. Their determination leads them to find a lawyer who could handle their case. However, persuading the lawyer to take their case is complicated since these families have no evidence other than their gut instinct. They firmly believe that



the Blaylock Corporation is responsible for polluting the drinking water wells in their town, causing the increasing rate of the rare leukemia that their children have suddenly contracted. However, environmental pollution and protection cases are particularly challenging. Proving the accusations made in these cases and providing evidence related to the case is difficult. In this case, the families must first prove that Blaylock Corporation has contaminated the well and then that the water from this well has caused the children's leukemia. Even if they manage to establish this link, they will incur a significant financial burden to prove it. Bin Kincaid, a lawyer known for his kindness, is on the verge of bankruptcy, but he is familiar with the specific challenges that come with environmental cases. When approached by families who want him to take on a case against a huge corporation, even his own office manager calls it a "kamikaze lawsuit." However, Kincaid believes that the cancer cluster in question cannot be a mere coincidence, but finding evidence to prove this is difficult and expensive since common sense alone is not sufficient evidence. Though he anticipates that the judge will dismiss the case before it even reaches a jury, yet the tragic stories and the heartbreaking narratives shared by the families are key factors in his decision to take on the case:

Ben listened to those stories and all the others. Each time he thought he had the worst, he found out he was wrong. Rarely in his life had he sat in a room in which the sense of tragedy was so palpable. These were grieving parents, mothers, and fathers who had poured their hearts and souls into raising their children, only to lose them due to something entirely outside their control. There could be nothing worse than that, Ben thought. Nothing at all. (Bernhardt, 2000: 48)

The affective features and characteristics may help people to have proactive attitudes toward environmental issues. Sometimes, feelings, emotions, and affective features may be influential on the decision-making processes when logic, reason, and facts tell otherwise. To risk and to try to do something considering an inevitable failure may not be possible without relying on affective issues. Affective characteristics can be powerful tools in promoting proactive attitudes towards environmental issues. Sometimes, these affective characteristics can influence people's decision-making processes more strongly than logic, reason, or facts. In fact, it may be impossible to take risks and attempt to tackle environmental challenges in the face of inevitable failure without relying on these affective factors. This underscores the necessity for environmentalists to remember the crucial role of affective features in fighting for environmental causes. People have a tendency to do what is right, even if it goes against their own self-interest. The families and Kincaid are willing to risk everything to prevent more children from falling victim to environmental hazards. This highlights the urgent need to address environmental issues that are becoming increasingly intolerable. People often do not let consequences stop them from doing the right thing, even if it is not in their best interest when environmental issues are becoming increasingly intolerable, as such problems are not just abstract concepts - they have real, tangible, and immediate impacts on families and communities.

*With Malicious Intent* (2004) also portrays a similar scenario. However, in this novel, attorney characters who handle environmental issues are associated with an organization. However, their decision-making process regarding which cases to take on and which one

should be prioritized is influenced by various factors. Unlike Kincaid in *The Silent Justice*, Rebecca, the attorney in this novel, is susceptible not only to economic threats but also to spiritual and physical dangers. Despite these risks, it becomes apparent that one of the primary reasons for Rebecca's decision to take on the case is again the heart-wrenching stories she encounters:

Rebecca had other cases pending, but this case was particularly important to her because of the alleged severity of the problems and the concern of the residents of the area surrounding the Triple R plant. She had attended several neighborhood meetings where the locals exchanged stories of their families' recent health problems and voiced frustrations over the inaction of both the company and the agencies responsible for regulating the plant. The stories were heart-wrenching. One baby had died after being diagnosed with brain tumors, several others had developed unusual forms of cancer, and elderly people routinely experienced severe respiratory problems. In the face of these tragedies, Rebecca found it easy to put her own life on hold. Perhaps too easy. (Kingsley, 2004: 20-21)

Despite seeking assistance from law firms that work for the public interest and act in an organized manner, individuals who fall victim to environmental issues can still become open targets of companies, organizations, institutions, and individuals that cause environmental problems, putting them at risk of financial, spiritual, and physical threats and attacks. Despite being threatened to give up not the case with direct and indirect messages, Rebecca risks her life to pursue it after listening to stories that appeal to her heart, stimulating feelings of empathy and sympathy. These stories show decisively how environmental problems deeply injure or even kill vulnerable people. What motivates the characters that suffer from the consequences of environmental degradation on their own lives in both books is similar. The resemblance between Kincaid from *The Silent Justice* and Clark Boudin, the leader of the ecovictims in the neighborhood from *With Malicious Intent*, is likewise noteworthy. Both characters share similar emotional responses and motivations. In the latter book, Clark Boudin explains the motivation and intention of the ecological victims to Billy; who lost his baby by stating, "I know this won't bring baby Ruby back, but it may stop other people from losing loved ones too" (Kingsley, 2004, p. 53). Obviously, it is impossible to undo the harm done or bring back the lives lost. However, ecofictive works also emphasize the importance of taking action to prevent further destruction of nature and avoid future losses and tragedies. Characters in ecofictive novels who have experienced immense grief and sadness due to environmental problems do not ignore the suffering of others. Instead, they take responsibility and do their best to prevent others from experiencing the same pain. This attitude is often associated with a sense of spiritual commitment and empathy beginning with affect rather than reason or material gain. Families who have suffered losses due to environmental crimes are portrayed as responsible individuals who use their emotional intelligence and affective capacities to challenge risks associated with environmental problems and persuade lawyers to take action. By taking action, they demonstrate that they are not helpless victims but rather individuals who are willing to challenge adversity and take responsibility for the environment and their community.

It is worth noting that not just civil citizens but also state officials, and competent bodies frequently rely on affective elements to persuade and encourage their colleagues and stakeholders to take action against environmental problems and crimes. It is important to recognize that affective appeals are frequently used by authorities and professional organizations to motivate and inspire their peers and constituents to address environmental issues and offenses. These appeals often prove to be more impactful than other forms of communication in this particular realm. This trend is exemplified in the eco-fiction book *Countdown in Alaska* by Lidia Llamas and Charles LoPinto (2000):

Since her child's death, Mrs. Gutierrez had moved up the ranks with a resolute furor to become deputy assistant director of the FBI. She was skilled at her job, put herself through all the rigors of the training, and worked very hard at organizing this new unit. She wanted the best people; she was determined to bring the villains to justice. (Llamas-LoPinto & LoPinto, 2000:15)

Mrs. Gutierrez lost a child to leukemia five years ago due to the poisons dumped under their home. She realized too late that the chemicals were slowly attacking the most vulnerable ones in the family-the children. She also learns that their neighbors' children have also developed illnesses, and two children died of leukemia. It is important to note that affective elements can be used not only for seeking revenge for a personal issue but also for taking action to address broader problems as it is presented in this novel. The mother character who has lost her child due to environmental pollution and leukemia may be motivated to advance in her career with a sense of fury and determination to make a difference. In this context individuals who are affectively motivated by making a positive impact in their professional lives can potentially identify and pursue opportunities within their organizations to contribute to environmental activism. Although the motivation for taking action against eco-destructive actions may stem from the harm caused to ecovictims in the narratives discussed so far, the ultimate goal should transcend mere retaliation or punishment. Rather than reacting in retaliation or punishment, it is important to develop a proactive attitude that aims to prevent such actions from happening in the future by holding those responsible accountable for their actions and increasing deterrence to discourage similar behavior.

The prevailing perception among many individuals, including those within the professional sphere, is that environmental issues are trivial and mere women's work, as revealed in the novel. In some cases, the task is even viewed as a hindrance to career advancement. However, upon a closer examination of the subject matter, one will come to appreciate its complexity and significance. Listening to narratives related to environmental issues can aid in reevaluating one's perspective and recognizing the potential impending crisis. It is apparent that the impetus behind the actions taken in an environmental movement such as this one is once again intrinsically tied to affective factors. The role that affective factors play is crucial in establishing a department within one's sphere of influence and authority, as well as in convincing those who will be involved in this department to take concrete steps toward environmental accountability.

Even if environmental concerns are proven to be severe and deemed a crime according to relevant regulations and laws, the perception of their importance, seriousness, and impact by law enforcers may still be questionable. This issue, explored in ecofictive works, highlights the need for greater awareness and action towards environmental crimes. In order to engage individuals in environmental issues and motivate them to take action, ecofiction supplements related concerns and challenges with affective appeals, anecdotes, and narratives that have the potential to generate the required trusted pathos and empathy needed to drive environmental change forward. This approach has the potential to yield positive environmental outcomes while simultaneously addressing individual grievances rooted in personal experience.

In ecofictive works, authors often use affective instruments not only to capture the attention of relevant individuals and encourage them to take action but also to persuade them to use their authority for environmental causes when they hold positions of authority. Moreover, these instruments can inspire people to take personal responsibility and act on environmental issues even when they hold no such positions. Some ecofictive works explore the idea that ecoheroines and ecoheroes, despite lacking authority or position, can still challenge environmental destruction and crimes through their own affective motivation. As ordinary citizens, they take risks and become open threats to those accountable for environmental problems, fighting against the criminals and related troubles that come with it. Furthermore, ecofictive works portray the determination of ecoheroines who take personal initiatives to gather information and create the necessary groundwork before seeking legal assistance, even if this means taking risks. These works show that emotions and feelings drive the motivation to act.

*Looking for Peyton Place* by Barbara Delinsky (2006) provides a relevant example for that discussion. Annie, who is tormented by the death of her mother and her sister's symptoms similar to that of her mother's disease before her death, starts her research on the effects of some diseases in her immediate surroundings on miscarriage and devastating consequences in children. Annie's interview with her mother's doctor, Thomas Martin sheds light on why people who were aware of the environmental situation in the town did not take action because the clinic owners in town also happen to be the owners of the only industrial plant, the main source of economic activity in the area. Their activities cause severe health problems, including the death of Annie's mother, as well as pollution of the rivers and the poisoning of fish, affecting numerous people. It seems that the doctor, who is also the clinic's director, has concerns about something going on in the town. However, he is hesitant to take any action since he lacks appropriate evidence to support his thoughts. Additionally, he fears that taking any action may result in him being labeled as crazy and losing his credibility. He feels that he may be caught between medicine and politics and that his actions may not be helpful to other people waiting for him. His fear of being fired prevents him from expressing his doubts. He is afraid even to voice his suspicions, let alone take any action. When he once tried to share his concerns with the factory owners, he was told he was "barking up the wrong tree." As a result, he has put aside all his thoughts and ideas.

The doctor even warns Annie, determined to pursue the environmental issue, to be careful and even suggests that she should give up. Yet, against all odds, Annie chooses to continue her efforts. Her motivation to ignore the prevailing norms and continue her fight is expressed as follows:

[I]t could be that Mom's symptoms truly were from Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, but now Phoebe's showing the same symptoms, and you say it's not from lead. I have a month, I have energy, and I have an incentive to use both. So think of it as me doing your dirty work. I don't care about my credibility here, and I certainly don't have a job to worry about. (Delinsky, 2006: 55)

Often the same order or system that causes harm to the environment also discourages people from taking action to prevent it. People dependent on their jobs and positions may be hesitant to take action against environmental issues and crimes, even if they are aware of them. In addition, environmental organizations also often require support from those structures that contribute to environmental problems, either directly or indirectly. As a result, these organizations may need to decide when, what, and how strongly to oppose these actions. Therefore, experiencing an affective response to environmental tragedies can be a key factor in motivating individuals to take action and encourage others to do the same regarding environmental issues. As Annie and other characters depicted in ecofictive novels suggest that individuals who undergo emotional tragedies may make decisions based on 'sense' and 'feelings' rather than 'logic' and may act fearlessly and recklessly, believing that they have nothing to lose by taking risks and ignoring the danger. Yet this bold and fearless behavior of environmentalists is sometimes exploited by eco criminals to portray them negatively and create a perception that they are crazy and radical, as can be portrayed in *Old Poison* by Joan Francis (2003). The *Old Poison* also depicts a character of female professor who struggled for the environment is subjected to attacks. This is crucial to highlight the diversity of environmentalists, including professors, academics, and intellectuals, to counteract the negative perception of environmentalists that eco criminals have created.

In econarratives, it has been observed that environmental activists, who are also referred to as ecoheroes/heroines, face the risk of being killed. However, despite the dangers, threats, and violence they face, these individuals remain devoted to fighting for the environment. Their actions are not merely driven by reason but also by their emotions. In ecofictive works, it is often emotions that compel environmentalists to take risks and face challenges rather than reason alone. In *The Glass Factory*, for example, the ecoheroine protagonist, believes that there are times when it is necessary to act in an irrational manner and even a solitary struggle when confronting ecocriminals and fighting for the environment. The below dialogue between ecoheroine and ecoriminal in the novel presents this approach:

"I feel ridiculous. I shouldn't need to turn to a 'strong male' to save and protect me."

"Our needs aren't always rational, Filomena."

"Are you saying I'm not rational? Maybe it would be better if I weren't. After all, rationalizing got us thrown out of the Garden of Eden. Maybe then I wouldn't deserve this punishment?". (Wishnia, 2001:177)

The dialogue between the ecoheroine and ecocriminal explains that environmentalists often question themselves before taking action. They ask if it's worth it, rational, practical, and if it makes sense. However, those who continue to take action despite these doubts are driven by both their emotions and logic. It is common for people to question their motives, but it is during these moments of conviction that affective appeals are most effective. When affective appeals are more effective during the moments of conviction, people stop questioning and decide to take action in econarratives. The system that destroys nature often pits ecovictims and nature against science. It views them as oppositional to the mind, civilization, and development, creating a dualistic framework. Consequently, the need to manage and subjugate these opposites has arisen, sometimes explicitly, sometimes indirectly, and sometimes in secret. This raises questions about what it means to be "rational" within the context of a system that devastates nature and humans alike and whose criteria perpetuate this destruction. The lawyers in the eco-fiction works mentioned previously have stated that it can be morally right and conscientious to reject compliance with the system, even if it may not be the smartest or wisest decision. To effectively critique, transform, revolutionize, or improve the system, one must first step outside of it, as being outside the system allows one to see the traps within it. As reason over emotion and science over art preferences continue to dominate individuals in addressing environmental problems and methods of struggle, they may also have the unintended consequence of directing and dominating the field according to the interests of ecocriminals to some extent. This may hinder a proper understanding of the issues and delay or prevent appropriate action from being taken against them. Additionally, it may render the activities performed meaningless and dysfunctional.

For the environmental struggle not to be futile or interrupted, it is essential to involve emotions, art, and nerves in the process. This involvement should start from comprehending the environmental issues and extend to deciding on and implementing effective combat strategies. Relying solely on science, numbers, reason, and logic, which are recognized as some of the leading causes of environmental problems, is not enough.

Everything is reducible to a sum, a statistic, a cost-benefit ratio, said Griffin. Horrified by the thought of a world ruled by and reduced to numbers, Griffin urged women to journey out of culture-the labyrinth of dualistic thinking-back into nature, the cave where matter and spirit merge into one, the true habitat of human beings who are more than mere "ideas". (Tong, 2009: 250)

It seems necessary to consider alternative perspectives on dismantling dominant systems, concepts, values, and perceptions. In this particular context, since likewise "an ecofeminist ethics is not based on reason to the exclusion of emotion but on an intelligence that requires reason and emotion to work together and to be recognized as equally important in ethical decision making" (Warren, 2000: 101), Slovic's emphasis on the link between affect and meaning gains importance. "Psychologists studying the link between affect (jargon for 'feelings') and meaning concur. Numerous laboratory studies have demonstrated that information must convey affect to be meaningful and to play a role in judgment and decision making" (Slovic & Slovic, 2015: 2). Although works of romance, popular fiction,

and stereotypical literature that may be viewed as having little literary, artistic, or qualitative value are often referred to as pulp fiction, even these types of ecofictive works, written by authors who have yet to establish themselves as literary giants, should be considered in literary criticism and environmental activism, as per Slovic's argument. These works can play a crucial role in making existing knowledge meaningful by enhancing the necessary affective element. Furthermore, they have the potential to influence people's judgment and decision-making mechanisms when it comes to environmental issues, thus contributing to environmentalism. It is important to recognize that even works that may be deemed less 'literary' or 'artistic' can have a significant impact and contribute to the larger conversation surrounding the environment. Therefore, they should not be disregarded solely due to their genre or perceived lack of literary merit. It is worth noting that the affect effect present in ecological narratives could potentially disrupt the vicious cycle of the environmentalist struggle. Proper utilization of this potential through further research could be a step towards making a positive impact.

### **Conclusion**

Ecofictive narratives are powerful tools to convey the scale of environmental issues and bridge the gap between science and understanding. By using imagination and appealing to emotions, they can provide a more profound cognitive advantage and promote perceptual change. These narratives also have the potential to disseminate related information in compelling ways and inspire people to share their own stories, ideas, and accomplishments as agents of change, initiators, explorers, professionals, and citizens. Since people are naturally drawn to stories and new narratives, ecofictive narratives can help connect individuals to a common goal, promoting a sense of shared purpose and community. It is important for environmentalists, to create their own stories, news, and narratives, given that changing opinions can be a complex process. In today's computing world, a strong narrative is just as crucial as factual information especially because ecocriminals and the system have been known to create fraudulent but powerful and more persuasive narratives on environmental issues. Creating a one-to-one connection with individuals on environmental issues is crucial and can be achieved by emphasizing positive emotions such as hopefulness, pride, and gratefulness. These emotions can be more motivating for environmentalists than negative emotions. Intimacy through the power of literature can provide the necessary atmosphere by appealing to the emotions, hearts as well as the minds of people through ecofictive narratives. By using the medium of storytelling, environmentalists can effectively convey their message and create a personal connection with their audience. Inspired by ecofictive narratives, people can create their own narratives and stories help them better understand environmental issues and challenges. They also may provide for people who seek alternative ways to do something for the sake of nature and the environment as reading these new narratives contributes to the creation of new opportunities. These narratives can serve as powerful tools for communication between science and emotions as well as between the environment and people. By creating environmentally conscious and friendly images in

readers' minds and hearts, they can help promote daily eco-friendly habits. Additionally, these narratives can inspire change by invoking narrative empathy, encouraging pattern text, and highlighting individuals who serve as models and impelling factors for positive change. Such narratives can be particularly effective by fostering hope and empowering readers to act in ways that unseat privileged ways of knowing that have resulted in devastation for both nature and people. Ultimately, these narratives can help people leave a positive legacy for future generations.

It is also worth noting how ecofictive narratives incorporate both positive and negative feelings to convey the urgency of environmental issues while also offering a sense of hope through their happy endings. These stories have the ability to deeply engage readers on an emotional level and provide a source of inspiration and motivation for environmentalists who may be feeling overwhelmed, fearful, or disheartened. Although the overall tone may not be optimistic, the hope that these narratives provide can serve as a new source of resistance, energy, and perseverance. It is important to remember that taking small steps can lead to significant progress in the long run.

The novels that showcase lawsuits or choosing the right thing reveal that things may not always end well. Understandably, people may not be optimistic about it. However, this does not diminish the fact that people always hope for a better outcome. These novels can be guiding examples in overcoming the indifference and inaction that environmentalism is exposed to. They showcase emotional interactions that occur through affective econarratives. In these ecofictive works, both ecoheroes and ecoheroines willingly pay any price to protect their loved ones, as well as nature and the environment. As Rosemarie Tong indicates, there are times to take drastic action even for the nonviolent and the peaceful: “when they realize their voices will not be heard and the destruction of everything and everyone (especially their children) precious to them will continue, even the most peaceful ecofeminists will fight for life” (Tong, 2009, p. 268).

Sometimes, happy endings in econarratives may come with the risk of compromising by taking responsibility away from people. However, the risk here is different from the way science fiction writers and cornucopians use in utopic and fantastic arguments to externalize responsibility for environmental issues. Because in these novels, the responsibility seems concrete, individualized, and personalized for individuals, groups, and societies rather than being abstract and imaginary like the future scientific and technological developments often portrayed in science fiction.

Ecofictive narratives present solutions to address the feeling of powerlessness in the face of environmental challenges. This feeling often leads to pseudo-inefficacy; this belief in the futility of individual action can be overcome by inspiring readers to take action in their own lives to make a positive impact on the environment. By empowering individuals to contribute to the ongoing fight against environmental issues, ecofictive narratives motivate readers to effect change and make a difference by revealing that both individuals and their actions matter. The character Buscarsela emphasizes the importance of individual action in



*The Glass Factory*: “well the world is a total mess and there is nothing I can do about it, except clean up one little corner of it. Now for that Morse incubator site” (Wishnia, 2001, p. 143). These attempts are profound examples of the reflection of environmentalist thought, which has already stopped waiting for a superhero or revolution, transformation, or a miracle to save nature, the environment, and the human spirit but focus on what they can do. They can inspire people to act by eliminating the pseudo-inefficacy perception, which notoriously leads people to escape from dealing with environmental issues.

Environmental narratives incorporating romance can guide readers’ emotional responses and motivations toward environmental issues. Similarly, integrating romantic elements within ecofictive narratives can help emphasize the importance of combining both emotional and rational thinking to overcome environmental challenges. Therefore, it is important for readers, critics, and environmentalists to recognize the potential that comes from affective environmental narratives. The idea is to increase the use the affective components present in ecofictive narratives to change the mindsets of individuals who are indifferent or apathetic about environmental issues. Connecting with readers’ emotions and entering their hearts make it possible to drive positive change towards a more sustainable future: “The cause of conservation lies in the hearts and minds of men and women; if that passion dies, no constitution, no law, no court, no jargon, no market mechanism can revive it” (Lines, 2001, p. 26). Thus, it is crucial to incorporate affective elements into new environmental narratives in order to combat the inaction that results from forgetting and habituation in environmental struggles. To strengthen environmental narratives and studies, it is important to include as many affective elements as possible and ensure their circulation in networks, as argued by Tim Lindgren (Lindgren, 2007); this can play a significant role in overcoming this weakness. In fact, Lindgren’s eco-effective texts may also turn into eco-affective texts that can play an important role in shaping new environmental narratives. The affective richness of these narratives can influence people’s thinking and actions towards the environment, leading to new practices and behaviors that contribute to sustainable living when these eco-affective texts become prevalent. In this way, eco-effective and eco-affective texts can have a lasting impact beyond the classroom and throughout people’s lives.

Hayrettin Karaca, as mentioned earlier, revised the environmental strategy by signing a book that referred to his ideas about environmentalism. This was just before he passed away, after dedicating his life to the environmental struggle. Upon reading the quote of himself that underlined the emphasis “Knowledge, Interest, Reaction,” he kept silent for a moment and said, “That is not enough; something is missing.” After debating for a while, he concluded that “love” must be added to that strategy. He put love as the very first word of his tetralogy and signed the book. Therefore, he also responded to the crisis of environmentalism after such an experience by combining heart and mind spirit with a passion, even at a very late age. The lesson is to do anything anywhere, anytime, with enthusiasm and passion, relying on the mind when it comes to environmental issues.

## Notes

- 1 Affective ecocriticism is a critical approach that emphasizes the significance of emotional and affective responses that humans have towards the environment and nature. This approach acknowledges the role of emotions and feelings in shaping our relationship with the natural world and aims to utilize these emotional responses to create a more impactful environmental movement. For more information on affective ecocriticism, please see Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment (Bladow & Ladino, 2018), Affective Ecologies; Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative (Weik von Mossner, 2017), Ecosickness in Contemporary U.S Fiction: Environment and Effect (Houser, 2014).
- 2 Since the primary purpose of this study is not to include the definition and discussion of the theory and the concept of affect but still its reflections on ecocriticism or affective ecocriticism, see The Affect Theory Reader (2010) for the detailed definition and discussion of affect (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).
- 3 For more information on psychic numbing, visit [www.arithmeticofcompassion.org](http://www.arithmeticofcompassion.org) ("Arithmetic of Compassion," 2023).
- 4 For more information on pseudo-inefficacy see "Pseudoinefficacy and the Arithmetic of Compassion" in Numbers and Nerves (Västfjäll et al., 2015).
- 5 For more information on the cornucopian perspective, see Greg Garrard's book Ecocriticism (pages 16-18) (Garrard, 2004, pp. 16-18).
- 6 Within the scope of this article, the function of affect, based on the connection between affect, emotion, materialism, and cognition, will be examined within the framework of its potential to transform environmental knowledge into practice and responsibility for action, without mentioning the ongoing conversations on affect criticism and without engaging in discussions of the sometimes-interchangeable use of affect with emotions or subjectively expressed emotions.
- 7 Since the aim of this article is not to discuss the theoretical distinctions between affect and emotion but as stated before those affective elements, in the axis or relationship of mind-emotion, should not be ignored in the environmental struggle, especially in the narratives used in this struggle. Thus, when there is a reference to emotion or emotions, please consider them as their capacity to produce affect.

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