

# Climate-Induced Trauma and the 4Fs: Theoretical Perspectives on Jessie Greengrass's *The High House* (2021)

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**Abstract**—The impact of climate change extends beyond environmental issues to include psychological and emotional concerns. Trauma intensifies with the increasing frequency and severity of climate-related incidents. Ecological trauma arises from environmental destruction, climate disasters, and the loss of nature, affecting mental health, cultural identity, and community resilience. Exploring trauma responses in novels uncovers how characters navigate fear, loss, and survival mirroring real-life emotional struggles and adaptive behaviors. This research paper investigates the relationship between trauma studies and climate fiction through a qualitative analysis of Jessie Greengrass's novel *The High House* through the lens of Somatic Experiencing theory. A close reading of this novel reveals characters' physical as well as emotional reactions to trauma during key moments of crisis. The strategies the characters use to cope are examined and compared to real-life instances of ecological trauma. Somatic Experiencing theory is rooted in the understanding of complex emotional and physiological reactions, such as fight, flight, freeze or fawn. Ecological trauma deeply impacts children, disrupting their sense of safety and stability. Climate disasters, pollution, and habitat loss can cause anxiety, helplessness grief, and displacement. These experiences shape their emotional development, influencing mental health, resilience, and connection to nature throughout their lives. The findings suggest that the embodied experiences are critical to understanding traumatization in climate fiction and contribute to the limited body of ecological trauma research, demonstrating how literature offers unique insights into diverse responses to climate change.

**Index Terms**—trauma studies, climate change, Somatic Experiencing Theory, coping mechanism, psychological resilience

## I. INTRODUCTION

One unique genre that has developed to address stories about the interplay between environmental changes and the human psyche is climate fiction — or "cli fi," as it's commonly known. It goes beyond traditional environmental writing by blending personal anecdotes with raw data, shedding light on the psychological and emotional aspects of ecological collapse (Trexler, 2015). In the realm of psychology, writers explore how climate change disruptions influence people's mental and emotional states. With environmental traumas becoming more common, climate fiction has emerged as an essential and timely subject for exploration through both literature and psychoanalysis. Writers like Richard Powers and Kim Stanley Robinson have also explored these themes, examining the psychological damage that environmental destruction inflicts on individuals. Meanwhile, in literary circles that engage with trauma studies and climate fiction, we also find the work of Jessie Greengrass in her recent novel *The High House*. Greengrass's narrative explores the broader emotional impact of environmental change. Undoubtedly, climate change is a major issue of the twenty-first century that goes beyond the physical environment, affecting deeper aspects of human life (Neckel & Hasenfratz, 2021). This situation is highly complex; people's roles are being redefined in a fluid environment that changes rapidly (Morton, 2013). In addition to depicting environmental loss, climate fiction examines the emotional toll of displacement and ecological catastrophe (Buell, 2006). More than merely highlighting the relationship between ecological destruction and existential sorrow, Greengrass's novel reveals how psychological devastation often parallels natural destruction. In the novel, the experiences of the characters are closely entwined with the changing surroundings. The novel serves as a metaphor for the end of nature and the emotional cost to humans as their ecosystems collapse; indeed, it functions as an allegory for contemporary fears about climate change. It invites readers to reflect on the harm caused by climate-related events. Through stark imagery and profound emotional depths, Greengrass confronts readers with their shared fears about the future of our planet. As Greengrass portrays what it is like to live in a society where environmental disasters are the norm, readers witness the long-term psychological consequences of such crises. Her work becomes a form of

emotional cartography, mapping how the devastation caused by natural disasters is rewritten into new narratives of societal relationships and individual identities. Examining themes of loss, uncertainty, and the effects of change, the characters in this narrative undergo emotional journeys. Through their experiences, readers gain insight into how ecological trauma may impact individuals.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Trauma Studies*

Trauma studies have garnered significant attention in the field of literary analysis, with scholars exploring how trauma is portrayed and represented in various literary works. Many studies in the field of trauma literature focus on the theme of repetition, as it is a common response to trauma and is easily identifiable within literary texts (Azmi, 2018). For instance, survivors of trauma often repeat aspects or the entirety of the traumatic event in their mind and sometimes even in their own literature. According to the sources, several notable literary studies have been conducted on the praxis of trauma by various scholars (Liaqat, 2022). Caruth (2016), Kaplan (2006), Kurtz and Hron (2018), Balaev (2008) and Toremans (2003) have contributed significantly to the exploration of trauma theories and their application to literature from different eras. Scholars in the field have examined works from multiple perspectives and conducted semiotic analyses to explore the multifaceted aspects of trauma depicted in literature. The study of trauma has expanded beyond literature to encompass fields such as film, media, sociology, psychology and politics. Through their analysis these scholars have observed elements of repetition within works that portray trauma (Azmi, 2018). Trauma literature is said to have a repetitive quality, as it shows how survivors negotiate and revisit their experiences. These repetitions often appear as recurrent pictures, motifs, symbols, themes or narrative devices. Caruth's (2016) explores the idea of "haunting" in trauma literature by contending that in stories about trauma where the past still intrudes upon and shapes the present, repetition acts as a kind of haunting. Various works in the trauma literature, such as those of Caruth (2016), consistently examine incidents through a lens that highlights broader long-term consequences for individuals and society. The concept of *aporia* has also been explored by trauma researchers, first introduced by Caruth (2016). To further understand trauma expression and communication, scholars in trauma literature have considered *aporia*, which refers to the difficulty of articulating trauma through language. In the field of trauma studies, postmodern aesthetics has been instrumental in explaining and presenting the literary representation of trauma. Stylistic disjunctions of tense and viewpoint, reflecting the symptoms of psychological trauma, are employed to create postmodern aesthetics in trauma literature through devices like pauses and compulsive repetition (Stratford, 2018). Moreover, thinking of the structure of traumatic experiences in terms of form, as supported by scholars like Vickroy (2003) and Whitehead (2004), reflects significant trends in recent trauma literature, often following a Caruthian model (KS & Karmakar, 2023).

### B. *Somatic Experiencing Theory*

In the realm of trauma treatment, Peter A. Levine's Somatic Experiencing Theory has become well-known. Levine's (2010) point of view holds that trauma is not only a psychological problem but is also intricately linked with one's nervous system and physical body. According to this view, traumatic events people go through might affect their well-being long afterward. Symptoms such as anxiety, increased awareness and physical pain might follow. Focusing on these elements and utilizing strategies that support the healing process through the completion of self-defensive reflexes, Levine's somatic experience therapy offers a means of treating trauma. It also aids in the control of arousal (Niu & Long, 2021). Somatic Experiencing therapy approaches trauma treatment by addressing it on a somatic level, rather than relying solely on talk therapy or cognitive interventions. This therapy recognizes the significance of working with the body's intelligence to restore a person's sense of safety, control and connection to their sensations and emotions. It acknowledges that trauma affects not only the mind but also has effects on the nervous system and physical responses. The focus of Somatic Experiencing therapy is to help individuals become aware of their sensations, track them and take physical actions that empower them and enhance their sense of competence (Fiskum, 2019). Clinical research has demonstrated that Somatic Experiencing therapy can effectively address trauma within an individual's system. Levine's theory underscores the importance of understanding trauma as an experience involving physiological aspects. It highlights the body's role in trauma and emphasizes the need to address these physical manifestations during therapy. According to trauma theory traumas remain stored in the body until they are given an opportunity to be discharged or resolved (Lord, 2022). By addressing both the psychological and physiological effects of trauma, Somatic Experiencing therapy provides individuals with a holistic approach that promotes complete resolution and recovery. In conclusion, Somatic Experiencing theory posits that traumas live in the body and can only be resolved through body-oriented interventions that promote empowerment and competency.

### C. *Climate Fiction as Genre*

Climate fiction, also referred to as "cli-fi" is a genre of literature that delves into the consequences of climate change on people, communities and the environment. Over time, climate fiction has attracted attention not only for its entertainment appeal but rather for its capacity to raise awareness and spark discussions on the urgent need to address climate change (Lovell, 2019). Pandya (2021) focused on how readers respond to the consequences that climate fiction portrays. According to him, climate fiction can influence people's opinions and attitudes regarding climate change,

potentially inspiring action. Research by Schneider-Mayerson (2018) supports the idea that climate fiction is a valuable instrument for generating action and tackling climate change. Through their research—which contrasts modern climate change fiction—Clode and Stasiak (2014) also investigate the intersection of science and literature. Examining their representation of the consequences of climate change and how they interact with scientific knowledge and narratives, their studies seek to contextualize and compare various works of climate fiction. Conversely, Clode and Stasiak (2014) concentrate on the artistic and educational aspects of climate change fiction. They underline the value of appreciating climate fiction because of its ability to arouse feelings and captivate readers. Furthermore, they argue that climate fiction informs readers about scientific facts and the consequences of climate change, potentially triggering shifts in consciousness. An article for *The Guardian* claims that climate fiction can help readers better grasp the potential future consequences of climate change and the current effects it is already causing (Querubín & Niederer, 2022). Beyond the limits of graphs and temperature swings, this genre seeks to make climate change events more relatable and intelligible. Climate fiction uses the power of narrative to link facts with lived encounters thereby allowing readers to explore the emotional and personal side of climate change.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Applying Peter A. Levine's Somatic Experiencing Theory, this research uses a qualitative literary analysis of Jessie Greengrass's novel *The High House*, thereby illuminating the trauma reactions of the characters to climate-related occurrences. The methodology includes a careful textual study of the story to identify the bodily and emotional responses of the characters to environmental challenges. This involves a close reading and detailed analysis of important sections to uncover how characters, in the framework of the tale, react physically and emotionally to traumatic occurrences. Using Somatic Experiencing Theory, the research analyzes the trauma reactions of the characters with an eye on fundamental ideas such as fight or flight, freeze, and collapse reactions. This theoretical paradigm clarifies the embodied character of trauma by stressing how the physical and emotional states of the characters mirror their inner conflicts and resistance to external disturbances. A comparative analysis is also conducted to find similarities between the way the book depicts trauma and actual cases of environmental suffering. Reviewing current research on trauma and climate change helps contextualize the issues presented in the novel and investigate how fictional depictions either match or contradict real psychological reactions to environmental events. The comparative analysis reveals why this novel is so relevant for contemporary reflections on trauma induced by climate change. The paper closely examines the characters' coping strategies in managing trauma, focusing on emotional detachment, seeking help, resilience and avoidance. This paper explores the various psychological and emotional mechanisms individuals use to manage their identities, illustrating different ways of coping and adapting, as portrayed in the novel. *The High House* captures the full extent of suffering and coping strategies related to climate change in parallel worlds. Textual analysis is used to explore fictional representations, aesthetic narrative content, and the theoretical use of genre, while comparing these to empirical psychological responses to environmental change in a similar global context. This work contributes to the growing literature on trauma studies and climate fiction by emphasizing that embodied experiences and adaptive resilience are crucial to understanding and addressing the mental health effects of global environmental crises.

### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. *The Physiological and Psychological Basis of Ecological Trauma Response in The High House*

Trauma can be defined as an emotional and psychological reaction to one or more events that are involuntarily distressing and disturbing. The human brain and body respond to trauma in complicated and sometimes protective, survival-instinct mechanisms. Although the psychological effects of trauma impact both older and younger people, the impact of trauma is not uniform, depending on life stages, personal resilience and social support. Because of differences in development and physiology, children and older adults respond to these traumatic events differently. In response to any traumatic event, the body will activate the autonomic nervous system, which has two key components: the sympathetic and parasympathetic responses. The sympathetic nervous system activates the “fight, flight, freeze or fawn” responses that ready the body to face or run from the perceived threat. Conversely, the parasympathetic nervous system slows the body down, returning to a place of calm once the threat has been resolved. As shown in Figure 1, there are four main types of trauma responses: Fight—The person reacts in anger, fighting back, or running away to regain control of the situation; Flight—Avoids engagement, physically or emotionally in order to escape confrontation; Freeze—the person feels stuck and unable to act; Fawn—someone who appeases or pleases others in order to avoid conflict. These reactions are adaptive responses that have developed for the sake of survival. But when trauma is chronic or unprocessed, such responses can become maladaptive, resulting in long-term psychological suffering.

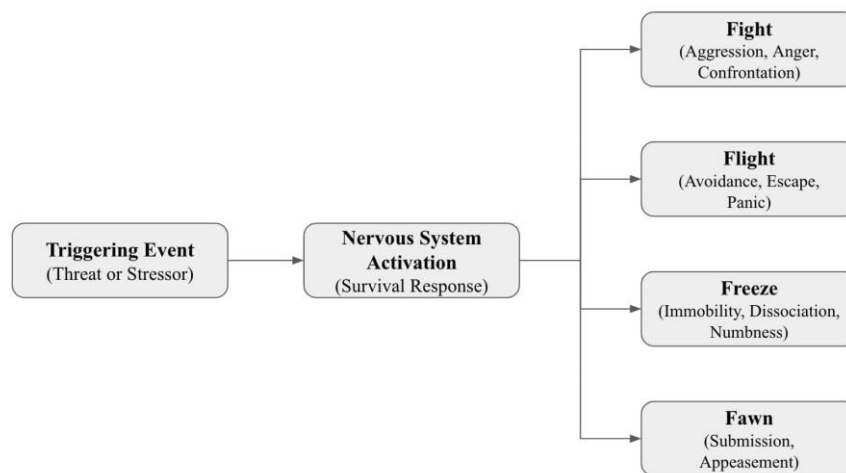


Figure 1. The 4Fs of Trauma Response

Children process trauma differently than adults — their brains and emotional capacities are still developing—making the experience unique for them. Their responses can vary by age, cognitive understanding, and attachment security. Children without a strong support system are more susceptible to long-term psychological impacts, such as anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and attachment-related problems. Early intervention through trauma-informed therapy, safe environments and supportive caregiving can help children process and recover from trauma. Older adults have a different response to trauma than younger people because of age-related differences in brain function, physical health, and social circumstances. In older adults, common sources of trauma include the death of a spouse, chronic illness, medical trauma, memories of war, and elder abuse. Older adults need care based on their cognitive and physical needs. Therapy, peer support groups and community engagement can help alleviate the symptoms of trauma in older people. Different people are affected by trauma in different ways, based on their age, strength, and mental state. Children and other adults may need extra care and help because they are more likely to get hurt. To heal, it's important to understand how stress shows up at different points in life. It is possible to help people feel safe and well again by creating environments where they feel seen, understood, and supported.

### B. Understanding Ecological Trauma

Both short-term and long-term natural tragedies can cause ecological stress. It covers everything from natural disasters like storms and wildfires to the long-term effects of pollution and ecosystem loss. When people are directly exposed to terrible events like storms, wildfires, floods, or extreme heatwaves, they experience direct trauma. People who have lived through these devastating events may have long-lasting mental effects, such as PTSD, anxiety, and hopelessness. But being exposed to environmental loss over a long period of time, such as pollution, deforestation, and climate instability, can lead to secondary ecological stress. Chronic worry, eco-anxiety, and a persistent feeling of helplessness are all signs of this kind of trauma that slowly erodes mental health. Environmental disasters are happening more often and with greater effects because of climate change. This makes ecological trauma a major problem. When natural disasters last for a long time, like rising sea levels in coastal towns or long-lasting floods in drought-stricken areas, they change the social and cultural fabric of those communities. People who are exposed to environmental hazards for a long time suffer from mental fatigue, which makes it harder for them to heal and increases their sense of hopelessness. Biological and mental signs of ecosystem stress can be different. People who don't know much about the environmental crisis are constantly afraid, which can lead to long-lasting worry and anxiety. In areas prone to natural disasters, there may be people who are always dreading the next bad thing that will happen. This is called anticipatory trauma. Some of the health problems that can happen when you're constantly worried are high blood pressure, a weak immune system, and trouble sleeping. Individuals who have to leave their homes because of environmental destruction are likely to experience displacement trauma. A person's sense of identity and connection is destroyed when they undergo separation from their family and home, which can lead to grief and loss. Individuals who have been forced to leave their homes because of disasters caused by climate change often have trouble adjusting to new social situations, which makes their mental health even worse. The psychological fear that environmental stress causes is another important factor. People, especially children and adolescents, can feel overwhelmed when they realize that the world is in a serious natural disaster. Eco-anxiety, the feeling of powerlessness, guilt, and hopelessness about the future of the world, is becoming more and more common. Overwhelming fear of the end of the world in one's lifetime affects people's mental health and ability to make decisions.

#### (a). Displacement and Survival in The High House

*The High House* by Jessie Greengrass is an unsettling narrative about a setting that has been changed by a natural disaster. At its core, the narrative is about two young children who have to leave behind everything they knew after losing their parents. They shelter in a high house, which is far away and provides both safety and confinement as they try to find their way in a world that is no longer welcoming. Rising seas and natural collapse make it hard for them to remain safe each day. Greengrass shows how displacement can be very hard on human emotions, especially on young minds, through their story. Coping with loss and facing an unknown future are two sides of the same coin for the kids. The high house represents resiliency in this narrative, but it also shows how terrifying it is to be alone and unsupported. The story delves into the long-term effects of climate change on entire generations, not just on specific victims. The children are stuck with a problem that they didn't even start, because of decisions that were made long ago. In *The High House*, the setting isn't just a place; it's a living entity that changes their lives and forces them to be resilient and adaptable in the face of an indefinite future.

A small group of people in the high house must deal with the biggest problem that climate change has brought about. One of the main characters, Caro, shows how to be persistent and do what's right. Within the chaos of climate change, she takes on the duty of taking care of her half-brother Pauly. As the story continues, Caro's courage is shown more clearly by her decision to confront her fears and keep her family safe. Readers witness her resilience and resourcefulness in the face of disaster, exploring the costs of preservation and the lengths one will go to save their family. The dedication of Francesca, a climate scientist and activist, to her work defines her. Her persistent warnings about an impending climate apocalypse distinguish her as a creation of Greengrass. Francesca's character embodies the weight of witnessing catastrophe resonating with the response to collapse outlined in the Somatic Experiencing theory. Her unwavering commitment reflects the unease and discomfort many feel when confronted with the impending global crisis.

Francesca, on my laptop screen, was making a speech. Pauly not yet six months old, was asleep in a sling on her front, his head tucked in beneath her chin, his legs dangling around her waist. She said: *We must recognize that we are being given a final warning – because if we fail to do so, if we fail to act, the consequences will surpass anything we have previously seen, and we will have missed our chance.* (Greengrass, 2021, p. 21)

Caro's weariness toward Francesca's warnings echoes our own highlighting the dynamics between characters and the unfolding challenges related to climate change. These characters' journeys offer a perspective through which readers can delve into the psychological aspects of trauma as well as the various ways individuals react to ecological crises.

#### (b). *Fight-or-Flight Response*

The fight-or-flight response is a reaction that occurs when an individual perceives a threat or danger. This natural response prepares individuals to either confront the threat head-on (fight) or remove themselves from the situation (flight). It is part of the stress reaction system in every human body, which has evolved millennia to guarantee survival and protect one from acute physical damage (Sapolsky, 2004). While discussing trauma and stress, one must understand the fight-or-flight reaction. This response clarifies how people react to events perceived as life-threatening and how they eventually regain balance. This response underlines the need to manage stress and trauma for one's long-term health and well-being even while it highlights how people can adapt and survive. Within the framework of the fight-or-flight response, the emotional experiences of the protagonists expose their immediate reactions to the approaching climate-related problems. As they negotiate a rapidly changing world, their emotional states swing between dread and action. Given the nature of environmental crises as long-term issues, these reactions can be exacerbated by a persistent threat, leading to an ongoing state of heightened arousal and increased difficulty in emotional regulation. Therefore, individuals may experience heightened anxiety, resulting in escape behaviors that can interfere with their ability to confront life's challenges adaptively (Dodds, 2021). The relationship between stress responses and mood can initiate a cycle of poor mental health, stemming from environmental changes often referred to as "climate anxiety". This phenomenon occurs when an individual feels overwhelmed by the potential effects of the Earth's external state on their life (Clayton, 2020). Therefore, to develop coping strategies that foster resilience in the face of climate-related adversities, understanding the fight-or-flight response is essential.

Caro exhibits emotional resilience in the fight-or-flight reaction. She stays resolute and flexible in the face of an impending disaster. As the climate challenges become more severe, Caro decides to act and protect both herself and her younger half-brother Pauly. Her emotional strength is an example of how humans can endure and adjust to crisis situations. Conversely, Francesca, Caro's father's partner and a high-profile climate scientist, experiences emotional turmoil as a response to the fight or flight instinct. Confronted by the climate-related challenges, her constant insistence on the coming apocalypse reflects the complexities of navigating a world in the throes of ecological transformation. Her emotional turmoil mirrors the larger societal response, marked by fear, anxiety, and a sense of impending doom.

On the screen, a whole car flew past.

- I mean, everyone had got out already.

Francesca, face taut with fury, stood up and, going into the corner of the room, put both hand against the walls. (Greengrass, 2021, p. 22)

#### (c). *Freeze Response*

The freeze response is one of the reactions the human body has to stress, along with fight and flight. It's a response triggered when individuals sense danger or feel threatened. Instead of reacting or attempting to escape, people who experience the freeze response become temporarily immobilized - almost like they're frozen in place, like how a deer freezes when it sees headlights approaching (Levine, 1997). The freeze response plays a critical role in the human stress response system. It showcases the body's tendency to become immobile when confronted with danger. Understanding this reaction is especially important for professionals who assist individuals dealing with trauma, as well as for those aiming to navigate and recover from traumatic experiences. It highlights the complex nature of responses to stress and underscores the need for customized therapeutic approaches that foster healing and resilience. For characters exhibiting the freeze response, their emotional states are marked by a sense of psychological stagnation, where they feel immobilized by the unfolding environmental changes.

Sally, the young woman entrusted with caretaking responsibilities at the high house, embodies the freeze response. She experiences emotional stagnation as she witnesses the devastation and rapid changes in the environment around her. Her experience is marked by a sense of powerlessness to act and a deep fear of an uncertain future. Caro exhibits symptoms of climate trauma, and the negative mental health effects of PTSD caused by climate change are evident in her behavior. As she gradually processes her emotions, Caro embarks on an emotional rollercoaster, swinging between forgiveness, love, and layers of emotional release. This outburst seems to grant her some control over her emotional life, which she is slowly beginning to regain. It signifies newfound emotional resilience as she adapts to the changing circumstances, ultimately taking on the role of protector and provider for her little brother.

Inside, with Pauly, when it was just the two of us. I was safe – or I felt safe – or I could turn away from what I was afraid of. Around me, it seemed, the world sank, or froze, or burned. I had no idea what I would do next, and when I thought about it – when I thought about anything other than Pauly, and the miniature of our lives together – I felt only terror, which shaded into fury at its edges. (Greengrass, 2021, p. 35)

Even though the world is under threat, Sally seems emotionally and mentally paralyzed. She talks about how the constant rain made it seem like they were the only ones left, revealing their disconnection from the rest of the world and their inability to do anything beyond mere survival. Feeling alone, even before the full effects of the disaster are known, shows a shutting down of the mind and emotions, which is a hallmark of the freeze reaction.

It was easy to believe, all through those long grey weeks of rain, that we were already the only ones left in the universe, but in truth I think I could still feel them—the others; the cities and the towns of people who went about their business as usual, finding their small familiar joys and telling one another that, after all, it was the best they could do. The rain fell on all of us. It drenched us the same, and in the weeks and months after the flood, that is what was lost: that sense of being a small part of a whole which persisted, even when we might dislike everything about it. (Greengrass, 2021, p. 200)

Instead of fighting or trying to get away, Sally just takes in what's going on around her. She doesn't feel connected to it, but she is still vaguely aware of the world beyond her immediate surroundings. Her admission that the rain "drenched us the same" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 200) shows that she understands that everyone is suffering, but she is still trapped inside and can't connect emotionally with everyone else.

#### (d). *Fawn Response*

The fawn response, which is frequently mentioned in relation to the fight, flight or freeze reactions, signifies a way individuals can respond to extreme levels of stress or trauma. While the fight or flight response readies the body for action, and the freeze response involves alertness followed by immobility, the collapse response is marked by a deep shutdown of both physical and mental functions. Understanding the fawn response is essential for professionals working in fields like psychology, psychiatry, or trauma therapy, as it helps in recognizing and assisting individuals who have undergone traumatic experiences and are exhibiting this unique response to stress. Characters facing the collapse response exhibit emotional states characterized by overwhelming despair and vulnerability in the face of environmental upheaval. Grandy, the wise elder of the group, embodies the collapse response. His emotional state is characterized by overwhelming despair and vulnerability as he grapples with the profound changes in the world. His responses reflect the sadness many people have upon witnessing the devastating consequences of climate change, thus conveying the great emotional toll of ecological trauma. Although the initial shock makes him feel weak, little Pauly slowly gets stronger in his own way. He exemplifies the resilience of youth and innate human ability to bounce back. Although he may not fully grasp the extent of the crisis, Pauly adjusts to the changed world, finding solace in life's patterns. He becomes a beacon of hope, symbolizing how individuals can find healing in challenging times.

#### C. *Coping With Ecological Traumatic Events*

Dealing with stress, trauma or tough situations involves using coping mechanisms. These strategies can be psychological or behavioral, helping individuals manage their emotions, lessen anxiety, and maintain their well-being. Different individuals employ coping methods, which are influenced by factors such as their personality, life experiences, and the specific nature of the situation (Folkman, 2013). This section delves into how the characters in *The High House* handle the difficulties caused by climate-related trauma. It explores the strategies they utilize, including avoidance, resilience, seeking support, and emotional disconnection.

(a). *Avoidance, Resistance, and Emotional Distance*

Caro uses avoidance to handle her situation. Her goal is to protect her brother Pauly from the realities of trauma associated with climate change. To reduce worry, Caro thinks up strategies to deflect Pauly's and her own focus from the gravity of the circumstances. Her strategy is to minimize or ignore the calamity to keep their life in some manner of normal. In *The High House*, the characters rarely speak openly about their struggles, nor do they engage in behaviors that directly facilitate coping. However, climate change is a central issue for Caro, whose father lost his life, leading her to advocate for climate policy reform. Her dedication and flexibility in addressing climate problems reflect her fortitude and endurance.

Sally's actions mostly show avoidance and resistance as ways to deal with stress. She stays physically busy by doing things like checking the yard, picking strawberries, and taking care of the chickens. However, her activities are more of a mental escape than a physical one. The repeated phrase "I didn't think about" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 200) shows that she was trying to avoid thinking about how much they depended on outside systems like medical care, infrastructure, and grocery delivery.

I put on my wellingtons and Grandy's old sou'wester and went out to check the garden, to pick the last of the autumn raspberries, to pull the leaves of the perpetual spinach. I let the chickens out to scratch in the wet earth and then called them back into the scullery, and I thought how fine it was to be so well prepared. I didn't think about the supermarket vans which still came monthly. I didn't think about the things we used but couldn't make: the sugar, the milk, the bottles of olive oil. I didn't think about the doctors and the hospitals who would be there if we wanted them. I didn't think about all the mechanical things, the fridge and the generator, the lights with their bulbs, the taps which turned. I didn't think about that vast net which, invisible, imperceptible, held us up. (Greengrass, 2021, p. 200)

This type of avoidance is a common way to deal with facts that are too much to handle. Sally refuses to see how fragile her sense of self-sufficiency is. Instead, she gets lost in small, concrete tasks that make her feel in control. Focusing on what she can control—growing her own food and how her immediate world works—keeps her from realizing how their life is still connected to society. She can't fully understand how dangerous their situation is because she is mentally blocking it. Even though they are prepared, they still need help from outside sources. She avoids things not only to survive, but also does it to maintain the appearance of independence. "That vast net which, invisible, imperceptible, held us up" (Greengrass, 2021, p. 200) refers to the systems that keep people alive but are often unseen, like supply lines, healthcare, and utilities. But she doesn't want to talk about them. She doesn't want to face the fact that these systems might collapse entirely, so she clings to self-sufficiency to protect herself from feelings of anxiety and powerlessness.

However, this unwillingness to face the truth makes people feel unsafe. Sally may feel clever and prepared, but her avoidance keeps her from confronting the reality that their existence is uncertain. To be resilient in a disaster, one needs to rely on oneself while also being honest about one's limits. Sally's coping mechanism seems to be denial, which suggests she isn't fully grasped how dependent they still are on society. This passage shows how trauma doesn't always appear as obvious pain, but sometimes as a quiet failure to face uncomfortable truths. Avoidance and resistance give Sally a short-term sense of security, but they also reveal the deep psychological cost of living in an unstable world, where coping can mean ignoring the very things that could cause everything to collapse.

(b). *Seeking Support*

As someone who cares about Caro and Pauly, Sally is more open about her need for help. She understands how severe their problems are and often reaches out for support. Similarly, Pauly, Grandy, and Caro are constantly seeking help to establish a stable support system. Their cooperative and supportive way of asking for help highlights how important it is to work together under stress. This way of coping emphasizes the importance of external help and community during a disaster. Grandy, the wise old man who gives vague advice, finds comfort in solitude. He faces the worst effects of climate change with a cold, distant attitude that sometimes borders on emotional withdrawal. His response shows a range of ways that characters in *The High House* deal with the distress that climate change causes. One thing that Grandy's adaptation reveals is how resilient or vulnerable people can be when faced with overwhelming problems. The varied ways the characters deal with distress caused by climate change give the plot more depth and show that ways of coping can evolve over time. This layered picture of grief and adaptation adds depth to the text and helps us learn more about how resilient people are in the face of natural disasters.

An ecological issue can trigger strong emotional and mental responses that remain hidden from the outside world. Often, these problems have to do with societal and cultural factors as well as fears about climate change or environmental damage on a large scale. Problems like these are closely linked to how someone feels and can have a big effect on how well they act. People tend to feel more stress, anxiety, and worry when there are problems like extreme weather, natural disasters, or ecological issues. The stress comes from threats to safety, health, and property. Coping with problems that are hard to predict and full of uncertainty can be hard, especially for people who are afraid of the unknown and find it hard to accept change. On the other hand, environmental changes can be beneficial to wellness. For instance, improved air and water quality can make you feel better and give you hope for a safer, more fulfilling, and optimistic life. How someone feels about situations can also affect how they respond to problems in their surroundings.

When individuals feel anxious or frightened, they might pay more attention and take the initiative to find solutions. For example, this could mean making decisions that do not negatively impact the environment, backing efforts to protect nature, or cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions. To solve big problems like climate change and protecting the environment, we need to understand how people feel about them. The mental health of people who have been impacted by environmental issues should be given more consideration than their physical well-being alone.

## V. CONCLUSION

Using somatic methods, especially Somatic Experiencing theory, this paper examines Jessie Greengrass's *The High House* in terms of how it portrays "trauma" in the context of climate fiction. Exploring the characters' physical experiences, mental responses, and coping mechanisms provides this study with unique insights into how trauma is depicted and addressed in a constantly changing living environment. Against the backdrop of a collapsed environment, the characters navigate a world transformed by both individual and collective despair. This changing environment is in conflict not only with the physical world but also with the mental and emotional health of the characters who inhabit it, as the plot reveals. Through the novel's exploration of fight-or-flight and freeze-or-fawn reactions, moments of strength, chaos, stagnation, release, overload, and rebuilding are portrayed. A wide range of emotions is expressed by the characters as they try to regain control and hope in the face of grave dangers. People react in a variety of ways to such challenges, and the characters' degrees of effort reflect that. This paper also examines the characters' post-traumatic responses, such as avoiding confrontation, seeking help when needed, demonstrating resilience, or mentally withdrawing. Learning about how relationships develop and heal through shared suffering adds a new dimension to the concept of healing through community. Symbolically, changes in the setting reflect the characters' internal states, demonstrating how external events are connected to their inner struggles. It sets the scene for narrative and supports character development by illustrating how climate change transforms individual and their relationships. The environment and the characters' emotional journeys interact, deepening the narrative and highlighting how profoundly natural disasters reshape relationships and personal growth. With its focus on presence and recovery, this study also contributes to the broader discourse in trauma studies and climate fiction. In a nuanced and cohesive way, it reveals how ecological suffering and real-life responses to environmental crises are depicted. Research suggests that fiction can illustrate and help individuals process the psychological distress caused by climate change. During natural disasters, compelling narratives can help individuals and communities deal with their emotions by fostering understanding, empathy, and resilience. As a result of this study, readers are also encouraged to consider how storytelling shapes our understanding of human suffering and climate change response. This study uses trauma-based textual analysis to invite a closer examination of the narratives that connect us to place and one another, with a focus on the emotional dimensions of the climate crisis. By highlighting on the importance of embodied experiences and adaptive resilience in addressing the mental health impacts of global environmental disasters, this study contributes to the growing body of work on trauma studies and climate fiction.

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