

## SARS COV11 AND OTHER CALAMITIES IN ADAM NEVILL'S LOST GIRL

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**Abstract:** Speculating about future based on the present, climate change fiction (cli-fi) proves its potential to predict the environmental and social repercussions of anthropogenic transformation(s) on Earth. As a cli-fi novel, *Lost Girl* (2015) envisions the collapse of the world through grim depictions of the nonhuman environment and restless societies and recounts the dangerous quest of a father to find his lost daughter amidst (un)natural disasters, pandemics, and chaos. In the realistic world of *Lost Girl*, new strains of deadly viruses take hold of the world. Prophesying the coronavirus pandemic and other calamities that came out to be true in 2020 such as the destructive wildfires in Australia or the heatwaves in Europe among others, *Lost Girl* has a realistic touch leaving a wake-up call effect on the reader to change their anthropocentric way of living through a posthuman perspective.

**Keywords:** coronavirus, pandemic, calamity, cli-fi, the Anthropocene, posthuman.

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## Introduction

The seventh novel by British author Adam Nevill, *Lost Girl* (2015), is a pre-apocalyptic climate fiction novel which focuses on the horror of environmental transformations in “a nightmarish near future crippled by global warming and over population” (Kitching, 2015). Standing out with its realistic touch as based on scientific facts, predictions and research, the novel narrates the fast-approaching, inevitable apocalypse encompassing a series of environmental disasters, and simultaneous social, economic and political collapse worldwide as a perfect picture of the twenty-first century anthropogenic world.

An Englishman only referred as “the father” is the protagonist of the novel through whom the nightmarish world of the near future of the 2050s is depicted. His nameless position gives him an anonymous position to stand for any human being who can plunge into crime and unruly behaviour once the lives of their loved ones are in jeopardy. In other words, in “this bleak society – he and his missing daughter are just more statistics – and the fact that he goes about his search gloved and masked” (Morgan P., 2017) adds to his anonymity. Concentrated on the cosmic world of Great Britain, which is “overrun by refugees and the authorities overwhelmed” (Jarrod, 2016), the novel aptly projects the total demolition of the Earth while stirring sympathy with the emotional story and helplessness of a father desperately searching for his daughter, Penny, amidst havoc. In this respect, the novel displays “planet-wide horror of civilisation slowly-collapsing with the personal demons” of a father losing his child (Everington, 2015). In fact, it pictures Nevill’s concerns about the near future while enclosing the associable story of a father in the novel, himself being a father as well (“*Lost Girl: An Interview*”, 2015).

Nevill’s notion of horror recently trends towards environmental devastation which can be tracked across the world. In an interview, he voices his private fears and concerns about “deforestation, soil degradation and erosion, carbon emissions from our continuing and accelerating burning of coal, the thermal heating of the oceans, plant stress, and the impending collapse of civilization” (Centorcelli, 2014). These are accompanied with the recklessness and arrogance of the human species having failed to learn from great disasters, particularly the *anthropos*, or big capitalist corporations and individuals that exploit the nonhuman environment.

*Lost Girl* is set in Torquay, Devon, in 2053, in the future world taken by environmental disasters while a supernatural presence seems to control an undeniable number of people around the world through a cult (Morgan P., 2017). Characters and the main story in the novel are introduced *in medias res* while the past two years after Penny had been taken when she was four and previous years are referred to in the background information to emphasise the gradual degradation in both human and the nonhuman nature (Nevill, 2015, p. 1).<sup>2</sup> Before the tragic incident of the kidnapping is unfolded, the father lived with his wife, Miranda, and daughter, Penny, in their secluded house in Torquay surrounded by a garden in which Miranda grew their fruits and vegetables (2), which is a privilege only the two per cent of the world population can have (108) for there is a food shortage all around the world. Before that, the Thames flooded the cities, and the Father had to move his family from Birmingham to Devon out of necessity (2). On the day of the kidnapping incident, however, the father is supposed to look after Penny as she is playing in the front garden while Miranda works in the back. Still, he gets distracted with the idea of an affair, and his mind is elsewhere while his daughter is quickly taken away (5).

Father’s psychology is mostly unstable after the tragedy of his daughter’s disappearance, which gives a realistic quality to the narration. The novel is reviewed to be “faultless with regard to writing and evocation” (Fryer, 2015) and being realistic despite employing horror elements such as King Death, rituals, and spirits. For instance, as the father discovers a deserted chapel that has been turned into one of King Death’s ritual places, he finds a shrine inside the building standing as a bricolage of the artefacts of death and destruction across the world:

The shrine was a mortuary roll that depicted nothing but disaster, death and decay: chaos, the great passage from civilization to barbarism. In this place, the father suspected that *someone* had grasped some deep, personal connection with the wider diaspora and depopulation. The whole edifice suggested the morbidly spiritual, which further convinced him that there was meaning behind the selection of this place too, as if this room ended another journey, or a hideously idiosyncratic pilgrimage. It was an installation of the King Death group for sure, but a shrine for a seer, priest, or whatever kind of witch doctor or shaman the group’s nihilistic mysticism and superstition generated. (261).

<sup>2</sup> From this point on, references to the novel, *Lost Girl*, shall be indicated with only page numbers.

Furthermore, one of the most striking narrative qualities of *Lost Girl* is the anonymity and flaws of the protagonist, the father, who evolves throughout the novel. He stands for any human being who has their loved ones and can risk everything to protect them, which is a realistic and humane touch in the novel. Losing his daughter Penny because of a moment of weakness and distraction, Father questions everything about himself: his morality, ethics and even humanity while he sets out on a bloody quest for his daughter. He gets to like the feeling of adrenaline when he chases criminals and kills them because of “his slowly capsizing psyche” (Fryer, 2015). In the first year after Penny is kidnapped, he feels so depraved that he does not care whatever is happening around the world. Once he realises the police force or any other official/legal organisation cannot help him, and that he is on his own to find Penny, he feels utterly devastated and then realises the grave condition of the world: “[...] most of Bangladesh got swallowed by rising waters, Greece and Africa were lost to wildfires, and China and Australia were surrounded by wildfires whereas the U.S. ruled by the Mormons leave Central Americans to their death “against the fence” (137).

### **(Un)Natural Disasters and Ailments in *Lost Girl***

Set in the near future and speculating about the fundamental horror of the human species about their survival and fear of a father about his daughter, *Lost Girl* stands out as a “climate-dystopia” and “climate change novel” (Agranoff, 2017) ornamented with horror fiction qualities. Bringing the characteristics of both genres together in a well-knit plot, Nevill brings “the apocalyptic vision of *The Road* together with Nevill’s [his] own brand of bleak terror” (Everington, 2015). On the one hand, Britain is seething with climate-change-forced-to-become refugees like other countries in the north which are becoming the environmental and geopolitical centres of the world while Mediterranean Europe is struggling with wildfires, extreme heat and an impending hurricane. On the other hand, human conflict can be observed through international crime organisations, gangs, violence, lack of sympathy and the rise of suspicion and selfishness among surviving humans. The world is in such a dreadful condition that the father falls into desperation and cannot picture a future for next generations:

Where can we go? the father wondered. We are alone in space. There is nowhere to go. The quick, cold realization never failed to produce an icy tension, the size of a snooker ball, behind his sternum. The very earth was

getting smaller. To migrate north as a species and to go higher and higher as the heat rose, and to compete for fewer and fewer resources . . . The closing of borders. The end of food exports. The ever-emerging hostilities to seize fresh water and arable land... All of these things were part of the penultimate stage of mass collapse; the idea could still take his breath away. (235-236).

In this respect, climate change fiction as “a subgenre of sci-fi” (Bloom, 2018) gives an account to the fears of the human species mirroring the time and conditions of the said age. Climate change novels such as *Lost Girl* function as follows:

Climate change is unprecedented and extraordinary, forcing us to rethink our place in the world. At the same time, in looking at its causes and its repercussions, we find old themes. There have always been disasters; there has always been loss; there has always been change. The novels, as all novels must, both grapple with the particulars of their setting and use these particulars to illuminate enduring truths of the human condition. (Tuhus-Dubrow, 2013)

A momentous role of cli-fi as part of “speculative fiction” (Streeby, 2018, p. 4) involves urging people to speculate about themselves and the world when, in fact, they tend to ignore the anthropogenic changes in nature. This explains why authors of climate change novels work on the “what ifs” and “future Earths”, because through their novels they are likely to stir eco-awareness in people and succeed what scientific facts have failed for so many years (Abraham, 2017). With this perspective in *Lost Girl*, the nightmarish condition and the *en-masse* collapse of the world is aptly represented through grim depictions combined with the touching survival story of a family and their happy reconciliation, which is most likely to trigger a positive change in people’s perception of the nonhuman environment. Depicting the deteriorating conditions in the cosmic world of Britain, whereas the rest of the world is often referred to in the news report, *Lost Girl* bears a harrowing effect to conjure a change of perspective in the humankind: Too much catastrophe in the world needed to be comprehended, with more and more happening all the time. It was the age of incident. Merely at a local level in Devon, there was the hot terror of summer, the fear of another flood-routing winter, cliff erosion, soil erosion, soil degradation, blackouts, and the seemingly endless influxes of refugees. Up above, the sky began to bleach white-blue from blue-black. When it became silver-blue with sharp light in an hour, the heat would boil brains. (16).

Demonstrating the human-induced changes in nature, the heatwaves and drought cause immense deaths. Those who perish instantly are the old, impoverished and the weak, in other words, the non-*anthropos* people (17). On the other hand, even people with decent means have little to do against the heat: they can “[s]tay indoors, do not move during the hottest part of the day, use cold compresses, stay in the shade, sip water. *Stay, sit, sip*” (56). The number of people who go insane because of heat, “the mutterers or head-slappers, the screamers or the too silent” (56) is undeniably high. The scenes of dying nature from the novel find their equivalent in the heatwaves in Europe and wildfires in Australia and the U.S. in 2020, which is called “the year of fire” (Hess, 2020).

The “popular fiction” of the twenty-first century, climate fiction has adapted to the conditions of the new world and gives voice to “pressing [and undeniable] contemporary anxieties and real-world events” (Murphy, 2017, p. 8). In the same vein, climate fiction of the 2000s emerged like ecocriticism of the 1990s, which “responds to a period of scholarly neglect of questions of reality and an interest in fictional ways of accounting for it” (Bartosch, 2013, p. 50). What turned the chances for climate fiction and made it popular is the current state of the world and the extensive studies of interdisciplinary “environmental humanities” since the 2000s (Palsson et al., 2013, p. 5). Hence, the disasters and the human conflict displayed in the novel are not a product of fantasy, and they have already occurred or are occurring in several countries across the world at present, even though the novel itself is fictional. At this point, Nevill confirms in an interview that *Lost Girl* is not a work of fantasy since it conforms to the world facts: “I set my story in a pre-apocalypse situation, that is very close to now, and recognisable to us in 2015 [when the novel was published] (*Lost Girl: An Interview*”, 2015). In other words, Nevill talks about the present and near-future realities of the world: “destructive storms, the loss of biodiversity, species extinction, and sea level rise [...] that are no longer on the horizon but are happening now” (Streeby, 2018, p. 4).

In addition to what can be observed within the borders of Devon as the third-person narrator of the novel reflects, the TV news presents the macrocosmic picture of the world suffering from disasters, famine and diseases. As illustrated in the novel, aside from environmental devastation, there is an extreme food shortage which results in the collapse of food

markets and weakens the capital holders around the world from the 2030s onwards, which explains why everyone becomes vegetarian for a decade until the 2050s, when synthetic meat is invented (3, 17). At this point, extreme air pollution among many other elements disturbs the harmony of nature which brings out “underproduction” of food lessening “agriculture’s biological productivity,” “yield growth” and “nutritional content” (Moore, 2017, p. 191). Similarly, fish, sheep and cattle have long gone extinct, and “genetically modified, drought-resistant crops” are the standard food for the decent citizen while the poor of the world are starving since the distribution of food is monopolised by international gangs like King Death and big corporations like the Open Arms charity (3).

More importantly, in the three decades preceding 2050, a dozen pandemics took hold of the world as the father remembers: “[p]lague, legionnaires’ disease, E. coli of the blood, hantaviruses and various strains of influenza” (158). However, there was always a more urgent natural disaster: fire, hurricane or flood to deal with, so people tended to ignore and forget the deaths related to these diseases. However, two new pandemics, SARS CoV11 in Asia and the Gabon River Fever in Africa, seize the world in an even greater urgency which explains why there is a refugee influx into nearby countries, primarily because of SARS: “China, the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, Bangladesh, the east of India: they were all coming down hard and fast with the bug” (91, 92). Likewise, the SARS bug is more contagious than the scientists expected as it soon infiltrates within the borders of Britain reaching Midlands, Oxford and London because of a “Hong Kong Chinese tycoon” who flies to Oxford to find a cure (243, 336). It is originally “zoonosis” (infectious disease between nonhuman animals and humans) spreading from bats to rats and from the rats to human beings in China as they were keeping rats for food in wet and congested conditions of the food market, which prepared the necessary conditions for the SARS virus to spread (382). Soon it became airborne and thus, “ninety per cent fatal” (383). Now the biggest threat to all human beings is the new SARS bug against which nothing works no matter how hard the Centre for Disease Control tries (158). Published in 2015, *Lost Girl* astoundingly predicts the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, which impacts the reader with the power of climate fiction as the tell-tales of the distant as well as not-so-distant future(s): “On 11 March 2020, WHO declared Novel Corona virus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a pandemic and reiterated the call for countries to take immediate actions and scale up response to treat, detect



and reduce transmission to save people's lives" (Budholiya et al., 2020, p. 311). In this respect, "it becomes much easier to empathize with the characters in this dystopian narrative [*Lost Girl*] for the contemporary reader that is currently experiencing a pandemic, Covid-19, a non-fictional horror in flesh and blood" (Çetiner, 2020, p. 230). In the novel which parallels the bitter reality of our world today, a vaccine is procured through antibodies of rats which were "the reservoir host", and only the rich ones like Karen, the father's old lover and the manager of Open Arms Charity, her husband Richard, Yasmin/Penny and those around them are inoculated (383-384). As Richard clarifies, the new bug is "[...] NBO. The next big one" (376) that has been transforming for the last fifty years and will be the cause of "the biggest sudden depopulation since the Black Death" (377).

The novel similarly lays bare the Anthropocene and its myriad consequences in real life because the Anthropocene is an age aware of its meaning and impact, unlike any previous epoch. Named within the same age it is happening for the first time in geological history due to countless evidence gathered from the strata, water and the air, the Anthropocene is "the first geological epoch in which a defining geological force [*homo sapiens*] is actively conscious of its geological role", and the positive change is expected to emerge "when humans become aware of their global role in shaping the earth and, consequently, when this awareness shapes their relationship with the natural environment" (Palsson et al., 2013, p. 8). This notion is riveted in the persuasive narrative of *Lost Girl* as a climate fiction even more. For instance, there is an excessive drought in China for many years due to a freshwater shortage and "depletion of the Yellow River and the region's deep aquifers" and the disappearance of the monsoon entirely so much so that "[t]he water shortage has been classed as irreversible by the UN" in 2047 (23). In the same manner, water problems emerge in Europe with depletion of water sources and "the Rhine, the Po, [and] the Loire" rivers while the riverbeds are teeming with poisonous algae which cause waterborne diseases (53), which once again reflects the problem of the drought in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, there is the worldwide phenomenon that is called the "[c]limate holocaust" (51-52) which ranges from the heatstroke in the locales of Kent and Devon with temperatures of around 40 °C degrees (50), forest fires in Mediterranean countries: Spain, Portugal, France (51) and wildfires in India and Australia (229). In southern Europe, the fire is thoroughly

uncontrollable because a massive part of northern Spain and Barcelona, "an area as big as Denmark," has already been lost to wildfires (53) which resulted in Britain being covered with black smoke (20) and Germany with white smoke (53). In another part of the world, in Australia, similar events occur as Sydney and Adelaide are all gone while Perth and Melbourne are surrounded by "[f]ire superstorms" (229-230). All these extreme weather conditions recall the notion of "flat ontology", which refutes the Eurocentric notion of human superiority over the nonhuman and explains how human beings are vulnerable in the face of vast environmental devastations since "nonhuman objects have a force of their own that cannot be reduced to human intention [or intervention]" (Morgan A., 2017). As a result of extreme air pollution caused by wildfire smoke, people in the novel wear masks all over Europe and in the afflicted zones, which finds its real-life correspondence in British Columbia following the barely controlled wildfires in California in July 2018 (Sierra-Heredia, 2018).

Likewise, landslide and rockslide are common anthropogenic incidents in the new, devastated world of *Lost Girl* as can be seen in the mountains of Switzerland that are falling apart while glaciers melt in an alarming rate (53). In the same way, the sea ice is gone whereas the permafrost (solid frozen ground) has been melting and releasing CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, which is the legacy of devastation for future generations if they manage to survive the catastrophes, diseases or boundless human violence. The father meets an older man who gets into a fervent conversation with him about the impending end of the humankind. He fears that the "the hydrogen sulphide [...] [u]nder the ocean floor" (233) will come up and exterminate whatever is left in the seas and leave a stinking smell for future generations. At that moment, the father thinks about the condition of the nonhuman nature which is left wholly unbalanced with centuries-long human interference: "Ironic that it was no longer human emissions doing the most damage to the atmosphere; the earth's own expulsions had become far more deadly, and the planet now seemed to be pursuing a purpose of its own. Great fields of permafrost were releasing their terrible and long-withheld breath into the air, while the forests and oceans absorbed less carbon dioxide than ever. (233).

In this context, the fictional debate about permafrost and ocean floor in the novel reflects none other than the twenty-first-century reality. In the winter of 2017, it was discovered that "a string of days 60 and 70 percent warmer than normal baked the North Pole, melting the permafrost that encased

Norway's Svalbard seed vault - a global food bank nicknamed 'Doomsday'" (Wallace-Wells, 2020), which is so vital for the preservation of seeds for future generations. Likewise in Alaska and Siberia, a research team tasked with observing the region for twelve years has lately found out that the thermokarst (protruding surface of permafrost and melting ice) lakes in Alaska and Siberia "could increase the emissions generated by permafrost by 118 per cent in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Rosane, 2018), especially when the recent years of sweltering summers and dry winters are taken into account. As displayed in the novel, flora and fauna of the Earth similarly struggle with the heat and poisonous air like human beings and die, which can be called human-induced ecocide. Trees give their "dying breaths" as they release the CO<sub>2</sub> that they are supposed to absorb, which adds another pile to the already high rate of carbon emissions (52-53) while animals die a painful death escaping from surviving human beings:

The great dieback from drought, famine and disease was making inroads into the herd; the other animals were running wild-eyed with foam-lathered flesh. Their teeth were showing inside red mouths that cried out uselessly. There was panic. Clubs and rocks were being seized and hoisted aloft to defend what little was left, fences were being erected. Grieving mammals were thinning to extinction; their little ones went first. And it wouldn't stop. (140-141).

At this point, having left the Edenic "old world" of the Holocene, people are facing the consequences of a human-induced, "less congenial epoch" (Tuhus-Dubrow, 2013), the Anthropocene, whose "scarring" signs can be read anywhere on Earth (Colebrook, 2016, p. 151).

### Human Conflict in the Novel

*Lost Girl* aptly reflects how human beings are drawn into social, personal and political conflict/evil that originates from the destruction of the non-human environment. This way, Nevill expresses that in the near future, the humankind will incline towards "protectionism, territorialism, and an even greater self-interest" once global catastrophes coupled with the constant threat of death become a norm ("*Lost Girl: An Interview*", 2015). Similarly, the novel pictures the lack of solidarity, empathy and moral codes among people and a dramatic rise of selfishness and the survival instinct: "Community spirit was thin on the ground, even in the better parts of town. People heard shots popping, and they locked down, grateful it was not their turn. In many parts of the country, who even knew who lived next

door? The national characteristic was mistrust" (17). This lack of morality is almost recurrent of "[t]he concept of nihilism, as the denial of religious morality and metaphysical truth [...] discussion of the meaninglessness of existence" (Yılmaz, 2017, p. 156) experienced amidst boundless natural and societal chaos in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel.

Escaping the catastrophes as much as they can, human beings are also put in a position to deal with criminals and gangs on their own as the police force does not interfere with gang matters, which presents "opportunities for the gangs to fast-track their interests through extortion, bribery, kidnap, blackmail, intimidation and violence" (100). Thus, normal people have become an "[e]asy prey [...] in the crumbling world where 'King Death' reigns supreme" (Everington, 2015). In this respect, the police force is feeble, with most of the officers corrupt and terrified of kings (130). When the father realises the police will not help him, he gets help and information from a handler, whom he names Scarlett Johansson (he puts her life in danger eventually for his vigilante acts) (274) and soon another one, whom he calls Gene Hackman (later killed by the kings) (277) to find his daughter. In the chaotic atmosphere of the world, people take justice into their own hands like Father does (14, 42) since "the forces of law and order are virtually non-existent" (Mahon, 2017). The state forgets about old crimes once the climate change hits (61) and the police classify the cases according to the kind of crime they have to deal with (94) while finding a gun is more natural than finding meat (83). The world is so corrupt and in the control of gangs that, when the father leaves his DNA in two crime scenes, his associate, Gene Hackman, informs him that his records could be national, but the kings keep them. It means they are going to finish off the father themselves (238), which they try hard until the end of the novel.

On the other hand, there is a refugee rush towards the northern parts of the world because of the heatwaves and wildfires in the southern parts. The narrator of *Lost Girl* calls it "Exodus," the great migration, for human species:

Millions had been displaced from southern Europe alone, augmented by further scores of millions from the Middle East and Africa, and all pushing north into Europe. It had changed the continent. Every man, woman and child south of France was steadily fleeing drought, heat, starvation, the wars and innumerable diseases that accompanied each dilemma. *The biggest migration of a single species ever known on the planet was underway.* (95 *emphasis mine*).

A species successfully crossing with the rodent; *perhaps a farsighted evo-*

*lutionary leap towards becoming envoys for the future*, when the planet's aridity seeped further north. (111 *emphasis mine*).

Becoming a geological force that interferes with the natural balance of the Earth and giving their name to an epoch, the Anthropocene, over the span of about 200.000 years with the emergence of *homo sapiens* in East Africa (Hart, 2007, p. 30), the humankind has not been able to predict the eventual turn-back of the Anthropocene in the future. As a result of centuries of anthropocentric exploitation and destruction of nature, human beings in *Lost Girl* end up running north for their survival as a species. As another outcome of the Anthropocene, environmental refugees populate specific regions in the north, which stirs social and political problems among human beings and countries. As the police officer who saves the father from the kings in the Commodore explains: “[...] The rules are changing, and the tone is changing. Every country for itself. What comes next? Every man for himself?” (136). Countries situated in the critical points for the refugee inflow close their borders to protect their own interests:

*Following Spain, Italy, Turkey, the Benelux and Central European countries' decision last month to close their borders, the newly formed French government is now considering the reclosure of its own borders, claiming its territory has again been 'overrun by refugees'. President Lemaire has declared the current situation an 'uncontainable and unsustainable humanitarian crisis'. [...] The British nationalist leader, Benny Prince, applauded the news and urged the British emergency government to follow the French example. (19 emphasis original).*

In addition, there has been political tension between Russia and China going on for fifteen years due to the issue of relocating Chinese people into Siberia and the subsequent Russian resistance about borders (23) while Pakistan and India are on the brink of war because of water sources, as the news report informs in the novel (92). These incidents increase the stakes for a nuclear war especially after “a massive exchange of nuclear weapons on the Indian sub-continent” takes place at the end of the novel (431) that alarms the states all around the world. Similarly, Arabian countries and African countries (Egypt-Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia-Sudan) are at war over farmlands and precious livestock while “the Islamic militia groups” loot everything in Sub-Saharan countries (91).

As exemplified in the novel, during anthropogenic environmental catastrophes, public services and institutions cannot function properly while citi-

zens are left to their fate, which in turn makes them self-centred, suspicious individuals. As can be seen in the case of Hurricane Sandy (2012), which bears similarities to Hurricane Katrina (2005) in terms of the humanitarian crisis that originated from racism, class consciousness and biased state demeanour, the U.S. government could not safeguard all its citizens and gave cause to “changed feelings regarding security, safety, stability, and [...] being unable to rely on the environment” (Kaplan, 2016, p. xvi). In the same fashion, climate security and issue of climate/environmental refugees are the issues in the world agenda as reflected in the climate change fiction because it realistically posits variant sides of “environmental transformation” in the foreground along with the humane stories such as the father's quest for his daughter (White, 2017, p. 182) in *Lost Girl*.

Considering the monumental, unstoppable, and devastating changes on Earth that leave human beings powerless, decentred, and helpless in the human age, the Anthropocene, *Lost Girl* accentuates the approaching extinction of the humankind several times. While it seems to grant infinite power to the humankind as a geological force, the Anthropocene indeed recalls the entanglement of the humankind with the nonhuman environment which indeed makes them vulnerable “within broader geological and ecological processes” (Parkins and Adkins, 2018, p. 5) such as catastrophes and diseases. With this, in *Lost Girl* people discuss the sixth extinction, the end of the world, and more significantly, the Industrial Revolution that commenced the permanent anthropogenic transformation of the nonhuman nature in the early nineteenth century. Considered to be the official origin of the Anthropocene (Crutzen, 2002, p. 23), industrialisation “with the accompanying mechanization of life in that period caused a lot of adverse changes” (Kaya, 2020, p. 30), which explains the gravity of the matter for the twenty-first-century humankind who experience the devastating impact of the anthropogenic changes in nature<sup>3</sup>. With the older man whom the father meets in a pub, the human part in the natural devastation and the doom and gloom theories about the humankind are all called up:

‘The planet's been more than patient. It was around for over four billion

<sup>3</sup> The common notion about the Anthropocene as proposed by Earth scientists is that it develops in three phases: the first phase is from its emergence with the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century to 1945, the end of World War II, the second phase from 1945 to 2015 with the post-war period and the Age of Affluence, and the third phase is from 2015 onwards with the high leap of technology, and the unprecedented environmental and societal transformation in the twenty-first century (Steffen et al., 2007, p. 618).

years before we set the first fires to clear the land. But it only took ten thousand years in this inter-glacial period for us to spread like a virus. We were the mad shepherds who didn't even finish a shift before we poisoned the farm and set fire to the barn. We've overheated the earth and dried it out. So it's time for us to leave, I think. Don't you? *We are already deep into the sixth great extinction, right now, this very minute.*' (234-235 *emphasis mine*).

Likewise, ironically, the "Exodus" of climate refugees starts in the south-east of England "to the place [London] that had started the Industrial Revolution, with its heavy reliance on coal-burning" (2). Thus, advancing for centuries after the Industrial Revolution, the humankind simultaneously triggered the destructive changes in nature that have become irreversible and fatal for their lives. Similarly, the British civilisation, buildings, and cities "that the Victorians had erected" in the nineteenth century are collapsing in the 2050s, "two centuries after the coal furnaces and fires of the Industrial Revolution belched" (107). In this respect, the Anthropocene is called an "archaic" and emptied term by some scholars (Oreskes and Conway, 2014, p. 53) for countless scientists and climatologists talk about worst-case scenarios that are likely to happen by the end of this century encompassing the extinction and mass destruction of the human species along with the end of civilisation.

Nevertheless, unable to cope with the enormity of natural disasters and despairing for survival, states come up with various methods to slow down the malignant transformations in *Lost Girl*. Among them are "[w]ind farms, biofuels, zero-point energy, carbon capture and sequestration [...] the space mirror plans [...] cold fusion [...] [and] geo-engineering with sulphur" (232). The final one, the sulphur method, is doomed to fail as the older man explains, for it will destroy the surviving crops and the world population will surely die of hunger. In the same manner, humans repeat their mistakes over again by interfering even more with the already delicate balance of nature. For instance, New Zealanders block the sun with extreme smoke since they have "pyrocumulonimbus" which are "[t]hunderstorms made from smoke" (230) and Chinese and Indians are planning to do the same to trigger an ice age in their region sending the smoke to the stratosphere "to turn the place into winter" (231). At this point, blocking the sun is a contemporary matter discussed and supported by geoengineering corporations in the twenty-first century. There is a project on "solar ra-

diation management (SRM)" that includes "saturating Earth's atmosphere with sulphur-laden aerosols to reflect solar light back into space, cooling the planet in the process" and the theory seems to be inspired by volcanic activity in Mexico (1982) and the Philippines (1991), after which the temperatures dropped by "0.6 degrees Celsius following [the release of] millions of tons of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere" (Turrentine, 2018). The success of the method in the future is vague as are its consequences for the nonhuman flora and fauna, which indeed elucidates how profound the human impact on nature is and will be in the future. In this respect, the humankind tends to turn a blind eye to human-induced natural changes and overexploitation of nature through arrogance and complacency for the sake of civilisation, advancement, capitalisation, and urbanisation: '[...] We deforested the land to cultivate livestock, we allowed our numbers to burgeon without limit. And we still burned the coal. We are still burning coal. Two hundred and fifty years, give or take a few, of intensively burning coal for this? What were we expecting? [...] We've known what was happening for close to a century. But we kept burning the black stuff. And now we have those feedbacks everywhere. This storm [hurricane] is because of the coal we burned twenty years ago.' (234).

In the same line, regardless of their tremendous part in the current state of the desolate world, the *anthropos* of *Lost Girl*, the rich and influential individuals and capitalist corporations, are solely guided by Eurocentrism, anthropocentrism and their endless desire for longevity to preserve their existence as the self-chosen representatives of the human species. They intentionally play around the tension zones among and within states to eliminate them from the world population. They take the opportunity of the SARS virus to ignore the tragedy of millions of people who are suffering and dying, and even taking joy from watching other people die because it would solve the refugee and population problems, food and water shortages all at once (387). Richard, Karen's husband, and Penny's adoptive father, since when Karen got her kidnapped from her home, confronts Father. Father loathes him instantly for his selfishness, cruelty, and greed for he seems to be the epitome of the *anthropos* carrying "his pride in being British" and representing "the Western technological, economic and military" power of his nation (Erdem Ayyıldız, 2018, p. 25):

The more he spoke, the more the man reminded the father of those distant, wine-fuelled executives from food distribution who held forth at parties,



their baritones rising to the ceilings of the rooms they quickly came to dominate; people who had drifted into the executive level of agriculture, construction, nuclear power, the emergency government, water management and resettlement planning, after their opportunities in finance diminished as the world's markets began to collapse; men who considered anyone unlike themselves as without worth. (379-380).

He calls Britain a "lifeboat" and the British "the lucky ones" along with "the Kiwis" (New Zealanders) who have managed to block the sun (381). Thus, he announces the fate of nations around the world confidently: "[t]he British and French, Canadians, Scandinavians, Polish, Russians, Japanese and Koreans" are going to survive the catastrophes while "Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, every single country but France that borders the Med, India, Pakistan and the Middle East, are all on their way to final collapse because of water [shortage]" (385). Additionally, he assures he will be among the survivors as one of the few representatives of the human race while he intimidates other human beings who most likely will not survive in the end. Nevertheless, soon after this display of arrogance and pride, he dies a painful death (like Karen) in Father's hands and joins the ranks of the dead people with whom he previously made fun of. Hence, as a prominent member of the *anthropos*, Richard cannot get beyond "the long history of human exceptionalism" (Ohrem, 2017, p. 12), racism and superiority for which he is doomed to be perished in the novel.

In this respect, as Nevill himself also underlines, *Lost Girl* bears messages about the Anthropocene and underlines the vitality of decisive human action to slow down its destructive effects, if not completely stop it. Likewise, as a counteraction for centuries-long human ignorance and multifaceted negative impacts, Paul Crutzen reminds of various positive developments during the Anthropocene, which can only be achieved through constructive human interference:

Hopefully, in the future, the "Anthropocene" will not only be characterised by continued human plundering of Earth's resources and dumping of excessive amounts of waste products in the environment, but also by vastly improved technology and management, wise use of Earth's resources, control of human and domestic animal population, and overall careful manipulation and restoration of the natural environment. (2006, p. 17).

Hence, as Crutzen anticipates, it is possible to turn the negative human impact on nature into a positive one by finding out the accurate methods and using adequate tools. Likewise, as a literary work and a cli-

mate change novel, *Lost Girl* conjures up awareness in the Anthropocene societies and governments about the urgency of taking action at once since the mindset of the majority of the humankind seems to be still rooted in the Holocene tradition, which has proved to be *anthropocentric* and short-sighted. To that purpose, Holocene societies are expected to comprehend that they have already morphed into Anthropocene societies especially after the enormous acceleration in the late twentieth-century and to build a fruitful correlation between their changed "insight and action" (Palsson et al., 2013, p. 7). Likewise, the negative transformation of the environment that encompasses the climate change has become both a public and private issue calling forth all human beings whether in an organised community or as individuals through "[e]nhancing the public's climate literacy" (Liu et al., 2014, p. 37). Therefore, it is vital to publicise the understanding of current environmental transformations to create a guided awareness and to initiate collaborative action in the humankind.

Nevertheless, despite the enduring threat of death and devastating natural disasters and new strains of illnesses, the humane aspect is not forfeited in *Lost Girl*. It is indeed a story of love displaying the endless love and sacrifice of a father for his daughter. When Penny is taken away from the father, his normal life ends, and he becomes a vigilante, a criminal, step by step to get closer to her. Then, risking his own life along with his wife's and those of his anonymous accomplices, he reflects his dilemmas and conflicts as a father and a human being risking all for Penny (Fryer, 2015). Hence, despite the horrible and dystopian foreground of the novel, it appears to be "overall a story about the limits of love" and endurance of a human being (Morgan P., 2017). At the end of the novel, when he gets Penny back and shields her from the dangers of the world with his wife, the father feels a natural relief that can be observed in all human beings who have someone in their lives they dread to lose. Thus, the human touch and happy ending of the novel bring out hope and enthusiasm in human beings to counteract the obstacles originating from the negative transformation of the nonhuman nature, and the dangers other human beings pose (such as a nuclear threat) for the loved ones in such crazy times:

Eventually the father extended one arm out and over the waists of his daughter and his wife, and carefully placed his chest against Penny's back. The smell of her hair engulfed him, and their three hearts beat together. The blood of the parents warmed the little one in the middle./ He made a vow. Unto death he'd never let them go, and if death were to divide him from

them, he'd go first. But before he left, he would find a place for them to be safe, and he would fill their hearts with so much love, it would glow within them long after the last reactor died. (435).

## Conclusion

To sum up, *Lost Girl* by the British horror novelist, Adam Nevill, stands out as a pre-apocalyptic climate change novel with horror qualities narrating the formidable quest of a father in the horrible atmosphere of the deranged near-future world. The novel conveys messages encouraging the humankind into adopting a constructive green philosophy and turning it into action at once by demonstrating the realities of the twenty-first century, the coronavirus pandemic, the climate change, and other horrendous transformations in human beings and the nonhuman environment alike. The emotional story involving a little girl who is taken from her parents and who reconciles with them only through her father's unspeakable methods gives hope after all, with Nevill's personal touch, that the anthropocentric tendency towards complacency and arrogance could be replaced.

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