

Navigating Ethical Dilemmas and Embracing Emotional Responses: Noria's Agonising Moral Choices in *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itäranta

WEI LIUNA

Department of English
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

IDA BAIZURA BAHAR *

Department of English
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia
idabb@upm.edu.my

ZAINOR IZAT ZAINAL

Department of English
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

*The contemporary era's climate fluctuations have wrought profound consequences on both the planet and its inhabitants, prompting a surge in climate literature that underscores the societal and environmental implications of climate change while instilling a sense of accountability. This study conducts a textual analysis of *Memory of Water* (2014), a novel by the Finnish author Emmi Itäranta (b. 1976), to examine how the protagonist, Noria, faces ethical dilemmas and makes ethical choices during a climate crisis. Utilising the framework of ethical choices conceptualised by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, the study explores the ethical dilemmas faced by Noria and the subsequent ethical decisions she makes following emotional turmoil. As Nussbaum points out, emotional responses generate compassionate and just ethical choices while facing ethical dilemmas. While discovering the ethical dilemmas triggered by climate change, this study also found that Nora's emotional responses have indeed helped her make ethical decisions, upholding goodness and morality in balancing the needs of the ecosystem and the well-being of humankind.*

Keywords: climate fiction; Emmi Itäranta; ethical choice; Martha Nussbaum; Memory of Water

INTRODUCTION

As stated in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report released in 2022, “[a]pproximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change. A high proportion of species is vulnerable to climate change” (p. 12). This is not just a problem of rising global temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions; climate change is a systemic problem that involves biodiversity, population development, resource use, urban spatial layout, energy and economic development, changes in human relationships, and trauma healing. Over the past few years, climate change has become a dominant topic in environmental discussions. Since British writer Robert Macfarlane (b. 1976) asked, “[w]here is the literature of climate change?” in 2005 in *The Guardian*, literature on the theme of climate change has emerged as an important new force in the literary world. In 2007, American journalist Dan Bloom coined the term ‘Cli-Fi’ as an acronym for climate change fiction to describe this

increasingly established genre. As Johns-Putra (2016) puts it, “It is clear that climate change is no longer a marginal topic in literature and literary studies” (p. 266). The emergence of this genre not only reflects the public’s growing concern about climate change but also underscores the significant role of literature in addressing social issues.

More importantly, climate fiction often depicts a post-apocalyptic future of extreme weather, resource shortages, and rampant viruses, as well as demonstrating the negative impacts of the climate crisis on social systems, politics, and economic structures, presenting a dystopian society in which human freedoms and rights are greatly restricted. Through climate fiction, “we may renegotiate the possibilities, the potentials, the demands, the horrors, and the pleasures of our various presents” (Chattopadhyay, 2022, p. 7). The sense of crisis and the emotional resonance conveyed through the texts reflect the collective anxiety shared by contemporary society and generate profound thoughts about the current environment, as well as how to survive and develop in the future world. However, ethical concerns are an inescapable major topic in climate fiction writing and climate fiction research. Climate novels not only record people’s collective anxiety in the face of climate crisis but also show the responsibility and care of human beings for future generations trapped in the crisis, highlighting the ethical concern in human emotions from multiple dimensions. Indeed, climate fiction is a narrative of the future, which “leads to a sense of mystery and ethical puzzlement in which the boundaries of the human are, potentially, renegotiated” (Caracciolo, 2022a, p.27).

A more vital essence to be highlighted here is that humanity has progressed from the stage of natural selection to ethical choice throughout its evolutionary history. This stage resolves the majority of human problems and produces pertinent ethical issues. When stuck at the ethical choice stage, making a decision is a difficult process, often accompanied by internal anguish, emotional confusion and psychological entanglement. Given the spatial and temporal natures of climate change, the future worlds presented in climate fiction are uniquely trans-regional, trans-species, and trans-generational, “which comes with considerable affective and ethical baggage” (Caracciolo, 2022b, p.151). Here, it is argued that the theory of ethical choices by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947) can help us gain a deeper understanding of the ethical dilemmas grippingly depicted by the contemporary Finnish writer Emmi Itäranta (b. 1976) in her novel *Memory of Water* (2014). In the novel, the protagonist, Noria, finds herself trapped in her own conscience when challenged with the issue of ethical dilemmas and how her emotional responses appear to be a non-negotiable option to help her make ethical choices in times of climate crisis and resource scarcity. An important factor that must be stressed here is that Nussbaum describes ethical dilemmas as stages of ethical conundrums, that this ethical confusion is itself an ethical response, and that the pain, hesitation, and other emotions not only have cognitive situational value but also itself a profound form of self-knowledge. More often than not, these choices are often expressed in outwardly personality behaviour and have a significant impact on others and even on society, accompanied by inwardly complex psychological activity.

The novel *Memory of Water* (2014) depicts a world in which living water has become a military-controlled rarity and natural resources are almost completely depleted, with people only able to obtain a limited quantity on a ration basis in order to survive. The privileged Noria is faced with difficult choices, constantly choosing between keeping secrets and being honest with her best friend, between staying with her father and following her mother, and between life and death (her father’s life and death, Minja’s life and death, and her own life and death). The plot of the novel centres around these secrets, loyalty and betrayal, life and death, as Itäranta leads us to consider these basic problems in the face of climate crisis. Ethical dilemmas frequently force people to

make ethically difficult choices, and the process of making an ethical decision is marked by a specific event and complex psychology. According to Nussbaum (2001b), pain is a catalyst for cognition, while love, empathy, and sympathy are inter-subjective bridges that can serve as guides for ethical choices (p. 235). Throughout the story of the climate crisis and water scarcity, it is through these emotions, as outlined by Nussbaum, that Noria fulfils the ethical choices she has made in her life time and time again to find a way to survive for herself as well as for others. Therefore, based on the above research problems, this study applies Nussbaum's ethical choices as a conceptual framework to examine the ethical dilemmas that Noria faces and the ethical choices she accomplishes during the climate crisis. This study will focus on the ethical dilemmas and emotional confusion brought upon by the climate crisis to human beings, as well as the important roles that emotional responses play in ethical choices, ultimately completing self-knowledge and the pursuit of goodness in the process of making ethical choices. This process, in turn, strengthens the emotional connection between human beings and provides a new way of thinking when dealing with the climate crisis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since its emergence, climate fiction has received more and more attention, and literary criticism has begun to pay attention to this emerging literary style. So far, many scholars have published studies on climate fiction, mainly focusing on the ecological crisis, psychological trauma, anti-utopia, capitalism, and human community in literary texts, and the relevant research results have been very encouraging. For instance, Satkunanathan (2022) analyses *The Broken Earth Trilogy* (2018) by American writer Nora Keita Jemisin (b. 1972), using a postcolonial ecogothic perspective to examine the patterns of power and domination. This study explores the separation and alienation of the plantation system, thereby reflecting on the harm that capitalism inflicts on the planet and people and revealing the dual struggles that individuals and communities face with the threats of capitalism and the climate. From a different literary lens, through analysing *L'ultima Bambina d'Europa* (2017) by Italian writer Francesco Aloe (b. 1982), Chiafele (2022) reveals the vulnerabilities and contradictions of modern society in the face of climate change. The novel employs a non-anthropocentric perspective and criticises petroculture, prompting readers to reflect on the greed of capitalism and the consequences of environmental collapse. In contrast, Pal and Pannikot (2023) provide a close textual analysis of *The Breathing Hole* (2020) by the contemporary Canadian author Colleen Murphy (b. 1954) and employ indigenous ecocriticism and the non-human turn to investigate how the dramatist rejects ordinary human categories by giving non-human Angu'ruaq, an anthropomorphic polar bear, priority over human characters. The key findings point to the devastating effects of capitalism and neo-colonialism on the indigenous ways of life, destroying the foundational connections that link the human (Inuit) and non-human worlds. These studies, thus, collectively demonstrate the thematic diversity of climate fiction and concern for different regions and groups of people, drawing social attention and global resonance, which is an important way to promote social change and environmental protection.

More significantly, Goodbody (2022) explores the symbolic significance of water in Itäranta's novel *Memory of Water* from the perspective of history and memory. This study highlights the novel's narrative strategy of recalling the past and imagining the future through the memory of water, which provides a new perspective on environmental protection and inspires readers to think about how to promote environmental sustainability through the preservation and

transmission of memory. On the other hand, Leppänen (2020) discusses the potential of dystopian literature, specifically focusing on *Memory of Water*, by applying a combination of literary concepts, namely the concept of “slow violence” by Rob Nixon and “eco-cosmopolitanism” by Ursula Heise. In this study, Leppänen underscores the importance of recognising and addressing the slow violence inherent in environmental degradation and resource scarcity, urging readers to consider the long-term consequences of our actions and the need for sustainable practices.

Meanwhile, Nidhi and Kaushik (2021) use an ecocritical perspective to analyse the symbols of degenerating surroundings in the novel by examining the use of symbols, imagery, metaphors, similes, personification, and motifs in the novel to convey the themes of ecological degradation and scarcity of resources. This study emphasises the impacts of human greed and negligence on water bodies and draws attention to the importance of water for purification, healing, and rebirth. In particular, it focuses on the significance of the imagery of water in *Memory of Water*, pointing to the importance of natural resources and the urgency of collective human action.

Nussbaum’s concept of ethical choice provides a new perspective for a deeper understanding of human nature and society. As a result, some scholars have used the concept of ethical choice to examine issues of personal nature, emotional relationships, and social responsibility in literary texts. For example, Asher (2011) has conducted a literature review of works by English novelist David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), focusing on his themes about the self, emotions, and morality in light of the idea that emotions have epistemic significance and can foster moral consciousness. Thus, while our ethical choices are guided by our primal emotions, we also make subtle distinctions in our daily lives based on our intellectual wisdom. From another perspective, Zeng (2019) analyses the novel *Lolita* (1955) by the contemporary Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), which explores the protagonist’s struggle with his desires, the conflict between individual nature and societal norms, and the controversy surrounding the moral interpretation of the novel. It forces readers to confront the complexities of human nature and the moral dilemmas that arise when individual desires clash with societal expectations. Furthermore, Vera Nelleke Veldhuizen (2021) examines a variety of narrative strategies in *The Machine Gunners* (1975) by English author Robert Westall (1929-1993), to explore ethical issues in children’s literature by demonstrating the impact of stakes and emotions on moral judgements and consequences through an analysis of the storyline. This study highlights that ethical and moral implications within narratives hold significant social and political importance and have potential cognitive impacts on young readers who are still in the process of cognitive development. In conclusion, these studies collectively demonstrate the presentation of ethical choices in different literary works and suggest that the concept of ethical choices can be utilised to further the understanding of human-society relationships and the moral growth of the self in different contexts.

Hence, these studies have examined the issue of ethical choices in literary works from a variety of perspectives, showing the variation and complexity of ethical choices. However, the available research has been rather limited, and only a few studies have addressed the ethical choices of characters and nature in the context of the climate crisis. Considering the urgency of the climate crisis as well as the survival and development of human beings, the theme of ethical choices in climate fiction and an urgent crisis needs further research in the field of literature.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nussbaum's theory of ethical choice suggests that literature can vividly demonstrate the complexity of ethical dilemmas, which often contain conflicting ethical principles and values and require individuals to make choices. However, the emotional response to an ethical dilemma can lead the individual to a fuller understanding of various aspects and, after analysing and weighing them, prompt the individual to make a more humane choice. Thus, ethical choice can be viewed as a difficult process because literature "shows us not so much a 'solution' to the 'problem of practical conflict' as the richness and depth of the problem itself" (Nussbaum, 2001a, p. 49). While ethical dilemmas are prerequisites for making ethical choices, the emotional responses triggered by ethical dilemmas play an important role in ethical choices and, indeed, more important than the outcome is the process itself.

Nussbaum believes that the greatest challenge lies in the moral choices people are forced to make. She calls this "tragic conflict" because they force individuals to choose between two or more conflicting ethics and values, each choice inevitably leading to a violation of some ethical standard. However, under normal circumstances, this individual's "ethical character or commitments would otherwise cause him to reject the act" (Nussbaum, p. 25). In *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (2001), Nussbaum offers an extensive study of Greek tragedy, with the ethical dilemmas of Antigone and Agamemnon standing out. Antigone faces a conflict between obeying the laws of the land and fulfilling his family responsibilities, while Agamemnon must choose between abandoning his expedition to Troy and sacrificing his daughter. Here, we can deduce that ethical dilemmas arise in specific contexts and are often accompanied by a clash of multiple values. Thus, this is the complexity of ethical dilemmas, and we must acknowledge their tragic nature.

However, the complexity and tragedy of ethical dilemmas dictate that they bring about complex emotional responses in individuals, reflecting their sensitivity to the benefits and ethical values of all parties in the dilemma. Nussbaum proposes that an emotion "is identical with the acceptance of a proposition that is both evaluative and eudemonistic" (Nussbaum, 2004b, p. 193). It is presupposed here that ethical dilemmas bring love, fear, pain, sympathy or remorse to the individual and such emotional bonds should not be ignored but embraced because they will help the individual to think about what is at stake in the ethical dilemma and to judge what is most important. According to Nussbaum, emotion and imagination are essential for recognising moral situations and making decisions. The emotional reaction to the ethical decision and the corrective actions made in response to the compromised values are more significant than the choice's outcome. When faced with an ethical choice, choosing one course of action does not free the person from the compromised ideals. Nussbaum appreciates emotional response and promotes the restoration of shattered values because she is of the opinion that it is inhumane for there to be no emotional reaction to an ethical choice (Spronk et al., 2020).

What needs to be highlighted in this discourse is that ethical choices guided by emotional intelligence often transcend hatred, revenge, and certain principles of pure reason, such as the principle of justice and the dignity of parents in front of their wrongdoing children, reflecting Nussbaum's quest for inner transcendence. Such an ethical choice is a choice to love family and friends and to love those who are far away through empathy and sympathy. In *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (2016), Nussbaum analyses and fully affirms the ethical choices made by characters in many literary works under the guidance of love, forgiveness, or compassion, such as *The Golden Bowl* (1904) by Henry James (1843-1916), *Cry, the Beloved*

Country (1948) by Alan Paton (1903-1988) and *American Pastoral* (1997) by Philip Roth (1933-2018). Additionally, Nussbaum examines how ethical decisions can be guided by emotional intelligence in more challenging situations. She contends that understanding and compassion can overcome hatred and guide one's thoughts away from fixation on the past and toward constructive consideration of the future, allowing one to make the proper moral decisions, even when forgiveness seems unlikely in the face of sorrow.

In Nussbaum's view, ethical dilemmas express the appreciation and respect of different values, while suffering involves the recognition of the importance of lost values and can lead to ethical reflection. The rationality of the emotional response contributes to the recognition of the value of the loss following an ethical choice and stimulates the act of redemption. This translates to respect for marginal values, which is an important aspect of the ethical life of people and reveals much of what has been sacrificed in philosophical principles, especially the principle of extreme utilitarianism (Carr, 2005, p. 138). Within this problematised research statement, this study aims to examine the ethical dilemmas and emotional responses faced by the protagonist, Noria, through a textual analysis of her experiences in order to explore the ethical choices she makes during the climate crisis. This study also investigates how she makes ethical choices to justify her personal moral decisions and pursuits.

METHODOLOGY

This study analyses the novel *Memory of Water* (2014) by Itäranta through the lens of ecocriticism and ethical criticism. According to Kortekallio (2023), the novel "lays out ethical challenges central to the Anthropocene" (p. 342). As recalled, Nussbaum states that ethical choices are predicated on the ethical dilemmas faced and produce an emotional response and, ultimately, the emotional response helps the individual make an ethical choice. This study, therefore, examines Noria's experience of the climate crisis, concentrating on her ethical dilemmas and emotional responses and exploring the ethical choices she makes and their significance. The primary method of data collection is accomplished through close readings of the text, applying Nussbaum's concept of ethical choice, focusing on the ethical choices faced by Noria and demonstrating the conflict of values in the midst of the climate crisis.

DISCUSSION

ETHICAL DILEMMAS ARISING FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (2001), Nussbaum argues how ethical dilemmas show us that sometimes ethical choices must be made between competing, "a conflict of ethical beliefs about what is and is not appropriate" (p. 30). The ethical potential of literature lies in showing the complexity and contradictions of real choices, "[f]or Nussbaum, literature is not only to be mined for its examples of the role of touché in human life, and the list of the things that matter that it reveals, but for its portrayal of the reality of how ethical dilemmas are experienced" (Ebner-Landy, 2023, p. 12).

Indeed, an ethical dilemma is the first stage of ethical choice and the existence of the ethical dilemma is implied in the very first sentence of the novel, "Some secrets demand betrayal" (Itäranta, 2014). In the novel, Noria is born into a family of tea masters, and her father is also a tea

master who upholds the art and historic holy rites of the tea ceremony. In the context of the military conflict and economically chaotic world depicted in the book, Noria's family is different from other poor families in the village, and this is reflected in her living environment and daily life. The descriptions of Noria's home environment in the novel are always filled with bright and comforting tones, while the descriptions of the environment outside of her home are always dark and depressing, which is a stark contrast to one another. In the following evidence, we can see the cosy surroundings of Noria's home:

The pale sand rippled around dark grey boulders like the water surrounding abandoned islands. The three tea plants growing just outside the edge of the sand burst towards the clear sky like green flames. I put the mint leaves in my mouth and continued to the small hillock in the shadow of a pine tree by the gate, from where I could see the road through the shadows of the scattered trees.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 27)

Sadly, in the novel, Noria can read her favourite novels while her friends search through the rubbish for usable home things. In addition, Noria and her parents have access to the purest, tastiest water and even enjoy the elegant tea ceremony while the rest of the village endure hunger and thirst searching around for sources of fresh water, "Due to professional reasons, the tea master's water quota is naturally somewhat larger than that of most citizens" (Itäranta, 2014, pp. 35-36). Here, it is clear that Noria's family enjoys a certain privilege that others crave, and it all comes from honouring the mysterious and sacred profession of the tea master. As Egerer (2022) points out, "[w]ater is what ties and holds everything together" (p. 34). In other words, it is not just water that the army controls but the survival and death of ordinary people. Water represents not only the hope of survival but also human dignity. So, at the time, such an enjoyment was somewhat anachronistic; when everyone else was suffering, this exclusive pleasure could only be secret. The allocation of resources is often a complex and pervasive issue, especially in difficult times when resources are scarce, "[g]iven pervasive exposure of vulnerable populations, issues of responsibility, fairness, and governance come to the fore" (Adger & Nicholson-Cole, 2011, p. 257). A conflict arises between the fair, efficient allocation of resources and the needs of different groups, and the tension between the principle of equality and individual interests is reflected in Noria's case. Her family enjoys water privileges, but with the water guard "checking people's monthly water quotas and enforcing penalties" (p. 19), it is clear that Noria's family is caught in an ethical dilemma of individual privilege and resource allocation.

In addition to this, Noria faces the difficult ethical dilemma of whether to carry on her father's traditional tea art and become a tea master to continue the family tradition. At the beginning of the story, Noria is a high school student who, as the only child in her family, has been taught the art of tea by her father since she was a child. Noria has always admired her father as a tea master, and he is proud of her. So, Noria is certain that she will stay at home to study with her father and become a real tea master, a firm choice she has made to fulfil her filial duty:

While I had done well, there was never any question that I would remain in my current apprenticeship with my father instead of continuing my studies in the city. It was a choice I had felt obliged to make and, therefore, perhaps, not really a choice. But it seemed to make my parents happy, and it didn't make me miserable, and those were the things that mattered at the time.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 6)

By fulfilling her duty at this time, Noria is referring to the transmission of traditional skills and culture, the inheritance and continuation of the elegant art and etiquette of tea from one generation to the next in her family. However, with water scarcity, life has become increasingly difficult and stressful; Noria's father and mother disagree on their plans, with her father wanting to stay at home and carry on the traditional tea ceremony and her mother insisting on leaving to start a new life in the big city, "The conversation of my parents drifted into my ears louder than before. My mother was using her sensible voice and my father's answers were concise" (Itäranta, 2014, p. 42). Noria "must deal with contradictory concerns where there is no unequivocal or obvious 'right decision'" (Kousholt & Juhl, 2023, p. 561). Clearly, following her mother's advice helps her live a better life because the rich metropolis provides excellent living conditions. Yet, the responsibility of passing on the family tea ceremony weighs heavily on her mind, and the question of whether to continue the family tradition or to start a better life becomes a huge personal dilemma for Noria, who is caught in a dilemma by her parents' expectant gaze. As she said, "I had no way of knowing which one of my parents was right, and I couldn't both stay and go" (Itäranta, 2014, p. 77). Here, conflicts arise in Noria's family due to differences in values and lifestyles, and these conflicts become ethical dilemmas for Noria. This is because the predicament involves morality and responsibility among family members, with personal freedom and professional development on the one hand and family responsibilities and traditional crafts on the other.

When Noria is ready to become a tea maker, her father informs her about a secret spring in the mountains. It is a mountain spring that has been kept secret by the family, from which the water they use to make their tea ceremony comes, a secret that has been kept in her family for generations. When her father urges her to keep this great secret, Noria makes her promise:

"I'll remember," I told him, but I didn't realise until later what kind of a promise I had made. Silence is not empty or immaterial, and it is not needed to chain tame things. It often guards powers strong enough to shatter everything.

(Itäranta, 2014, pp. 12-13)

In the world depicted in the novel, the act of keeping information about freshwater resources private is considered a crime, and such a crime would spell disaster for the entire family and make it impossible to continue the family tradition. So, it is important, both to Noria personally and to the family, that this secret is kept, which determines the survival of the family and the legacy of the family tea ceremony. When Noria's father dies, however, Noria is placed in an even more difficult ethical impasse. On the one hand, Noria has the responsibility of keeping the family's secrets and passing on the art of tea to the family. On the other hand, others in her immediate society are struggling to survive due to a lack of water. Noria clearly understands her ethical dilemma because:

Death is water's close companion. The two cannot be separated, and neither can be separated from us, for they are what we are ultimately made of the versatility of water and the closeness of death. Water has no beginning and no end, but death has both. Death is both. Sometimes, death travels hidden in the water, and sometimes, water will chase death away, but they go together always, in the world and in us.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 5)

However, the army commander has been watching Noria's home, trying to seek out the secret about the mountain spring and, if she is discovered, then she will be condemned as a water criminal and eventually executed. As Egerer (2022) argues, "Noria, struggling to fulfil her role in the web of life" (p. 35). In the novel, Noria has multiple identities; she is a resident of the village, the daughter of the family and the inheritor of the traditional tea ceremony. These three roles put

different pressures on Noria, and they are accompanied by a variety of conflicting values. This triple pressure puts Noria in a deeper ethical quandary; she does not know how to choose between her family's honour, her personal future and the lives of others.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES IN ETHICAL DILEMMAS

According to Nussbaum, ethical dilemmas contain a conflict of values and morals, which inevitably elicits an emotional response from the individual. And she presents "a powerful argument for treating emotions not as alien forces but as highly discriminating responses to what is of value and importance" (Nussbaum, 2001b, p. i). These emotional responses are usually in the form of love, grief, regret, compassion and anger and are responses to values chosen or discarded in ethical dilemmas. Therefore, they should be seen as "intellectual responses", which are ways of thinking about important issues (p. 25).

There is a lot of anger, but nothing that could be done about the plundering of the water resources by the military forces in power, who use extreme violence. In this respect, Noria, like everyone else in the village, hates the hegemony of the army. On the other hand, in terms of the distribution of water, Noria has a source of freshwater that is not available to others. Thus, Noria clearly feels trapped at such a moral crossroads and the thought is deeply embedded in her mind:

When I closed my eyes, I saw the distance that separated our house from the village and from another house, more weather-worn than ours. On its door, a blue circle stared into the white night with outlines sharp enough to wound. The distance was not great, and if I looked at it long enough, it would grow narrower until I'd be able to touch the door of the other house to listen to the movements behind it. Or the silence. I wrapped the image away and pushed it from my mind, but I knew it did not disappear.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 49)

She even feels guilty when confronted by her good friend, Sanja, for being indifferent as well as for being powerless. Noria feels angry and guilty, which is a sign of resentment towards the government's powerful behaviour and the value it places on people's lives and dignity. However, it is important to recognise a genuine ethical dilemma, which provides a good basis for the subsequent search for ways to resolve the ethical dilemma, as "the failure to recognise genuine moral dilemmas commits us to something like an existentialist view of moral personality, in which we boldly take credit for choices that we make, undeterred by remorse for the wrong that we thereby have done" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 1010).

Nussbaum (2001a) believes that "[i]n fact, internal to our emotional response itself is the judgment that what is at issue is indeed serious" (p. 307). In the context of water scarcity, Noria's emotional response reflects a valuing and adherence to the collective benefit and individual goodness. When her parents have an argument, Noria begins to feel like a stranger to her parents, who are discussing a life-and-death issue she does not know about but is directly related to her life. She starts to doubt herself. As a result, confused about her future and wondering if she should stick to her original dream of doing her duty to carry on the family tea ceremony, "Everything that was left unsaid during those days tightened around us like a web that might suffocate and crush us if we didn't find a way out soon enough" (Itäranta, 2014, p. 63). In essence, the ethical dilemma is inevitably an emotional response, a confusion that gives rise to doubts, hesitations, guilt and pain as Noria considers her future life, caught in a dilemma of self-perception, "I can pick my own beginning. Perhaps I will pick my own end" (Itäranta, 2014, p. 6). Nussbaum argues that, far from being dangerous, fragility and intuition play a valuable part in our responses to philosophy, literature, and the ethical dilemmas we face together. Emotional openness enables us to see each

other from the “inside” in ways that people who treat each other as detached spectators of the world cannot (Straus, 1990, p. 290). Therefore, such emotions and dilemmas are indeed not negative; they can help Noria learn to face her difficulties positively, to look straight into her inner world and to better see the inheritance of her family’s love and culture.

Eventually, Noria takes over her father’s position as a tea master, but due to the harsh, natural and contentious environment, Noria feels psychological pressure from several sources. The responsibility of carrying on the tradition of the tea ceremony haunts Noria, who sees it as a way of honouring her dead father and performs the ceremony with reverence and respect. At the same time, not being able to help her best friend, as well as her neighbours, out of their predicament makes Noria feel very guilty. Nevertheless, if she helps more of her neighbours gain access to water, then she will be severely punished, and the traditional tea ceremony will be forced to be discontinued when the spring, which the family has protected for generations, is made public. As a result, Noria becomes confused, tormented and in pain, with profound moral dilemmas that cause her to struggle internally over and over again because “moral perception is a solution to resolvable ethical dilemmas” (Hole, 2021, p. 368). The story of emotion is the story of judgments about important things, judgments in which we acknowledge our neediness and incompleteness before those elements that we do not fully control (Nussbaum, 2004b, p. 184). As Plumb (2014) posits, emotional responses “make a significant contribution to our understandings and our judgments, especially our moral judgments” (p. 149). Here, Noria’s own moral perceptions help her to recognise herself when faced with a moral dilemma and to set up her own future path.

ETHICAL CHOICES AFTER THE STRUGGLE

As Nussbaum (2001b) suggests, “[w]e will have to grapple with the messy material of grief and love, anger and fear, and the role these tumultuous experiences play in thought about the good and the just” (p. iii). This process of response is an ethical choice, a judgement made with the help of emotional responses, choosing the more important values and, at the same time, abandoning others. It cannot be ignored that ethical choices imply that there must be an aspect of morality and values that are compromised. In the novel, when Noria decides to become a tea master in order to protect the hidden spring and carry on the family’s tea tradition, she will be separated from her mother for a long time. Here, the relationship between a mother and her child is undoubtedly weakened by this decision. However, Noria is reminded of her mother frequently while she goes through the practising tea master’s inspection ceremony, and she sincerely hopes that her mother will be there for all of the significant events in her life:

I thought of my mother again, her journey that could have been mine: another life in which I had buried my tea master’s outfit instead of accepting it as my second skin. Bright as a reflection in a clear mirror, I saw myself walking and learning the scent and twists of the unfamiliar streets between the buildings of a strange city like one learns a new language. Beyond that, I would like a landscape of my own, one that I can discover and make my own home.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 98)

Scenes from Noria’s own later life often depict her longing for her mother; this is a reflection of her choice to stay and work as a tea maker - a decision that, of course, does not imply that she regrets it but rather shows how much she values the relationship between mother and daughter.

One of the values is always impacted once an ethical decision is made in a dilemma. Hence, it is crucial to identify and address the values that have been harmed. In *Political Emotions: Why*

Love Matters for Justice (2013), Nussbaum discusses how a justice-seeking society requires us to expand our love and compassion to look at the extraordinary and unspectacular things in the world: “[a] primary source of political difficulty is the ubiquitous human wish to surmount the helplessness that is so large a part of human life—to rise, we might say, above the messiness of the ‘merely human’” (p. 16). Therefore, the reflection and remediation of damaged values after ethical choices is a recognition of the value of life and respect for marginal values, which contributes to the development of personal moral emotions and helps to alleviate social conflicts and build a harmonious society.

As depicted in the novel, when the army controls the water, they also criminalise the hiding of water information and the taking of private possession of it while rewarding informants with clean water. This is a violent and unjust judgement because “[o]rders exist not on the edge of the territory of the state, but in numerous points within and beyond it” (Delanty, 2006, p. 183). Thus, the loyalty and trust between people begin to crumble, silent suspicion fills the village, and the mistrust, betrayal and suspicion between people put them in a completely passive position. However, when Noria becomes a tea master, she bravely makes her choice to protect the people’s dignity and rights, striving for justice and goodness in her heart. Under difficult circumstances, Noria, as an independent individual, “exhibits a degree of autonomy as she reacts and responds to the changes occurring around her” (Rezaei et al., 2022a, p. 52). This then explains her morally upright decision to share the location of the spring with her best friend, Sanja, and to sell fresh water for a fair price in addition to providing it free of charge to those in need who have travelled a great distance but lack money. At the heart of her moral quandary, we detect Noria’s personal wishes that everyone has access to water rather than just the soldiers. This is because “Water doesn’t belong to us, but we belong to water: when it has passed through our fingers and pores and bodies, nothing separates us from the earth” (Itäranta, 2014, p. 221).

Even though Noria believes that freedom and choice are valuable, she is prepared to give up both her own freedom and her family’s tea tradition in order to save the lives of her friends, neighbours and many other people. Noria also has her own thoughts on freedom of choice:

When life is chained within narrow limits, the slightest illusion of freedom is valuable. The weathered wood of the door and the fragile glass of the windows would not keep away those who were threatening me, but if I could still hide one small slice of my life from them, make it mine alone, I would not give up this shred of privacy, possibly the last one I had.

(Itäranta, 2014, p. 228)

Here, individual freedom seems insignificant in the face of life and power during a period of severe water scarcity but Noria never gives up on her quest for freedom. She bravely challenges those in power during times of difficult circumstances to defend her own and other people’s legitimate rights and liberties.

So, whether Noria is determined to become a tea master or brave enough to set out on a quest to find water for all, she has indeed made the ethical choice of her life bravely. When it is all over, and Noria looks back on her experience and records it, she feels more relaxed than ever: “My body felt like an empty husk: light enough for any breeze to carry away, free of the weight of water and words” (Itäranta, 2014, p. 256). On the surface, Noria has made the ethical choice to fulfil her life, pass on her family’s great skills, and give to others. Nonetheless, at a deeper level, Noria insists on justice and goodness, and she has overcome individualism in her ethical choices, not dwelling on the gains and losses of her personal interests. Instead, she considers issues from the perspective of family, friends and society, reflecting the importance she attaches to human dignity and achieving her own moral sublimity. Here, Noria’s predicament can be described as being “forced

to make difficult choices in order to not only survive but also change her world and make it a better place for human beings” (Rezaei et al., 2022b, p. 218). Indeed, making the honest and decent choice has led to Noria’s feeling of rebirth; “For a moment, I thought I had been born again” (Itäranta, 2014, p. 257). The completion of Noria’s moral choice in her life means that she has realised her pursuit of justice and goodness, perfected herself in the process of choosing and found the right way out for herself and for others.

CONCLUSION

The ethical quandary thrust upon Noria due to the harsh realities of water scarcity in *Memory of Water* by Itäranta triggers emotional distress and anxiety, compelling her to navigate a path towards ethical decision-making and emotional response. While this predicament may initially appear mundane, its implications are far-reaching. We have seen Noria grappling with a profound understanding of the ethical dilemma, experiencing a spectrum of emotions, such as anxiety, confusion, hesitation and pain. These emotional responses, though challenging, are integral to the ethical decision-making process. In this case, Noria tries to feel the pain from another person’s point of view under the effect of an emotional response, which makes her brave enough to escape from the ethical dilemma and, unconsciously, make ethical choices. Noria’s ethical dilemmas, despite the adversity they bring, serve as a reflection of life’s complexity and the diverse array of moral values she encounters. This finding thus aligns with Nussbaum’s perspective that moral growth necessitates confronting ethical dilemmas and making appropriate choices, with emotional response playing pivotal roles in recognising and addressing these challenges. Consequently, Noria’s ethical dilemmas, far from being solely negative, foster positive emotions and feelings. They prompt Noria to heighten her emotional awareness, engage in introspection regarding her life and career and ultimately make judicious choices. In essence, this study highlights the ethical dilemmas and emotional responses that the climate crisis poses for Noria. It emphasises the constructive role of emotions in navigating ethical dilemmas and illustrates how Noria uses her emotional responses to devise effective and ethical strategies for survival and personal development in the face of the climate crisis. The story of Noria in this novel is a prime example of confronting ethical dilemmas and formulating emotional responses to the climate crisis, highlighting the positive effects of emotional responses and making more just and reasonable ethical choices in order to create a hopeful future.

REFERENCES

- Adger, W. N., & Nicholson-Cole, S. (2011). Ethical dimensions of adapting to climate change imposed risks. *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, pp. 255–271.
- Asher, K. (2011). Emotions and the ethical life in D.H. Lawrence. *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 40(2), 101–120.
- Caracciolo, M. (2022a). Child minds at the end of the world. *Environmental Humanities*, 14(1), 145-161.
- Caracciolo, M. (2022b). *Contemporary fiction and climate uncertainty: Narrating unstable futures*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Carr, D. (2005). On the contribution of literature and the arts to the educational cultivation of moral virtue, feeling and emotion. *Journal of Moral Education*, 34(2), 137-151.
- Chattopadhyay, B. (2022). Fictioning the futures of climate change. *Fafnir-Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, 8(1), 7-12.
- Chiafele, A. (2022). Francesco Aloe’s climate fiction: Ruins, bodies and memories from the future in “L’ultima bambina d’Europa”. *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 13(2), 154-173.

- Delanty, G. (2006). Borders in a changing Europe: Dynamics of openness and closure. *Comparative European Politics*, 4, 183-202.
- Ebner-Landy, K. (2023). A critique of Martha Nussbaum's liberal aesthetics. *Political Theory*, 52(3), 1-30.
- Egerer, C. (2022). *Water Lore*. Routledge.
- Goodbody, A. (2022). *Mensch & Mitwelt: Herausforderungen für die Literatur-und Kulturwissenschaften*. Wehrhahn Verlag.
- Hole, B. (2021). Aristotle's account of moral perception & Nussbaum's priority of the particular thesis. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 77(1), 357-380.
- Itäranta, E. (2014). *Memory of water*. Harper Voyager.
- Johns-Putra, A. (2016). Climate change in literature and literary studies: From cli-fi, climate change theater and ecopoetry to ecocriticism and climate change criticism. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 7(2), 266-282.
- Kortekallio, K. (2023). Breathing with seagrass: Embodied estrangement and the emerging planthroposcene in Finnish speculative fiction. *Extrapolation*, 64(3), 341-356.
- Kousholt, D., & Juhl, P. (2023). Addressing ethical dilemmas in research with young children and families. Situated ethics in collaborative research. *Human Arenas*, 6(3), 560-579.
- Leppänen, K. (2020). *Memory of water: Boundaries of political geography and world literature*. *European Review*, 28(3), 425-434.
- Macfarlane, R. (2005, September 24). The burning question. *The Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/sep/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>
- Nidhi, M., & Kaushik, S. (2021). Symbols of degenerating surroundings in Itäranta's *Memory of water*: An ecocritical perspective. *Nveo-Natural Volatiles & Essential Oils Journal NVEO*, 8(4), 9378-9395.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). The costs of tragedy: Some moral limits of cost-benefit analysis. *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 29(2), 1005-1036.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001a). *The fragility of goodness: Luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001b). *Upheavals of thought the intelligence of emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2004a). Emotions as judgments of value and importance. In R. C. Solomon (Ed.), *Thinking about feeling: Contemporary philosophers on emotions* (pp. 183- 199). Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2004b). *Poetic justice: The literary imagination and public life*. Beacon Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2013). *Political emotions: Why love matters for justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2016). *Anger and forgiveness: Resentment, generosity, justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Pal, S., & Pannikot, D. (2023). Ecological crises of the capitalocene: A study on Colleen Murphy's *The breathing hole*. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 29(3), 27-39.
- Plumb, D. (2014). Emotions and human concern: Adult education and the philosophical thought of Martha Nussbaum. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 46(2), 145-162.
- IPCC. (2022). *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Technical Report
- Rezaei, Z., Bahar, I. B., & Mohan, Z. A. (2022a). Freedom, choice and achieving self-realisation in the dystopian world of *Parable of the talents* by Octavia Butler. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 11(1), 47-53.
- Rezaei, Z., Bahar, I. B., Termizi, A. A., & Mani, M. (2022b). Tracing Rousseau's human perfectibility and self-love in *Mara and Dann: An adventure* (1999) by Doris Lessing. *Journal of Language and Communication*, 9(2), 217-229.
- Satkunanathan, A. H. (2022). Plantationocene systems and communal disruptions in NK Jemisin's *Broken earth* trilogy: An ecogothic perspective. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 28(3), 231-244.
- Spronk, B., Widdershoven, G., & Alma, H. (2020). Addressing harm in moral case deliberation: The views and experiences of facilitators. *BMC Medical Ethics*, 21(1), 1-11.
- Straus, N. P. (1990). Rethinking feminist humanism. *Philosophy and Literature*, 14(2), 284-303.
- Veldhuizen, V. N. (2021). Narrative ethics in Robert Westall's *The machine gunners*. *Children's Literature in Education*, 52(1), 3-19.
- Zeng, Z. (2019). The relationships in novels from the perspective of literary ethics—taking the film *Lolita* as an example. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9(9), 1140- 1145.