Envisioning Tierratrauma within Resilience Discourse: Reviving Myth and Restoring Nature in Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud*

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Abstract

Tierratrauma encapsulates the experience of sudden and traumatic environmental upheaval, often manifested in climate change-induced disasters and famines. In her novel *Son of the Thundercloud* (2016), Easterine Kire, a writer hailing from Nagaland in the Northeast of India, investigates into this theme, painting a picture of despair where social cohesion wanes and hunger becomes ubiquitous. The narrative follows Pele, a man shattered by the devastation of famine, who struggles to find solace amidst the chaos. Kire adeptly intertwines Naga creation myth into Pele's journey, highlighting the pressing concern of climate change and the role of storytelling in confronting trauma. Pele's character embodies the despair wrought by sudden environmental shifts, leading to a crisis of faith in traditional beliefs and societal structures. As rationality falters, mythical fiction emerges as a beacon of hope, offering an alternative truth that transcends the limitations of language and culture. Through myth, Kire suggests a pathway to restoring the human-nature connection, emphasizing the intrinsic value of the natural world beyond its utility as mere resources. This article seeks to explore the intersection of Tierratrauma, myth, and environmental restoration in Kire's narrative. By examining Pele's journey of resilience and the transformative power of myth, it aims to expound how storytelling can serve as a catalyst for healing and revitalizing our relationship with nature. Ultimately, it advocates for the recognition of myth as a compelling tool in addressing the existential threat of climate change, fostering a deeper sense of stewardship towards the systems that sustain life on Earth.

Keywords: Tierratrauma, myth, climate change, story-telling

Introduction

As the world confronts the escalating threats of climate change, the mental health impacts of this global crisis are becoming increasingly evident. The once abstract idea of a warming planet has been made perceptible by the growing frequency and severity of extreme weather events—

devastating hurricanes, relentless floods, extended droughts, and intensified wildfires (Robinson 1186). These disasters serve as daily reminders of the planet's distress, but the gradual rise in global temperatures often remains imperceptible to the naked eye. However, the consequences are becoming all too clear, with scientists sounding ever more alarming warnings about the future. The psychological toll of climate change is not limited to its physical manifestations; it extends into the deeper, often invisible realms of the human psyche (Lawrance et al 443). Concepts like "Tierratrauma" and "solastalgia" capture the profound sense of loss and disorientation that people experience as they witness the degradation of the natural world. "Solastalgia," the trauma induced by environmental changes, and "solastalgia," the emotional distress caused by the loss of a familiar environment, are reshaping our understanding of mental health in the Anthropocene. A group of UK scientists revealed that 28 trillion tonnes of ice have vanished from Earth's surface since 1994, with potential sea level rises to a meter by the century's end. This alarming discovery aligns with the IPCC's worst-case climate predictions, echoing concerns that Greenland's ice sheet may have already reached an irreversible tipping point (Ankel). These bleak forecasts are not only highlighting the catastrophic environmental impacts but also contributing to a rising wave of anxiety and despair among the global population. A 2018 survey by Yale and George Mason Universities revealed that 69% of Americans are at least "somewhat worried" about global warming, with 29% feeling "very worried"—the highest levels recorded since the surveys began (Leiserowitz et al. 3). The psychological impacts are particularly acute among those on the frontlines of climate research and activism. Climate scientists, like glaciologist Jason Box, who famously tweeted "we're f*cked" after learning about methane plumes escaping from the Arctic seabed (quot. in Richardson), and biologist Camille Parmesan, who described herself as "professionally depressed" due to her work on climate change, exemplify the emotional toll that this crisis is taking (quot. in Thomas). These individuals, who are immersed daily in the harsh realities of environmental destruction, often struggle with feelings of hopelessness, guilt, and despair. This growing awareness of climate- induced psychological distress is prompting researchers to re-examine their perspectives, shifting from a purely environmental focus to one that also considers the profound repercussions on human mental well-being. The chronic effects of climate change—such as increases in trauma, anxiety, depression, and even violence—are forcing us to confront the fact that the damage extends beyond the physical world. It is eroding the very foundations of our mental peace, persuasive us to rethink our approach to both climate science and mental health in this new and unsettling era (Cianconi et al. 1). In the Anthropocene era, where human interference with nature has reached unprecedented levels, the significance of ancient myths, folktales, and legends has taken on new dimensions. These stories, once passed down through generations orally, are now being revitalized and retold, not merely as a means of preserving cultural heritage but as a crucial lens through which we can reconsider our current path (Berk 68). As the world grapples with the tangible impacts of climate change—devastating hurricanes, relentless floods, unforgiving droughts, and raging wildfires—the once abstract notion of a warming planet has become all too real. These modern-day calamities echo the apocalyptic visions found in age-old tales, serving as stark reminders of the delicate balance between humanity and nature. In this contemporary moment, retelling these ancient stories becomes an act of both preservation and prophecy (Thaker 2). They are not just cultural artifacts but are infused with new life, reflecting our collective anxieties and the urgent need to rethink our relationship with the earth. The mental strain that accompanies the growing awareness of our ecological crisis is palpable, much like the dark omens that once haunted the myths of old. Through these retellings, we find ourselves at a crossroads, where the wisdom of the past

intersects with the warnings of the present. Thus, living in a world where the threat of climate-induced apocalypse looms large, these stories offer a way to reflect on our choices, urging us to heed the lessons embedded within them before it is too late. In this context, the stories and myths of old, once used to make sense of the world, are gaining new significance. They now serve as both a reflection of our current anxieties and a guide for navigating the uncharted territories of our ecological and psychological landscapes. As we stand on the brink of, what many fear, could be an apocalyptic future, these narratives offer a crucial means of reconsidering our steps before it is too late. Acknowledging that these retellings are shaped by the intricate cultural narratives that contemporary writers inhabit, this paper seeks to delve into how modern explorations of identity are articulated in literature, using Easterine Kire's novel *Son of the Thundercloud* as a case study. This work, often placed within the realm of children's literature, draws from an Angami Naga folktale. While the novel is undoubtedly a creative reimagining rooted in the author's connection to her community's collective memory, it also extends an invitation to readers for a deeper, more critical engagement with the Naga worldview. The narrative opens avenues for a more sophisticated understanding of complex issues like trauma and climate anxiety, offering fresh perspectives and reinterpretations.

Tierratrauma in the spirit of draught

Filmmaker and activist Gillian Caldwell has vividly articulated the emotional toll of advocating for climate action, framing it in the context of trauma. "Coming Out of the Closet: My Climate Trauma (and Yours?)" (2009), a blog posted by Caldwell, where he candidly reflects on the psychological strain experienced by herself and others committed to the cause. She coined the term "Climate Trauma" to describe this phenomenon, noting that while she isn't a mental health professional, the symptoms of this trauma are unmistakable to her. Caldwell's reflections highlight the profound emotional burden that comes with confronting the daunting realities of climate change, both personally and collectively. The proliferation of terms like "climate trauma," "ecological grief," "eco-sickness," and "Anthropocene disorder" underscores the profound psychological impact that environmental degradation and climate change are having on individuals and societies. These emerging concepts represent not just a response to the physical changes in the environment but also a recognition of the deep emotional and mental distress caused by these changes. However, there is a critical need to examine how these forms of ecological trauma are often marginalized or downplayed within mainstream discussions, particularly those focused on Anthropocene and trauma-memory studies. The collective identity in the face of ecological disaster is fragmented, as individual experiences of trauma are often repressed or ignored. This repression reflects a broader societal tendency to minimize or dismiss the psychological effects of climate change, which can lead to a dangerous underestimation of the mental health crisis that is brewing in tandem with environmental degradation. The acknowledgment of these anxieties and their incorporation into trauma theory can not only enrich the existing body of trauma studies but also provide new perspectives on how to address the pressing issues of global warming and man-made disasters. As said by Naseer in her blog, Climate change, now recognized as a profound public health crisis, is severely affecting mental health and psychosocial well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) has urgently urged nations to fortify their mental health infrastructure to tackle this escalating issue. During a regional workshop in Indonesia, Saima Wazed, WHO's Regional Director for South-East Asia, underscored the acute vulnerability of the South-East Asia region to the psychological

repercussions of climate change (quot. in Sharma, 2024). This disorder is rooted in the disconnect between the human experience of time and the slow-moving disasters unfolding around us, as well as in the jarring disparity between the destructive forces at play and the often insufficient or misguided efforts to combat them. This tension fosters a profound sense of disorientation and unease, as our conventional ways of understanding and responding to these challenges seem woefully inadequate.

By bringing these ecological traumas to the forefront of academic and public discourse, there is potential to develop more comprehensive strategies for prevention and mitigation. This approach would require a shift in how we understand and respond to both individual and collective experiences of environmental distress (Schlosberg 1). Rather than viewing these experiences as isolated or secondary to more "traditional" forms of trauma, they should be recognized as integral to our understanding of the human condition in the Anthropocene. This shift could foster greater empathy, resilience, and proactive measures in the face of ongoing environmental challenges. The urgency of our environmental crisis has transcended the domains of social and environmental sciences, compelling writers across all literary genres to engage with these themes and reach broader audiences. In Northeast India, literature has become a powerful medium for expressing the deepening anxiety over the loss of nature's untouched beauty and its devastating impact on humanity. Through both fiction and poetry, these voices resonate with a profound concern, highlighting the erosion of the natural world and the profound consequences this degradation holds for human life. Their works serve as a poignant reminder that the destruction of nature is not just an ecological issue but a deeply human one, intertwined with our very existence and identity.

The novel *Son of the Thundercloud* by Easterine Kire, which received significant accolades such as the Tata Literature Live Award for Fiction in 2017 and the Sahitya Bal Puraskar in 2018, stands as a compelling illustration of Naganised literature. Its acclaim is not merely for its narrative elegance but also for its profound integration of indigenous cultural elements with Biblical allegory. While the novel is celebrated for its magical realism and its semblance to Paulo Coelho's spiritual fables, its deeper resonance lies in its unique retelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ through a Naga lens, blending Angami Naga folklore with Biblical themes. Kire's imaginative re-contextualization of Jesus Christ as a Naga boy, complete with traditional elements such as slingshots, brings forth a rich cultural and religious syncretism. This nativized Christianity condenses the evolution of identity within the Naga community, a process intricately tied to both personal and collective narratives. The novel serves as a poignant example of how storytelling is pivotal in reconstructing and articulating a community's identity by simultaneously addressing individual traumas.

The notion of trauma, as explored in the broader field of trauma theory, traditionally leans towards an anthropocentric perspective. In Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), he recounts a haunting tale that mirrors the deep psychological tensions between love, loss, and guilt. The story centres on Tancred, a knight whose tragic fate intertwines with that of his beloved Clorinda. In the heat of battle, unaware of her true identity, Tancred strikes down Clorinda, who is concealed beneath the armour of an enemy knight. This act of unwitting violence sets the stage for a macabre twist. After laying Clorinda to rest, Tancred finds himself wandering through a mystical forest—a place where the very essence of nature seems to pulse with dread. The forest, infused with a sense of the uncanny, challenges the Crusaders with its ominous presence. Here, Tancred, driven perhaps by the same impulses that led to his tragic mistake,

draws his sword and strikes a tall, imposing tree. But this act of aggression does not go unanswered. As his blade slices through the bark, blood, unnervingly human in its vividness, begins to pour from the wound. The forest, once silent, now resonates with a voice—Clorinda's voice—carrying the weight of pain and betrayal. Her soul, trapped within the tree, laments this second injury, inflicted upon her by the very hand that once loved her. In this eerie moment, the boundaries between the animate and inanimate, between past and present, collapse, revealing the cyclical nature of trauma and the persistence of the past in the present. In *Son of the Thundercloud*, Kire's narrative vividly illustrates how the interplay between the human and natural worlds can create a nuanced understanding of trauma. The novel intertwines the mythical with the physical, suggesting that the Naga community's collective memory and identity are deeply embedded in their interaction with their environment. Here, nature is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the process of trauma. The human actions, much like Tancred's, have repercussions that extend beyond the immediate, affecting the broader ecological and spiritual landscape. This interlocking of human and environmental trauma underscores a broader critique of trauma theory's anthropocentric tendencies. By juxtaposing the Biblical narrative with local folklore, Kire highlights how the wounds inflicted upon one part of the world inevitably affect another, creating a cascading effect of damage and suffering. The notion that wounding one aspect of existence leads to the deterioration of another reflects a profound commentary on the interconnectedness of all life forms and ecosystems. In essence, Kire's work exemplifies how trauma is not solely a human experience but a phenomenon that permeates the very fabric of our interactions with the natural world. By engaging with this narrative, readers are invited to reconsider the boundaries of trauma theory and recognize the intricate web of connections that shape our understanding of suffering and resilience.

In this narrative, Pele, a man devastated by the loss of his family and happiness due to a severe famine, embarks on a journey to the Village of Weavers, seeking refuge and sustenance. His path, however, leads him to the drought-stricken, desolate village of Noune, a place ravaged by famine so intense that even newborns perish as their mothers' milk runs dry. Within this abandoned wasteland, Pele encounters two sisters, astonishingly four hundred years old, who have managed to survive solely on "hope." Their existence is sustained by a daily ritual of consuming hope, a symbolic act that keeps them alive in a world where social structures have disintegrated, and hunger reigns supreme. Kire's narrative immerses us in a realm of despair, where the sisters' survival through a seven-hundred-year-old famine is framed as normal within the mythic context of the story. The sisters share with Pele the prophecy of the Son of the Thundercloud, a saviour whose birth is foretold to restore the land to its former abundance, "Hope, sir, we have been living on hope. Every morning when we wake up, we eat hope, and so we live to see another day," (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 20) they tell Pele. In their words, hope is not just an emotion or a fleeting thought—it is a tangible sustenance, a metaphorical nourishment that has kept them alive in the face of unrelenting despair. Their existence defies logic, yet within the mythic context of their world, it feels almost natural. The sisters embody the idea that in the absence of physical sustenance, the human spirit can cling to something as insubstantial yet powerful as hope, transforming it into a force that defies even the direst circumstances. This prophecy, devoid of any rational explanation, offers a fragile solace, creating an affective atmosphere where characters cling to hope as the only impetus for survival in an otherwise bleak existence.

The concept of Tierratrauma, which echoes the intense grief or anguish one feels upon

encountering a sudden environmental upheaval, as written by Figueiras in her blog, can be woven into this narrative to explore the profound psychological impact of environmental devastation on Pele. The loss of the utopian cultivational paradise—once fertile, now barren, and lifeless—induces a traumatic rupture in Pele's sense of reality. The drought, a physical manifestation of the destruction of the land, also signifies the erosion of hope and truth in Pele's mind. The most rational and ordinary things seem impossible and unreal to him, indicating his deteriorating mental state, connecting human suffering. Disasters brought on by climate change have a substantial correlation with a number of mental health conditions, most notably posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, sadness, and overall psychological discomfort. Even though these occurrences frequently cause acute trauma reactions, the long-term environmental changes they bring about—like intense heat—exacerbate these mental health issues and raise the risk of suicide and psychiatric disorders as well as mortality. The long- term psychological effects of climate change are evident in the fact that they extend beyond the immediate aftermath of natural disasters and continue to deteriorate as environmental degradation persists (O'Donnell & Palinkas 3). In "Truth and Storytelling," Trudy Grovier explores the tension between life's narrative lens, as championed by MacIntyre, and t h e   challenge that this framing can distort reality, oversimplify experiences, and exclude those who don't see their lives as stories (167). While Grovier acknowledges the validity of Strawson's critique in relation to the more straightforward aspects of life, one could argue that certain natural phenomena and their profound impacts on human existence resist easy narrative interpretation. These events often lie beyond the reach of our conventional understanding, challenging the idea that all experiences can or should be neatly packaged into a narrative framework. In this sense, the tension between narrative and reality becomes even more pronounced, inviting us to reconsider how we make sense of experiences that defy simple storytelling. The sisters' first appearance of covered in coarse black only projects Pele's own disturbed bereft of hope psyche, which, in turn, made him feel pity for them, despite their assurances that they were full of hope 'they didn't seem to be sorry for themselves, and the expectation in their eyes was nothing short of wondrous" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 23). As he wanders through the devastated landscape, unable to reconcile the present reality with the memory of what once was, Pele's perception of the world becomes increasingly distorted. Soon, in the company of his sister, he began to rediscover the simple pleasures of nature— rain, thunderclouds—that had once seemed inconsequential to his fractured spirit. What was previously dismissed as mundane now revealed itself as profound and restorative. Through this renewed connection with the natural world, he began to perceive truth and hope with newfound clarity, seeing their essence in a way that had eluded him before. The black coarse has gone, and "they were growing younger before his eyes" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 34). The once-promised land now rendered hostile and unforgiving, strips him of the ability to see the potential for renewal or the possibility of a brighter future.

This dissonance between the idealized past and the harsh present can be seen as a form of tierratrauma, where the ecological collapse of his environment triggers a profound existential crisis. Pele's journey through the desolate village is not just a physical passage but a psychological descent into the depths of despair, where the loss of the land mirrors the loss of his grip on reality. The prophecy of the Son of the Thundercloud, while offering a glimmer of hope, also underscores the deep wounds inflicted by the famine—a trauma that blurs the boundaries between myth and reality, leaving Pele caught in a liminal space where the truth remains elusive, and hope is a double-edged sword. Connecting Pele's narrative with the story of Clorinda and Tancred, as interpreted by Freud and Caruth, highlights a troubling

anthropocentrism that permeates both the original text and its subsequent readings. In these interpretations, the harm inflicted on the natural world—exemplified by the slashing of a tree—is quickly transmuted into a metaphor for human suffering. The tree, wounded and bleeding, is not recognized in its own right as a living entity that experiences harm; rather, it becomes merely a vessel through which Clorinda's pain and Tancred's guilt are expressed. This shift from environmental destruction to human trauma exemplifies a phenomenon known as "plant blindness," a term coined by Wandersee and Schussler (3) to describe the tendency to overlook or trivialize the lives and significance of plants within their ecosystems. This rhetorical move, which derealizes and invisibilizes the literal damage to the tree, reflects a broader cultural inclination to prioritize human experiences over the non-human. The relegation of "what happens to trees" in Tasso's poem to a mere footnote in Caruth's analysis underscores how environmental harm is often sidelined in discussions of trauma, even when it is integral to the narrative. Tancred's story for Caruth reflects as embodying traumatic experience through "the enigma of a foreign voice that emerges from the wound, crying out with an otherness that defies comprehension" (3). Kire's narrative thus features a crucial point; nature's impact is not just a distant, abstract concept but a direct, personal experience that profoundly affects individuals' spirit of belief system. This personal experience, when shared, resonates within the community, transforming a solitary event into a collective memory. The individual's encounter with the forces of nature becomes a narrative thread that binds the community, making the intangible impacts of environmental change a tangible, shared reality. This perspective aligns with Edward Sapir's insights in his essay "Language and Environment," where he argues that language and environment are deeply interconnected:

> The environment impacts individuals first, and these individual reactions often ripple through a community, creating shared traits that appear to stem from environmental factors. In reality, these influences are rarely pure; they are almost always intertwined with social and cultural forces. Environmental effects on an individual are continuously shaped and transformed by the surrounding social context, highlighting the deep interconnection between society and environment in shaping human behaviour and communal identity (Sapir, 13).

Similarly, in *Son of the Thundercloud*, the relationship between human and environmental suffering is made explicit. Here, the narrative does not simply overlook the devastation of the natural world but instead directly ties the fate of humanity to the well-being of the land. The drought-stricken village of Noune, where newborns die from malnutrition because of famine, serves as a stark reminder that when the environment suffers, so too do the people who depend on it. The ancient sisters' optimism on "hope" speaks of a prophecy that promises the return of rain and fertility to the land. This prophecy underscores the interconnectedness of human and environmental well-being. The barren, lifeless landscape is not merely a backdrop to human suffering but is itself a central cause of that suffering. The land's desolation is mirrored in the villagers' despair, illustrating that environmental degradation and human trauma are inextricably linked. In this context, *Son of the Thundercloud* can be seen as a counterpoint to the anthropocentrism of the Clorinda and Tancred story. While the latter shifts focus away from the tree's suffering, reducing it to a metaphor for human pain, Kire's narrative insists that the fate of humanity is bound to the fate of the land. The suffering of the environment— symbolized by the drought and famine—directly translates into human misery, demonstrating that neglecting the well-being of the natural world inevitably leads to human suffering. This critical perspective

urges a re-evaluation of how narratives, both historical and contemporary, address the interplay between human and environmental trauma. It challenges the tendency to privilege human experiences while shelving the significance of ecological harm, advocating for a more holistic understanding that recognizes the profound impact of environmental degradation on both the natural world and humanity.

Mythical recuperate of breaking the drought

Factual writing often strives for coherence, logic, and cogency, aiming to secure credibility through irrefutable proof and reasoning. Writers, anchored in the belief that every problem faced by humanity can be dissected with technical precision, equate the presentation of reality with the power of rational argument. However, reality itself can be elusive, particularly when it comes to the complex, often chaotic challenges like climate change-induced disasters and famines. These phenomena defy simplistic, rational narratives and demand engagement with stories that may seem irrational or even untrue on the surface. Grovier (2003) highlights those narratives, often known as stories; do not initially manifest themselves as arguments. When viewed as arguments, particularly as arguments supporting broad conclusions, stories can be seen as illustrating different fallacies and problematic strategies (167). In this context, truth becomes an elusive concept, shifting and refracting through the lens of individual and collective memory, each rooted in its own foundation of experience. Our identity thrives in the space where memory and imagination converge, shaping not only our understanding of self but also our perception of reality. Cognition isn't simply about copying or constructing the world. Instead, it's the dynamic process that keeps us engaged and adaptable, enabling us to stay connected with a world that's constantly in flux (Palmer 90). In this interdisciplinary oeuvre of memory and imagination, the very essence of truth becomes a narrative constructed and reconstructed, never fully grasped but always within reach.

Here, Kire delves into the Naga creation myth, resurrecting a deeply regional narrative that has always been a touchstone for understanding our place in the world. By revisiting this myth, she not only preserves cultural memory but also challenges us to confront the Anthropocene's stark realities. The once-stable narratives that grounded us in our environment are now refracted through a lens of loss and displacement, as the natural world we once knew slips away. In this state of trauma, we find ourselves aging, not merely in years but in our collective consciousness, as we look back at these ancient stories with a new, more complex vision—one that is both enriched and haunted by the eccentricities of a world in decline. Kire's (re)-telling becomes a mirror, reflecting both the enduring wisdom of our past and the urgent need to redefine our relationship with the environment before it is irretrievably lost. Even in the midst of disbelief and trauma, the myth of the Son of the Thundercloud offers Pele and the other characters a fragile ray of hope. The sisters' prophecy, though devoid of any logical explanation, creates an affective atmosphere that transcends the dire reality they face. ''They didn't mind their ghostly existence, so strong was their desire to see the Son of the Thundercloud. Everything else had become unimportant to them. And that made him doubly curious" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 23). Here, Pele's curiosity, emerging from the depths of eco- trauma, reflects a paradoxical tension where his disillusionment with the mystical underscores a lost connection to creativity, yet simultaneously, it signals a fragile reconnection to the imaginative possibilities that eco-trauma had nearly extinguished.

Like the Irish and Ukrainian famines, the Naga famines, wrought by natural disasters and war, have left scars that are etched deeply into the collective memory. These catastrophes are not only destructive in their immediate impact but also in the lingering trauma they inflict on those who survive. In a world where the wealthiest nations exacerbate climate change, it is the most vulnerable—especially indigenous peoples—who bear the brunt of its effects, often without the means to mitigate the damage (Hallegatte et al 223). In such complex and politically charged contexts, ordinary language fails to capture the full extent of the devastation. Myths and metaphors, however, possess a unique power to articulate the inarticulable, illuminating the vital issues of anthropogenic climate change and ecological distress. Through the mythical language of the *Son of the Thundercloud*, Kire is not merely telling a story; she is redressing trauma, offering a lens through which to view the world's deep wounds and perhaps, in doing so, to heal them. Kire here critiques the contemporary Naga patriarchy's exploitation of nature by contrasting it with the wisdom inherent in Naga myths, which she uses as a special language code to highlight the dire consequences of environmental degradation, such as ghost villages, resulting from neglecting this ancient ecological knowledge. One village had become a very rich village; abundant harvest filled the granaries till they began to overflow. People would leave half their harvests to rot in the fields because there was no more space in the village granaries. Soon, they grew careless about the taboo that said that every village must keep aside some grain after the harvest as seed grain. One afternoon, when they were on their way back from the fields, the villagers saw black clouds of field mice swarming over their granaries and homes. Not one house or granary had been spared, and people had to abandon the village (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 13). Even in their disbelief, the traumatized souls of Pele and others find in this myth a new form of hope—a hope that is not grounded in logic or reason, but in the enduring human capacity to find meaning and resilience in the face of overwhelming loss. It is this very hope that allows them to imagine a future where the earth might once again sprout life, where the rain and mist might soften the soil, and where they might reclaim a world that has been slipping away. The vocabulary of a language serves as a mirror reflecting the physical and social realities of its speakers. The entirety of a language's lexicon can be seen as a nuanced catalogue of the ideas, concerns, and activities that dominate the collective consciousness of a community. If we had access to a comprehensive thesaurus of a particular tribe's language, we could largely deduce the nature of their physical surroundings and the cultural traits that define their way of life. Numerous languages offer clear evidence of how their vocabularies are imprinted by the specific environments in which their speakers reside (Sapir 14). In this way, Kire reclaims the power of myth, transforming it from a relic of the past into a tool for navigating the uncertainties of the Anthropocene.

In *Son of the Thundercloud*, the narrative offers a profound exploration of this expanded understanding of trauma through its portrayal of ecological destruction and its consequences for both human and non-human entities. The novel presents a world where the boundaries between the human and non-human, the living and the non-living, are fluid and interdependent (Biswas 1). The uncanny occurrences in the narrative, such as the appearance of a deep chasm where there was none before and the movement of celestial bodies that pull the earth eastward, serve as metaphors for the interconnectedness of all forms of trauma, whether human, organic, or terrestrial. Pele witnesses these extraordinary events and struggles to comprehend them through rational means, highlighting the limitations of anthropocentric thinking in the face of ecological destruction. The narrative suggests that traditional knowledge, rooted in myths and taboos, may offer a more profound understanding of these phenomena than rational arguments alone. The

ancient stories and taboos that govern the lives of the characters in *Son of the Thundercloud* serve as ethical restraints, shaping the behaviour of individuals and communities in ways that promote sustainability and harmony with the natural world. The idea that literary images might serve as subliminal "oughts" or "ought-nots" that dictate social conduct is explored by Carolyn Merchant in Death of Nature (4). This observation is applicable to the Naga stories in Kire's novel, where the taboos and myths of the ancient Naga belief system form the ideological framework necessary for sustainability. The violation of these taboos, whether through disrespect for nature's gifts or through violence and bloodshed, leads to dire consequences, such as environmental disasters and the destruction of communities. The narrative's normative function lies in its ability to convey these ethical imperatives through its depiction of the consequences of breaking taboos. When viewed through the lens of the revival preconception of trauma, which has its origins in human psychology but has been through substantial reconceptualization in the last several years, the stimulation that Pele experiences become quite clear. Trauma has been defined by scholars such as Anil Narine, Reza Negarestani, and others to include not only human but also non-human traumas and the ways in which they are interrelated and entangled. This change is a result of people realizing that ecological damage affects all living things, not just humans. It highlights the interdependence of the two. Narine presents the concept of eco-trauma in his 2015 edited collection *Eco-Trauma Cinema*, describing it as the damage that humans cause to the environment and the injuries that humans experience as a result of the most brutal aspects of nature. He contends that these two types of environmental damage are frequently interrelated, and that the traumas we inflict on the environment eventually hurt us back. As a human sufferer would, nature "survives and endures trauma," and "a traumatised earth spawns traumatized people" (Narine 13). Thus, a more comprehensive vision of suffering that incorporates the non-human realm is proposed by this eco-trauma idea, which contradicts the conventional, human-centred interpretation of trauma.

By utilising and expanding upon Nick Land's post-psychoanalytic concept of geo trauma, Negarestani further develops this post-humanist shift in trauma theory. Trauma, in Negarestani's view, is more than an unfortunate event; it is a wound inflicted by objective reality or absolute order (53). A cosmologically enriched and interrelated understanding of trauma, spanning from the socio-cultural and neuropsychological to the particle and cosmic, is what he proposes as a universal definition of trauma, given that all traumas are interconnected and not separate or individual incidents, there is no such thing as a solitary or isolated psychic trauma, says Negarestanian, as cited in Matts and Tynan (157). According to this theory, traumas build upon one another in a recursive fashion, with each level of trauma building upon the one before it. This view encourages us to think of trauma as an objective fact that defies containment within the confines of the human mind and exists in the physical world as well. The current story digs deeply into this enlarged concept of pain by depicting environmental degradation and its effects on living things, both human and others. It becomes very evident that any disturbance creates irreparable suffering for both humans and the ecosystem when the indisputable link between the two is brought up. Therefore, the two must provide each other with unfaltering support to overcome this trauma.

In Chapters Three and Four, Pele suddenly sees the stars appear and change drastically, "not as fixed pinpoints of light, but as celestial bodies moving in harmony with each other, like an orchestral dance" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 24-5). The loss of traditional stories and songs, as lamented by Mesanuo, the mother of the Son of the Thundercloud,

represents a deeper loss of the wisdom necessary to navigate the challenges of living in harmony with the natural world. This "famine of stories and songs" is depicted as a form of cultural and ecological trauma, one that has led to the disintegration of the community and the devastation of the environment (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud* 48). The narrative depicts the divine impregnation of Mesanuo by a raindrop, giving birth to the Son of the Thundercloud, who transforms a barren land into a lush paradise. Here, the headman's question, 'Where have those trees and rocks come from?' (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 46) reveals his detachment from the vital connection between humanity and nature, reflecting a loss of hope and understanding. To which Mesanuo's response "it's called birthing, headman. The earth has birthed trees, rocks, stones, and grain, just as a mother births her offspring" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 46), corrects this by emphasizing the need for respect and care for the earth, illustrating the reciprocal relationship crucial for sustaining both people and the environment. This had been stretched further down the line when Kire intricately links ecology with cultural values, emphasizing the necessity of upholding ancestral taboos for ecological sustainability. The Angami elders' practices, rooted in conservation and social ethics, are integral to maintaining environmental and communal balance, in Chapter 20, "not everyone hopes it will be fulfilled (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 117)," critiques the perils of forsaking these traditional values, arguing that such abandonment invites catastrophic consequences as nature reacts to the loss of cultural and ecological fidelity. But in the narrative, there is a reason: Pele emerges as the true protagonist, his journey shaping the course of events and reflecting the resilience of belief in a dire, dystopian world. Pele's agency and connection to the land make him the embodiment of the human struggle in the face of environmental degradation—a struggle that is increasingly relevant in our Anthropocene and Petro-modern era. In contrast, Rhalie, the son of the thundercloud, was murdered by his jealous friends after gaining popularity for killing the spirit tiger, despite his miraculous origin, lacks the agency that defines Pele. Thus, unbelief does take them over. His role, while significant, ultimately highlights the limitations of miraculous interventions in the face of systemic collapse. Rhalie's passive sacrifice does not bring the hoped-for redemption, but rather reinforces the grim reality of human frailty. This contrast underscores the narrative's deeper message: in times of profound crisis, it is not only the miraculous but the enduring amalgamation of resilience of human belief in one's righteousness and action, as represented by Pele, that offers a path forward. As he re-starts his journey again, he becomes symbol of human being overall who is not trauma stricken anymore rather has gain the sight of reality with a touch of lost creativity, "he buried her in the soft loamy soil of the earth that he had witnessed being regenerated by the miracle of thunder and rain…then he lifted his bag and walked out of the village that he would remember for the rest of his mortal days as Nouzi. Compassion" (Kire, *Son of the Thundercloud,* 148).

Conclusion

Indigenous literatures frequently prioritise the examination of environmental justice as a strategy to confront anthropocentrism, employing narrative as a potent instrument for resistance and reclamation. Daniel Heath, in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter,* elucidates the significance of literature as a vital tool for Indigenous communities to combat the obliteration of their histories and affirm their cultural identities (30). This form of literary activism advocates for a reinterpretation of trauma that goes beyond the limitations of human experience. It broadens its focus to include non-human beings and lifeless objects, thereby questioning the dominant belief

in human superiority. According to Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, broadening the scope of what can be mourned to encompass the non-human world challenges the prevailing focus on human-centred stories of loss and grief (16).In narratives featuring prominent people like Pele, who supplant previously influential Christ- like figures like Rhalie, we are prompted to imagine two distinct realities: one based on Indigenous cosmologies and the other constrained by colonial and Christian frameworks. This duality represents more than just the contrast between the past and present, but rather a deep involvement with several temporal dimensions, including mythical, historical, and futuristic. The pre-rain landscape, portrayed as a dystopian prediction, reflects the themes found in T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, cautioning against a future in which the disconnection from nature results in devastation. The role of myth in this context is to function as an instructive influence, reminding us that our daily behaviours, patterns of consumption, and social systems are closely connected to the environmental crises that we mourn. Moreover, the restoration of the delicate equilibrium between awe and reason, between folklore and actuality, can only be achieved by reconnecting with the natural world. The message is evident: the narratives we recount and the legends we resurrect possess the ability to mould our shared destiny, compelling us to cooperate harmoniously with the environment rather than opposing it.

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