Papers
Explorations into Children's Literature

The Girl's Body, Climate, and Neoliberalism in *Weathering with You*

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Abstract

Set in an eternally raining Tokyo and in a time when the climate has changed permanently, the anime film *Weathering with You* (2019) tells the story about a teenage girl possessing the magical ability to clear the sky and bring sunshine back to a part of the city for a short period of time through prayers. This form of power is later employed by the young protagonists to run a "sunshine girl" service in the city characterised by the neoliberal market. The first half of the film gives sentimental values to the service; however, as the plot unfolds, the overuse of the magical power gradually results in the bodily sacrifice of the girl protagonist. This article makes the case that *Weathering with You* makes visible how girls' bodily sacrifice is entangled with humans' mistreatment of the environment. Engaging with ecofeminist philosophy, Stacy Alaimo's term of trans-corporeality, and economic geography, this article argues that the film cautions against manipulation of nature and girls' bodily labour within the ideological framework of neoliberalism. The "sunshine girl" service therefore offers a dark model that illuminates what it means to be a girl (or human) living in the Anthropocene against the backdrop of masculinist desires to master the natural world.

Keywords: ecofeminism, climate, embodiment, neoliberalism, anime

Written and directed by Makoto Shinkai, *Weathering with You* (2019) is set in an eternally raining Tokyo and in a time when the climate has changed permanently. Following the typical boy-meet-girl trope, the film tells a romantic story between a teenage girl and a teenage boy. The female protagonist, Hina, has the magical ability to control the weather through prayers,

meaning that she can clear the sky and bring sunshine back to a part of the city for a short period of time. Hina later meets Hodaka and agrees to run a business with him by providing the "sunshine girl" service for people who wish for a sunny moment. The young entrepreneurs quickly enjoy business success. The sunshine girl herself also finds her agency in the city, as she confesses, "I'm in love with this sunshine girl job. I finally found my role in life" (Shinkai). But, as the plot unfolds, Hina's body becomes increasingly transparent and watery, as she ceaselessly performs the magic for the business. When her body reaches a certain stage of transparency, she is spirited away to the sky, serving as the human sacrifice that brings sunshine back to the city. Driven by his romantic love for Hina, Hodaka eventually manages to save her and bring her back to Tokyo. After her return to the ground, the rain never stops and begins to drown Tokyo.

The film is a timely work of fiction that parallels the current environmental realities in Japan and its people's increasing awareness of humans' connection with nature. The Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, which claimed the lives of 18,500 to 20,000 people, exerted an enormous impact on the country's attitude towards the environment. As a response to the disasters, the federal-level Ministry of the Environment launched policies not just about reconstruction but also about energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. Individuals have shown a higher ecological awareness through their lifestyles (Nishio et al.), while concerned groups frequently organise protests against nuclear power (Hasegawa). The disasters also had gendered implications; the omission of women's voices in disaster management gave rise to local feminist groups, such as Women's Eye, which seek to empower women and assist vulnerable women and children (Tsalikis). The flash torrential rain that hit Tokyo during the summer of 2024 again reminded the Japanese (and, arguably, everyone on the planet) of the realness of climate change and its immediate impact on humans. By carefully analysing *Weathering with You* through an ecofeminist, neoliberal lens, this article not only demonstrates

how the film functions as an urgent response to the environmental changes in Japan (and globally), but it also explores what it means for humans, especially girls, to be interconnected with the weather. I argue that the anime film draws a parallel between the mistreatment of girls and that of nature, cautioning against the masculinist manipulation of nature and girls' labour within the ideological framework of neoliberalism.

Theorising Nature *and* the (Girl's) Body

Ecofeminism offers an invaluable theoretical framework for analysing the interconnection between girls and nature. Karen Warren, one of the founding theorists of ecofeminism, confirms that the "central project" of ecofeminist theory is "the unpacking of the connections between the twin oppressions of women and nature" against the backdrop of the "patriarchal value-hierarchical thinking [that] gives rise to a logic of domination" ("Feminism and Ecology" 6). "The logic of domination", as she explains elsewhere, "has functioned historically within patriarchy to sustain and justify the twin dominations of women and nature" ("The Power and the Promise" 131). The logic of domination is said to hinge upon "a substantive value system, since an ethical premise is needed to permit or sanction the "just" subordination of that which is subordinate" (128). The constructed association between men and reason/culture is juxtaposed with that between women and embodiment/nature in the patriarchal value system, with the latter pair traditionally being relegated to positions of inferiority. Ecofeminists call on theorists, in particular feminists, to reconceive of patriarchal oppression as a system that interlocks oppression of women and exploitation of the natural world.

Ecofeminist thinkers also gesture towards the interconnection between all forms of oppression, including that of children. In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Val Plumwood coins the "master model"; she notes that "culture was shaped around the written word in Plato's

time" (190), arguing that Athenian philosophy serves as the basis of how reason has been used to sanction the "radical exclusion" (49) of "not only the feminine and nature, but all those human orders treated as nature" (42). The master model is not merely "a masculine identity pure and simple" (78); rather, it is seen as "a legacy, a form of culture, a form of rationality, a framework for selfhood and relationship" (190) that leads to hierarchies in gender, species, age, and races through the process of othering. Alice Curry, an ecofeminist young adult literature scholar, puts forward the idea that "the flexibility and integrative nature of ecofeminist discourse leave it scope to encompass 'the child' as a third category of analysis alongside women and nature" (6). On this, she explains that children and nature are both discursively constructed differently from adults for being perceived to possess "innocence", "wildness" and uncultivated simplicity" (7) . Governed by the master model, our society alienates, devalues, and oppresses the child or, to a greater extent, the girl for how they are constructed as opposed to or as inferior to the male adult subject, and for how they are seen as "closer" to nature.

While ecofeminism is useful for conceptualising the twin oppression of nature and girls, Stacy Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality illuminates how (girls') bodies are entangled with nature. In her book *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, she starts by contesting any discursive attempts to "pose nature as mere background … [and] as inert, empty space or as a resource for human use" (2). Nature is "not located somewhere out there" for humans to connect with, but it has always been "the very substance of ourselves" (4). She offers the definition for trans-corporeality:

> Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from "the environment" … By emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures. (2)

Alaimo's theory shifts our understanding of the human self by rejecting humanist conception of the absolute separation between humans and nature, instead pointing to how nature might "signify, act upon, or otherwise affect human bodies, knowledges, and practices" (7-8). She aligns literary and theoretical texts with environmental science to show that the interchanges are "often unpredictable and unwanted" (2). She analyses Muriel Rukeyser's poetry collection *The Book of the Dead*, which documents the history of the Hawks Nest Tunnel Disaster that took place in West Virginia in the 1930s. Alaimo sees the poems as making visible how the lives of the miners were co-constituted by the materiality of water, air, and the silica-bearing rock itself. The trans-corporeal body intra-acts with discursive or social practices, as Alaimo succinctly writes: "As the material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial, what was once the ostensibly bounded human subject finds herself in a swirling landscape of uncertainty" (20). If Rukeyser's poetry is reflective of how urban development discourses are associated with the intermeshing of miners and nature, *Weathering with You* can be read as how discourses about neoliberalism are entangled with Hina's trans-corporeal body: one that stores water and connects with the climate.

It is therefore crucial to define neoliberalism for this article before the analysis of how female embodiment, the climate, and neoliberalism operate within the film. Economic geographer David Harvey defines the notion of neoliberalism as an ideology that promulgates "that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2). Under this ideological framework, one's sense of achievement and even identity is largely predicated upon one's independence in engaging with the economy and upon one's ability to improve their quality of life through unregulated buying and selling.

Harvey also maintains that "[t]he corporatization, commodification, and privatization of hitherto public assets has been a signal feature of the neoliberal project" (169). The public assets, as he elucidates, may include public utilities, social welfare, public institutions, warfare, and *nature*. He also adds that "[n]eoliberalization has transformed the positionality of labour, of women … by emphasizing that labour is a commodity like any other" (180). Likewise, Susan M. Roberts writes that although "women, like any other actors, are freer subjects when able to make more or less rational decisions in unregulated markets," they are simultaneously seen as "units of human capital … [that] productively participate in (formal) labor markets" (135). If an individual follows a profit-maximising agenda without an ecofeminist awareness, they may choose to make profit through the privatisation and commodification of both natural resources and female bodily labour.

Ecofeminism in Children's Literature Criticism

While Clare Bradford and her colleagues, back in 2008, declared that the extensive use of ecofeminism in children's literature studies "is yet to come" (Bradford et al. 85), Anja Höing, writing more than a decade later, still finds their claim accurate: "a wide integration of ecofeminism into children's literature studies remains a vision of the future" (438). One of the earliest ecofeminist readings of children's fiction is Marion Copeland's contribution to *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*. Copeland loosely draws upon ecofeminism to read Beatrix Potter's and Gene Stratton-Porter's novels to argue that stories about the animal characters, including Peter Rabbit, can be seen as envisaging animals' liberation from and even engagement with humans. But Copeland's argument and analysis, despite being thoughtful, are more ecocritical than ecofeminist in essence. Ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard later acknowledges the potential of children's books such as John Burningham's *Oi! Get Off Our*

Train (1989), highlighting that "the logic of domination" can be obstructed by "narratives of connection, community, and interdependence among humans, animals, and the natural world" (327). Curry offers the most comprehensive study of ecofeminism in the field of children's literature studies thus far. Her monograph examines "the processes and productions of gender difference that 'feminise' categories lying outside the parameters of the adult white male subject" (1). In a similar vein, Peter Kunze applies ecofeminist philosophy in his reading of Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* (1975), writing that the novel reflects "an emancipation from the patriarchal logic of the domination of land and women" (41). Gaard, Curry, and Kunze, then, each utilise ecofeminism to tease out the patterns of oppression of women/girls and nature in patriarchal and capitalist society.

Other scholars of young adult literature consider ecofeminism in relation to the idea of growing up. Roberta Seelinger Trites, in her book about material feminisms in children's literature, sees ecofeminism as a useful tool for "explor[ing] the intersubjective and interactionist relationships people develop by interacting with the environment as they mature" (61). In a 2024 article, Jennifer Briguglio nuances Trites's argument by showing how Rachel Griffin's *The Nature of Witches* (2021) and Kalynn Bayron's *This Poison Heart* (2021) "provide the protagonists with agency and strength through the natural, [but] their representation of how this power must assimilate into society for both it and the characters to gain acceptance further reinforces the division [between nature and human society]" (66). Thus, this approach in ecofeminist readings of children's fiction draws attention to how girls' and young women's lives are shaped or, at least, influenced by the environment.

This article not only expands the amorphous ecofeminist scholarship in children's literature studies, but also illuminates how ecofeminism operates with neoliberalism and Alaimo's trans-corporeality in such young adult texts as *Weathering with You*. Trites sees a young adult novel as reflecting neoliberalism when "young people … [function] as individual

entrepreneurs who sell their bodies" (101). Similarly, *Weathering with You* presents the pattern of neoliberalism by featuring a teenage girl being involved in a form of the entrepreneurship that makes profit from her bodily labour and connection with the weather. Although, on the surface, the business is sentimentalised for the film's emphasis on how Hina's magic enables her to navigate her power and identity in Tokyo, the film, overall, conveys two urgent messages associated with ecofeminism. First, the logic of domination manifests itself through the neoliberal project of profiting from the exploitation of the weather and girls' labour. Second, the intermingling of girls and nature can be understood in material, bodily terms, when the protagonist experiences bodily sacrifice as a result of the neoliberal project. Ultimately, this article points out the radical message embedded within the anime film: the girl's body bears the material consequence of the masculinist exploitation of the climate and female labour in the neoliberal market.

Neoliberalism and Girls' Labour

The discourse of neoliberalism is made evident by how the film couples individual wellbeing with one's responsibility and freedom of income generation. In the beginning of the film, when the male protagonist, Hodaka, is about to arrive at the Tokyo ferry terminal, he posts a question on a forum, asking, "I'm a 16-year-old high school student. Who will hire me without a student ID?" (Shinkai). In this city characterised by free market, Hodaka is aware that he needs to sacrifice his labour or skills to maintain a life; furthermore, integrity or compliance to the law does not impede his need and desire to participate in the free market. He settles down at Kabukichō, a busy leisure district famous for a variety of restaurants, bars, and night clubs. Without many savings, he stays in a manga bar. Later, using up all his savings, he spends his nights at a local fast-food restaurant. By depicting the hardship of living in Tokyo, the film

highlights the correlation between (one's ability to make) income and the level of one's wellbeing. One fast way to increase wellbeing in the film is the commodification of one's body. Despite being dismissed by Hodaka, the idea of serving as an underage sex club worker is suggested to him on the forum. Working in a host or hostess club is by no means uncommon at Kabukichō, according to the film: there is a truck displaying a job advertisement for hostesses, playing the jingle, "We wanna make more money! We love money!" In Hina's first appearance in the film, several gangsters try to lure her into serving as a hostess and make a high income. As an orphan, Hina has been doing part-time jobs to sustain her and her younger brother's lives, but she has recently lost her job working in a fast-food restaurant. Desperate for a stable job, she is shown to reluctantly consider accepting the offer, despite the job's apparent demeaning and sexual nature. This entertainment district, as a microcosm of neoliberal Tokyo, is depicted as a place where (young) individuals must market their labour around governmental regulations in order to survive and improve their wellbeing; meanwhile, the fastest way to do so is to commodify their bodies, foreshadowing the necessity of the launch of the sunshine girl service, which sells Hina's bodily connection with nature.

The sunshine girl service, when read through an ecofeminist lens, is a neoliberal project that commodifies and dominates the weather and the girl's labour simultaneously. Although Hodaka is employed to work in a small publishing company, he receives a rather small salary (¥3,000, which is approximately $31 Australian dollars, per month) and longs for another part-time job. He then proposes the "weather business" to Hina, who agrees to turn her magical power to clear the sky into an economic good. Hodaka suggests launching a webpage that allows people to make appointment with Hina; the details concerning payment are worthy of attention: the cost, which must be paid in cash, is a sum of a baseline service fee and a fee for day-return transportation. The business must be operated at a high degree of efficiency and in accordance with the principle of profit maximisation. The young entrepreneurs quickly come

up with the division of labour: Hodaka is responsible for managing the webpage and requests, while Hina's duty is to make it sunny. The description box of the request form on the webpage states: "For anyone who needs help with the weather, the 100% sunshine girl will bring you the sun no matter where it is" (Shinkai). Thus, there exists an imbalance of power in gender dynamics: the more the boy accepts requests to maximise profit, the more labour the girl must perform. The webpage design also reveals the desires to control and commodify the weather. Whenever a request is received, the eyes of the frog shown on the webpage will turn into the yen sign. The frog's eyes here imply not only the (masculinist) desires for money but also the customer's satisfaction with successfully hiring the girl to control nature. The sunny weather is rendered a commodity whose value can be measured by money. For ecofeminists, "the commodification and objectification of nature and of women are similar and come from giving entitlement to what is labelled or considered masculine, which leads to domination and power and control over others" (Mitten and D'Amore 107). By treating the weather as a commodity and overusing girls' labour, the sunshine girl service, as product of neoliberalism, maps onto ecofeminist conceptions of oppression.

The masculinist focalisation of the sunshine girl service through Hodaka's viewpoint presents a problematically romanticised notion of the girl-nature connection. Hina and Hodaka continue to accept requests from different people – a bride, members of an astronomy school club, a middle-aged male horse-racing gambler, two cosplayers, and a group of preschoolers – who all wish to see and enjoy sunshine in a small spot for a brief time. Hina fulfils all their hopes by praying and therefore clearing up the sky. As soon as the clips that illustrate these moments are shown, the viewer is offered Hodaka's perspective on the positive effect of the sunshine girl service, as he says to himself, "what a wonderful world I was born into … I realised how much the human heart is connected with the sky" (Shinkai). Hodaka's realisation, at first, seems to resonate with an ecofeminist vision of the connection between nature and

humans (from all age groups, including children); however, this romanticised perception is built on the problematic commodification of nature. The film also does not show any evidence of the male protagonist taking into consideration Hina's bodily conditions or her excessive labour. While it is hard to call Hodaka a patriarchal and exploitative figure, his sentimentalised view as well as his failure to consider the exploitative essence of the business encapsulate the dominant masculinist view of nature and girls as objects and commodities.

Hina's embodied experience as a sunshine girl corresponds to the neoliberal treatment of female labour. As Roberts reminds us, despite their apparent freedom as sellers and consumers in the neoliberal market, women nowadays are still often seen as "units of human capital … [that] productively participate in (formal) labor markets" (135). *Weathering with You* portrays Hina as an agent who makes profit through her magical power, yet she has been unaware or even passively accepting of her status as "human capital", with her physical labour exploited via the sunshine girl service. Hina's labour is not a remote one that can be performed through, for example, casting a spell at her home; instead, the scenes that depict the business operation tell us that the service is an embodied process. Hina and Hodaka take public transport to move from one place to another to perform the ritual in person so that she can complete the requests received. The service, therefore, does not merely entail language or thoughts but requires Hina to offer her physical presence as well as labour.

The embodied quality of the sunshine girl service is also evident in the revelation of her bodily conditions. In the scene where an old lady asks for sunny weather on Obon – the festival when spirits of ancestors revisit the household – Hina says her prayer, with sweat glistening on her forehead. This is when Hodaka remarks that she looks tired. Apart from exhaustion, it is later revealed that her body becomes increasingly transparent as a result of the incessant prayers and being overworked. In the scenes where Hodaka consults a female fortune teller and a male Shinto priest, it is revealed that, with their ability to manipulate the balance of nature, sunshine

girls are destined to pay a heavy price. The price, as the narrative unfolds, is the gradual loss of flesh. Thus, Hina has been tolerating the exhaustion created by the business to an extent that she conceals not only her tiredness but also the negative side of being a sunshine girl. Although Hina's body is not directly offered as a commodity for consumers in the service, the use of her bodily labour and the gradual loss of her body are necessary in the completion of requests. Similar to how workers are estranged from their sense of self according to the Marxist feminist idea of alienation of female labour, Hina, depicted as a self-denying girl, is increasingly isolated from her body and her capacity for labour. Ecofeminist literature scholars like Curry would see Hina's body as reflective of how the female body "acts as currency, subject to, and a product of, the interlocking monetary discourses of a globalized consumer culture" (63). The film, at this point of the narrative, visualises how neoliberalism leads to the girl's passive acceptance of her body being treated as "human capital" and erased.

Climate and Hina's Trans-corporeality

The weather, for people living in Tokyo, is understood as a powerless object that yields to human control and intervention. In the words of Val Plumwood, nature is often "defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject … [and] as a terra nullius, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings and hence available to be annexed" (4). The first instance of how the weather is viewed in this way is Hodaka's denial of its agency; after he learns myths about sunshine girls from a fortune teller, he describes the weather as a form of natural phenomena like air pressure rather than a form of power. Seen as not having agency, nature becomes an object that is available to be commodified. The customers of the service, too, demonstrate a consumerist mindset that regards the weather as that which serves their needs. The first clients, owners of a flea market stall, offer Hina ¥20,000 and tell her that "we'll sell a lot more now

that it's sunny" (Shinkai). While these people see the sunny weather as something that can be bought to help generate more income, other clients purchase the service for a better experience of special events. For example, the bride hopes to wear the wedding dress under the sun, whereas some students hope that they could watch the meteor shower in a clear sky. These moments give sentimental values and hence demonstrate the desire to justify the artificial and humanist intervention in the weather that treats the climate as a passive object fulfilling human needs.

Redolent of Alaimo's idea of trans-corporeality, Hina's watery body demonstrates how human bodies are inseparable from and affected by nature. Hodaka plans to call a halt to the sunshine girl business after learning about Hina's exhaustion and being overwhelmed by public requests. In the scene where he tries to offer Hina a ring as her birthday gift, a strong air current rushes towards her and levitates her with a string of transparent waterdrops. Indicative of Hina's increasing inability to control her body due to being overworked, this scene foreshadows Hina's upcoming radical transformation. There are two brief moments in which she rolls down her sleeve to cover up her left arm and left hand, both of which are slowly transforming to appear similar to the transparent sky fish and raindrops from the world above. Her attempts to conceal her unwanted bodily changes demonstrate her self-sacrificial tendency. Later in the film, Tokyo is faced with a storm and heavy snow during the summer. These weather conditions are atypical, as the temperatures in summer often exceed 30°C in Japan. Hodaka, Hina, and her younger brother run away from the police during this severe weather, as Hodaka has been identified as a missing person. Inside the hotel room in which they take shelter, the sunshine girl finally reveals her bodily condition. She takes off part of her bathrobe and shows her watery body, a large part of which is no longer flesh and blood and is now replaced with water and bubbles. This scene is accompanied by Hina's revelation of the doomed fate that accompanies being a sunshine girl: the more she prays for sunshine, the more transparent her body becomes. She has

also prepared for serving as a human sacrifice to the sky, ending the constant rain and the extreme weather. Although Hodaka asks *kami* (the deities in Shinto beliefs) not to take Hina away, she is transported to the magical world before the next morning. Sacrificed to the sky, Hina performs the last part of her role as a sunshine girl – bringing sunshine back to the whole city. In short, from partly watery to half-occupied by water, Hina's body not only emblematises the interconnection between the climate and human bodies, but also speaks to the idea that the upsetting of the climate's balance would cause consequences or even damage to the flesh and blood of human beings.

Hina's bodily changes imply that the girl's body bears the consequence of neoliberal commodification of the girl-weather connection. In the diegetic world of the film, it is a natural law that the sunshine girl, whose power is granted by *kami* (and hence nature according to Shinto thought), loses her body and life if she overuses her magical power to change the weather. Upon acquiring the magical ability, Hina does not overuse it — she only occasionally does it and has no intention to commodify it. Nevertheless, from the moment she accepts Hodaka's proposal, her body is rendered to be a site of the neoliberal desire to manipulate weather through market transactions. Despite her ability to make certain the change of weather (in a way that seems to promote "girl power"), Hina has never been certain about the change of her body. Turning increasingly transparent, her body houses not only water as an aspect of nature but also a mass number of metropolitan desires for sunshine. Thus, the anime film offers an ecofeminist vision of how the trans-corporeal body is an "unpredictable and unwanted" (Alaimo 2) result of the exploitation of girls and nature within the world dominated by neoliberal capitalism. The result of commodifying the girl-weather connection might not be obvious at first, which allows the protagonists to accept more and more requests. However, the disregard for possible consequences hinges upon exploitation of the girl's labour and the weather, eventually causes the change of Hina's body, and gradually leads to her symbolic

death. The film advances our understanding of the twin oppression of nature and women theorised by ecofeminism: the bodies of girls, who are marginalised for their age and gender, pay the cost of neoliberal exploitation of nature by experiencing uncontrollable and unwanted corporeal changes.

Heterosexual Romance and the "Crazy" Weather

One possible way to interpret Hodaka's rescue of Hina in the film's climax is to see it as a representation of the masculinist drive to possess a girl and limit her agency. After Hina vanishes, Hodaka strives to bring her back to the human world and walks through the rooftop shrine to find Hina. As he reaches her, he holds her hands tight and drags her off from the floating island. She is worried that her return to her world will resume the never-ending rain, but Hodaka tells her, "Who cares if it never gets sunny again? I want you more than any blue sky … the weather can stay crazy." This moment of the narrative, then, simultaneously usurps power from the sunshine girl, who has continued to showcase agency through her magic, and heroes the male young entrepreneur who has capitalised on her magical power. Writing about the traditional conception of the *shōjo* (young girls), anthropologist Jennifer Robertson notes that "controlling the *shōjo* was desirable because she was fascinating, attractive and weak, and it was necessary because she was powerful, threatening and different" (158). The film can be read as rehearsing the misogynistic message that when a girl is too powerful, she shall be contained and relegated to the role as a boy's romantic interest and appendage.

Although this interpretation may hold true to some extent, I argue that the film, through Hodaka's rejection of Hina's identity as a sunshine girl, presents an ecofeminist take on the tension between individual sacrifice and collective problems. Hina shows her internalised self-sacrificial belief when she hesitates over leaving the world above because, if she does so, the

endless rain will resume. In other words, Hina embodies the (Japanese) dominant view that it is justified or even ethical for an individual (especially a girl) to sacrifice herself to solve an issue faced by people collectively. On the contrary, declaring that "the weather can stay crazy", Hodaka refuses to see Hina's individual sacrifice for the city as justified (despite his refusal being attributed to his love for her), and in turn recognises the collective nature of climate change: the unwanted or, indeed, "crazy" weather should be faced by everyone rather than handled by an individual girl. At this point, Hodaka's refusal to exploit a girl to manipulate the weather aligns with the ecofeminist agenda to resist the twin dominations of nature and women or any marginalised groups.

Navigating the Difficulty

The ending of the film asks the viewer to embrace the state of nature that is unaffected by human intervention. In the film's epilogue, following Hina's return, it has never stopped raining in three years' time. As the city continues to sink, some parts of it are now being covered by water. In a conversation between Hodaka and an old lady, viewers learn that Tokyo was once long ago a bay and therefore now returns to its ancient form. This revelation echoes a point made in an earlier scene; an old man who owns an antique painting of the sky world rejects the claim that the present weather is abnormal, as it "changes on a whim regardless of human needs", and "we can't tell what's the norm and what isn't." The sunny weather is seen as the norm by Tokyo citizens because of how it serves as a romantic backdrop of human activities, but the ending challenges this view and destabilises humanist assumptions about the state of nature. This message calls into question humans' view of the sunny weather as the norm and calls for a rethinking of how humans might live *with* and *in* nature. In the final scene, Hodaka meets Hina for the first time in three years, and the film hints that the two might develop as a couple. The

juxtaposition of a renewed understanding of nature and a happy ending, then, implies that human (romantic) relationships can coincide with the un-commodified and non-normative state of nature. While neoliberal discourses convince us that commodification of nature enhances our wellbeing, the film rejects that anthropocentric view by calling for a new perspective of human-nature relations, one that is similar to Donna Haraway's notion of "staying with the trouble" (1). The new relationship with nature presented in the film does not aim at "restoration" but targets "the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together" (10).

Weathering with You provides a narrative of neoliberal control of girls and nature, and it cautions against such impulses by making visible the unwanted consequence. The film starts with a premise that reflects a common understanding of nature: just as it is possible to pay for a sunshine girl service to enjoy 'good' weather, it is easy for us to assume that nature is a commodity under our control and subject to our understanding. When read via an ecofeminist lens, the service functions as a fantastical imagination of the interconnection between exploitation of female labour and manipulation of nature under neoliberalism. Hina's transparent body, understood as trans-corporeal in Alaimo's terms, is a cautionary example of the process of commodification – girls bear a heavy cost, one that is materialised through the body. The sunshine girl offers a dark model that illuminates what it means to be a girl living in the neoliberal economy against the backdrop of human desires to master the natural world. In her reading of Helen Marshall's *The Migration* (2019), Sherryl Vint concludes that the novel "provides both a narrative of the necessity to change in the face of anthropogenic climate change and … to navigate the difficulty of such change, a condition that is necessarily also one of loss" (222). The ending of the anime film, in a similar vein, makes us rethink our need to embrace the state of nature that is not altered by anthropocentric beliefs. For people in Tokyo, the eternal rain might appear as "a condition … of loss," yet the narrative refuses human intervention in nature and asks humans "to navigate the difficulty."

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