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LITERATURE

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Voices of Nature: Narrative Diversity and Ecological Awareness in Contemporary Canadian Short Stories[1]

Abstract. This article argues that three voice strategies in contemporary Canadian eco-stories—collective we-narration (Gartner), figural animal focalization (Bone), and omniscience inflected by oral address (Maracle)—activate distinct pathways of narrative empathy (attention re-calibration, perspective-switching, metaphorical reframing). Bridging ecocriticism and narrative theory, I show how these forms redistribute agency to nonhuman actants while exposing the affordances and risks of anthropomorphism. Close readings demonstrate that Gartner's satirical collective voice performs de-anthropocentrization, Bone's alternating figuration stages cross-species identification within unequal power regimes, and Maracle's you-address and cyclical temporality enact relational resurgence. I conclude by outlining how such voice-driven designs move readers from elegiac "environmental loss" toward pedagogies of care and repair.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Canadian literature, climate fiction, cli-fi, eco-story, environmental loss, narrative voice, ecological storytelling, climate change literature, environmental consciousness.

1. Introduction

Narratives hold significant importance in our lives as they serve as reflections of our culture, reality, and language. As Harré Rom et al. assert, "Narratives, which appear in a variety of forms, constitute a linguistic, psychological, social, and philosophical

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framework for our attempts to come to terms with the nature and conditions of our existence" (1999, 70). Narratives serve as a vital tool for literature, in that employing diverse narrative techniques and voices shape both individual and collective identities. In the same way, employing diverse narrative perspectives allows literature to engage with critical societal issues, including, in this context, the ecological challenges of our era. This paper examines the role of diverse narrative perspectives in selected eco- stories, highlighting how these perspectives contribute to ecological awareness and foster empathy toward nature. I argue that three voice strategies—collective we-narration (Gartner), figural focalization through a nonhuman animal (Bone), and omniscience shaped by oral address and second person (Maracle)—activate distinct narrative-empathy pathways (Keen): attentional re-calibration, perspective-switching, and metaphorical reframing. These in turn decentre human exceptionalism and redistribute agency to nonhuman actants (material/posthuman ecocriticism), while exposing the limits and risks of anthropomorphism. I contend that voice is not a neutral conduit but an ecological technology: by structuring attention, access, and alignment, narrative voice can dehierarchize species relations and scaffold environmental responsibility—provided we account for the frictions of anthropomorphism and colonial history.

This analysis is based on ecocriticism, narrative theory, and decolonial ecology. Greg Garrard defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (2012, 5). This perspective offers a foundation for exploring how literature engages with ecological concerns and challenges anthropocentric viewpoints. Narrative theory, on the other hand, provides tools for understanding how perspective and voice shape reader engagement and influence meaning-making. As L. B. Cebik explains, narrative has the capacity to "educate or edify; to inform, correct, revise, or update; to entertain; to inspire actions or attitudes; and to imbue with value" (1986, 72). Extending this view, Erin James emphasizes that econarratology "highlights the potential that narratives stand to make to readers' understandings of what it is like for people in different spaces and times to live in their ecological homes by foregrounding the comparative nature of narrative immersion" (2015, 23). James' insight foregrounds the transformative capacity of narrative form to shape readers' ecological imagination — a key premise of this study's approach to voice and environment.

Moreover, As Indigenous scholars such as Kyle Whyte remind us, "Anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change is an intensification of environmental change imposed on Indigenous peoples by colonialism" (2017, 153–154). This perspective reframes environmental degradation not as a universal crisis but as a continuation of settler-colonial extractivism that disrupts Indigenous relationships with land, knowledge, and non-human kin. By applying these interconnected frameworks, this study examines how eco-stories employ diverse narrative voices, including non-human perspectives, to foster ecological awareness, challenge anthropocentric worldviews, and reimagine human-nature relationships.

To operationalize this interdisciplinary framework, the study applies close reading as its principal analytical method, combining narratological precision with ecocritical and decolonial sensitivity to language, form, and affect. The analysis proceeds through three dimensions: the textual markers of narrative voice, the readerly effects these markers generate, and the ecological functions they perform. Focusing on Zsuzsi Gartner's "The Second Coming of the Plants," Wendy Bone's "Abdul," and Lee Maracle's "Cedar Sings," the discussion explores how these narratives, though stylistically distinct, converge on a shared thematic concern—human complicity in the accelerating ecological crisis. As Löschnigg observes, "environmental loss has emerged as an important topic in the Canadian short story" (2023, 227), a claim borne out by the formal and ethical experiments these texts undertake. Through collective plant narration, figural animal focalization, and oral Indigenous storytelling, they articulate diverse strategies for reimagining human–nonhuman relations and for activating ecological awareness through literary form.

2. Anaylsis: Selected Eco-Stories

2.1. "The Second Coming of the Plants"

Zsuzsi Gartner is a Canadian journalist and an author. She currently writes for several newspapers and magazines along with her fictional authorship. Her story "The Second Coming of the Plants" was published in *Best Canadian Short Stories 2019.* This eco-story explores flora in a fresh light, empowered by its unique narrative perspective. By allowing plants to retell their story from their own viewpoint, the narrative enhances the reader's comprehension of the non-human entities of this planet. This story is particularly essential to opening up new perspectives and connections on an emotional level with nature. "The Second Coming of the Plants" adopts a satirical tone that interlaces ecological humor to enhance the story's effectiveness in terms of its emotive position. This approach aligns with one of the key aspects of ecological writing; to raise awareness about one's surroundings and establish empathy towards nature.

"The Second Coming of the Plants" consists of three sections; I: Twilight of the Insects, II: The Fertile Season, and III: Welcome to the Garden. The story depicts, as the title suggests, the second coming for the plants who had once been in charge of everything in the living world. The plants are planning a revolt in which they seek to reclaim power after their previous overthrow by humans. Despite their role in the creation of this world, "[w]hen we first arrived on this mineral world, it was barely animate… [we] gave this benighted planet lungs. We gave it life" (Gartner 2019, 60–61), they are nonetheless rendered powerless, as a result, humans gain control of all aspects of life. After having been dethroned, the plants are forgotten and left aside, which reinforces the idea of the lost connections between humans and plants.

Jerrold Levinson notes that titles function as interpretive frames that guide how audiences perceive and evaluate a work, shaping both its aesthetic and conceptual reception (1985, 29). The title "The Second Coming of the Plants" exemplifies what he calls an "allusive title" (1985, 37), evoking the biblical narrative of Christ's return and reconfiguring it through an ecological lens. In Gartner's story, the plants' "second coming" replaces divine salvation with ecological resurgence, positioning the non-human world as both creator and redeemer. The plants are the voiced actors who speak as a collective mind. They tell their history to their heir, who is a hybrid lovechild that represents the interconnectivity between different species. The plants explain that there was a time in history when they were one with human beings. The criticism of humans by the plants is not merely due to the lack of any remaining connections between the two species. It is also a consequence of the human obsession with materialism. According to the plants, human beings have become so self-centered that they have lost their sensibility towards nature.

Along with its distinct voiced actor, this eco-story employs an unnatural narrative. Gartner goes beyond traditional forms of nature writing and directly reaches out to the addressee, the lovechild, or the reader Although, the first-person plural form creates ambiguity in terms of the addressee, at the same time, it creates a unison within the "we." Brian Richardson highlights that the first-person plural form provides an exploration of unreliability, the awareness of other minds, and the formation of a shared or collective consciousness in the texts (2006, x). The story begins with these lines, "Believe us, dear sprout, when we tell you how fickle, how self-obsessed, they were" (Gartner 2019, 59). The narrative immediately makes a distinction between us and them. Plants, as a collective mind, reach out to baby sprout. Richardson further asserts that "we" narration can serve to erode the boundaries between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narration, particularly when it challenges the conventional expectations regarding the extent to which one individual can safely make assertions about the thoughts and experiences of others (2016, 390). Therefore, the "we" narration, in this eco-story shows the interconnectedness of plants, "The Second Coming of the Plants" maintains that plants are linked on a level of connectivity that is distinct from human understanding, which suggests a form of inter-species connection. Moreover, the plants claim that they were once interconnected with humans, emphasizing the historical and intrinsic bond between humanity and the natural world of flora. However, as Richardson further states "we" and its position frequently change as the story unfolds (2006, 38). As the narrative progresses, the once-unified collective consciousness of plants evolves into a hierarchical structure, transitioning from a shared, communal mind to being led by a dominant plant.

Beyond its unnatural narrative voice and satirical tone, the story not only merges intertextual elements that contextualize and enrich the story but also enhances the reader's engagement. Starting from the title, "The Second Coming of the Plants" uses intertextual elements and therefore allusions that enrich the narrative's resonance. Intertextuality provides a more profound bond with the text that may result in a height-

ened appreciation and understanding of the story's themes and motivations. Graham Allen highlights the significance of intertextuality as a concept that emphasizes relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence within modern cultural discourse (2000, 5). By introducing an additional layer of complexity and intrigue to the narrative, intertextuality improves the overall depth and thought-provoking quality for the reader. To illustrate from the story: "We had our champions. Goethe—he was our Gandhi. Goethe, who posited the idea of our spiritual interconnectedness through the *Urpflanze*—not one living plant but the essence of us all…" (Gartner 2019, 62, emphasis in original), "We enjoyed Ravi Shankar and Tamil ragas better than Bach and Dvořák" (2019, 61) and "We knew our Shakespeare" (2019, 62), are some key figures that are mentioned in the story. While employing intertextual elements by mentioning non-fictional people, the story also makes use of material goods and introduces them in a humorous way. As previously noted, the satirical tone, particularly when used to convey empathetic moments in the narrative, operates on a crucial level, enhancing both emotional impact and critical engagement:

> The enslavement of millions bound for the Christmas tree lots, and, later the chippers; the struggles of the coastal mangroves; the routine massacre of walking palm and Brazil nut tree; the agonies of the Japanese willow and jasmine at the hands of their bonsai torturers. And so many of us strung out on liquid nitrogen; Miracle-Gro our crystal meth. Cornstalks jonesing so hard for BioAg, silken tassels convulsed in paroxysms of distress as we tried to kick. Many of us didn't make it. We pray the makers of Roundup are now cosigned to the seventh circle of hell. (Gartner 2019, 61)

The satirical tone in this passage reflects the harsh realities of humans' actions with a different tone that ensures a comical stance. As plants point out, they have been plotting against humanity after centuries-long suffering.

The addressee, the hybrid love child, is presented with a vision of both the past and a possible future in which plants reclaim dominance over the world. Through this narrative design, the story engages the love child as an interlocutor while simultaneously involving the reader, positioning them as recipients of the unfolding ecological narrative. On a broader level, the story effectively evokes empathy toward nature, prompting reflection on the interconnectedness of human and non-human life and the consequences of environmental degradation. As Löschnigg points out the significance of this eco-story by saying that "'The Second Coming' is unique among eco-stories not only for its unusual narrative voice but also because of its satirical tone, which conveys the malady of humankind's fatal alienation from and interference with the flora in a vibrantly comical and yet thought-provoking manner" (2023, 238).

The text uses anthropomorphism to critique anthropocentric viewpoints. The plants' collective voice, which attributes negative traits like being fickle and self-absorbed to humans, simultaneously constructs its own identity in terms of martial prowess: formidable warriors, masterful strategists, and assassins. This attribution of human-like—

and even superhuman—agency to the plants serves to deconstruct the very human/nature binary it seems to employ. Far from highlighting a closeness, this narrative strategy establishes an antagonistic co-existence. It posits the non-human world not as a passive victim, but as a sophisticated and lethal agent, forcing a radical decentering of human importance.

In a way, anthropomorphism enables the short story to be intertextual. It is repeatedly seen throughout the story, for example, when the plants talking about Shakespeare and Goethe, as well as Miracle-Gro, a brand of plant-fertilizers, and BioAg, which is a real company that sells organic bio-stimulants. This method makes the story even more complicated yet, empathetic. The content, the voice, and the overall aesthetic of the story create an affective tone and appeal. Ultimately, the short story conveys the message that plants and animals are just as essential as humans to the well-being of the planet and that this reality should never be overlooked. In doing so, the narrative challenges the anthropocentric worldview, advocating for a more inclusive and interconnected perspective on life.

This narrative strategy, however, must be situated within the significant ethical and epistemic risks of anthropomorphism. The device might fall into the trap of facile projection, reinforcing human exceptionalism and enacting species erasure by masking the genuine alterity of the nonhuman. This story, however, does not naively fall into this pitfall; rather, it consciously exploits the device. Instead of using human-like traits to generate simple empathy, it uses them to posit the non-human as a rival, sovereign intelligence. By framing the plants as formidable antagonists, the story avoids the erasure of passive victimhood and instead performs a material ecocritical move: it forcefully redistributes agency to the nonhuman, using the master's own tools to dismantle his house.

2.2. "Abdul"

Shifting the focus from flora to fauna, the next story under examination, Wendy Bone's "Abdul" (in Cli-Fi: Canadian Tales of Climate Change, 2017), offers a compelling exploration of environmental and ethical questions through a non-human narrative perspective. Bone, a writer and literary journalist whose work frequently engages with the intersections of environmental justice and human rights, situates the story in Indonesia, where she currently resides. Her lived experience in this region informs the narrative's cultural and ecological texture, grounding its depiction of species endangerment and human intervention in lived reality. Positioned within a climate-fiction anthology, "Abdul" explicitly echoes the anthology's central concern with the planetary consequences of climate change, while extending it through an empathetic lens that bridges human and animal experience.

The story unfolds through the intertwined perspectives of a young Canadian woman, Sara, and an orangutan named Abdul, whose parallel experiences illuminate the en-

tangled fates of humans and non-human beings. Drawing on her Cree-Métis heritage, Bone articulates a vision of kinship that transcends species boundaries, foregrounding the ethical interdependence between human survival and ecological well-being. As Susan O'Brien observes, echoing a Cree proverb, "If you destroy the land, you destroy the animals. If you destroy the animals, you destroy the people" (2013, 187). Bone's narrative dramatizes this warning, portraying environmental destruction as inseparable from moral and cultural collapse.

Through figural narration, the story alternates between Sara's interior reflections and Abdul's consciousness, establishing a formal symmetry that mirrors their shared vulnerability. Sara, a successful yet spiritually unfulfilled art director, is jolted by an advertisement depicting endangered orangutans—a moment of mediated compassion that propels her from Canada to Indonesia in search of purposeful engagement. The perspective then shifts to Abdul, a captive orangutan forced to perform for tourists, whose interior monologue reveals both awareness and resignation. His understanding of language—knowing that orang means "person" and orangutan "person of the forest"—underscores the irony of linguistic kinship amid captivity. As Abdul ponders,

> There was nothing to do but wrap his hands around the bars, press his face against them and wait. It was in his nature to love solitude, though it was the solitude of the forest. Here, he shared mutual isolation with the other beings in cages. One day the trainer came. Abdul reached out to him. The trainer took his hand and held it a moment. Then he laughed and pulled his hand away. (2017, 140)

Abdul's reflections foreground the cognitive and emotional complexity of non-human experience, destabilizing the human–animal hierarchy through an ethics of recognition rather than through sentimental pity. The stark juxtaposition of gesture and withdrawal—the trainer's brief touch followed by laughter—captures the profound asymmetry of power that defines captivity, where intimacy is momentary and always denied. In this moment, Bone exposes the fragile boundary between care and control, compelling readers to confront the uneasy coexistence of empathy and domination that characterizes human relations with the non-human world.

Structurally fragmented into twenty-two alternating sections, the story balances both voices yet privileges Abdul's perspective, suggested by its title. The convergence of their narratives culminates in Abdul's death by gunfire—an outcome that forces Sara to confront the limits of her own compassion. Sara's compassion collides with the uneven moral terrain of globalization—a moment where transnational empathy meets the economics of survival. Her instinct to intervene reflects a distant ethic of care, while those around her act within the immediate demands of livelihood and scarcity. Bone stages—rather than resolves—this asymmetry, revealing how global compassion often collides with the material realities of postcolonial environments. The story thus exposes the moral dissonance between affective empathy and structural inequality, turning Sara's awakening into a critique of privilege and displacement.

By granting the orangutan narrative consciousness, Bone extends the Canadian animal story tradition that Margaret Atwood identifies in Survival, where mourning shifts "from the hunter to the hunted" (2012, 97–98). "Abdul" participates in this lineage yet reframes it through transnational and decolonial lenses: the animal victim becomes both a symbol of ecological devastation and a subject with agency. Atwood's question—what such symbolic animal victims reveal about collective identity (2012, 99)—resonates here, though Bone recontextualizes it beyond Canadian borders to interrogate global complicity in environmental harm. As Misao Dean observes, literary animals are often endowed with agency only within human-centered hierarchies (2013, 373); Bone captures precisely this tension. Readers are invited to empathize with Abdul while remaining aware of the exploitative systems—economic, colonial, and emotional—that render such empathy insufficient.

Ultimately, by situating "Abdul" within and beyond the Canadian eco-animal story tradition, Bone's narrative transforms the figure of the orangutan into a site of ethical reflection. Abdul is not merely a victim of deforestation but an emblem of environmental loss and the contradictions of global care. The story's fragmented structure and dual narration compel readers to inhabit conflicting moral positions, exposing how ecological empathy must reckon with uneven global relations of survival and responsibility.

2.3. "Cedar Sings"

Lee Maracle was an Indigenous writer, who holds significant relevance within the discourse surrounding ecological storytelling. Her Indigenous heritage, combined with her profound exploration of nature's connection to humanity, enables her to craft narratives that evoke deep emotional resonance. Through her unique perspective, she weaves stories that reflect the deep-seated bond between people and the natural world, creating an emotional and cultural depth that speaks to the heart of her audience. Her story titled "Cedar Sings" is part of her short story collection *First Wives Club: Coast Salish Style* published in 2010.

According to Thomas King's categorization of Native storytelling, "Cedar Sings" fits into the category of "interfusional" literature (1990, 186). Löschnigg quotes Terasa Gibert to explain 'interfusional literature,' which "addresses a wider audience although it retains Native subject matter, certain linguistic features and traditional oral tale narrative devices" (quoted in Löschnigg 2014, 161). Hence, "interfusional literature" illustrates how Indigenous writers use their traditional literature to incorporate with their works. This method grants Indigenous literature to be involved with a broader readership without limiting its significance or meaning exclusively to Indigenous people.

The opening passage of Maracle's "Cedar Sings" engages the reader with its usage of "you-narration". This brief employment of the narrative choice draws readers to the story easily, while at the same time creating a bond. "You-narration", according to Richardson, has three categories: "standard," "hypothetical," and "autotelic" (2006, 18). Within his taxonomy, I place the brief you-narration in "Cedar Sings" into the

"standard" category. The narrative choice throughout the story mimics the oral storytelling tradition. After directly connecting with the reader rather than positioning them as a passive observer, "Can you see? No matter. They are there" (Maracle 2010, 69), the narrative maintains a third-person omniscient view and describes the events that Cedar and Raven experience. Through the omniscient narrator, the story connects cultural memory with ecological awareness, offering a hopeful vision of reconciling people with their environment that speaks to both Indigenous traditions and current environmental concerns. While the story may initially appear to be a simple fairytale, with its erratic characters and tone, this impression is quickly overturned by the deep sense of empathy it cultivates, drawing readers into a profound connection with its themes and narrative.

Another point regarding the narrative structure is the fluidity of the story. The first passage moves between the past and the present rather effortlessly, suggesting that time in the story is non-linear, which further reinforces the elements of Indigenous storytelling. In addition, the first passage of the story presents a historical contrast between pre-colonial Squamish territory, and its present-day use, highlighting the environmental and cultural changes throughout the years:

> Cedar Sings. She stands at the edge of Squamish territory, near Whistler Mountain before it was a ski resort, overlooking Howe Sound. This is the place where you can hear Raven sing, too. Today, the ancestors who inhabit the mountains between North Vancouver and Whistler are dancing—potlatch dancing. (Maracle 2010, 69)

This interchange of temporal fluidity and historical awareness reinforces the story's broader themes of resilience, continuity, and the impact of colonial and ecological change. Moreover, a crucial aspect of the story is its deep empathetic resonance that creates a connection between the reader and the narrative's exploration of loss.

The plot of the story follows a tree, Cedar, and Raven as they try to restore the once-strong connection between humans and the natural world. This once harmonious relationship has deteriorated over time. The story particularly focuses on the Squamish territory, reflecting on how even the Indigenous people of this region, who were historically deeply connected to nature, had lost their integrated and respectful relationship with their environment. Maracle uses her non-human characters to engage with modern environmental issues, emphasizing the necessity of restoring a more sustainable and respectful relationship with nature.

Cedar is a tree that lives on the West Coast. She lost most of her relatives due to the extreme logging on the coast. Cedar is an innocent figure who invokes the importance of the unity of all species. She also provokes empathy for non-humans. The other character, Raven, is the trickster figure of the coast who is a shapeshifter. With Cedar, they form a friendship that lasts more than many decades. "Raven can see Cedar having trouble getting anyone to hear her song. Not even the wind whistling through the trees is helping them to hear. Even the loud sounds coming from the bottom of the sea es-

cape[s] their attention" (69). Both non-human characters experience the loss of nature clearly and they are aware of the consequences even though humans are oblivious to climate change and the long-gone connection with nature and their environment. This theme is also supported by Löschnigg in *Green Matters,* she advocates that literature has a specific role to fulfill in the "cultural pact between past, present and future generations" and literature also embraces "more than human" or "non-human" as a being with its own distinctive features (2020, 24). The affective and emotive impact of the story functions proficiently due to its immersive depiction of the non-human world, evocative sensory details, and the narrative's ability to foster empathy toward nature's agency and experiences.

This relational dynamic between Cedar and Raven reflects what Kyle Whyte describes as the process of "renewing relatives," in which Indigenous communities sustain and recreate relationships of reciprocity between human and non-human beings as part of climate resilience (2017, 158). Seen in this light, Maracle's narrative transforms ecological mourning into a practice of renewal: Cedar's song and Raven's plan to reconnect humanity with the forest exemplify the restoration of relations that colonial disruption has fractured. Their alliance thus embodies an Indigenous ethic of continuity—repairing ancestral bonds while imagining new forms of ecological reciprocity

Cedar "sings to the few remaining giant cedars" (Maracle 2010, 73), which reflects the idea that past, present, and future are in fact connected. In their conversations, it is implied that both non-human figures have a sense of responsibility. They have their own duties on Earth, on account of other species. It is depicted in the story that technology causes humans to lose connection with nature. Cedar and Raven realize that even the Indigenous people no longer hear Cedar's singing or any other plant screams. Raven, because of her curiosity, watches TV once in a while. She saw on TV that humans now produced an amplifier so strong that they could even hear plants making sounds. Raven then comes up with a plan to stop logging and reconnect people with nature. It is ironic in the sense that Cedar and Raven try to be heard by people using technology which in the first place distanced them. Raven says, "Imagine their stereos amplifying the screams of a forest of cedar. It would drive them crazy, and the loggers would run out of the bush screaming in terror- you know" (2010, 74). Along the same lines, David S. Miall has suggested in "Affect and Narrative" that:

> [C]haracters' motives, rather than their traits, account for the affective engagement and self-projection of readers into characters, though it remains unclear when, and at which cues, readers' emotional self-involvement jump-starts the process of interpretation. (quoted in Keen 2006, 218)

In this story, in particular, emotional connection is created via Cedar's and Raven's combined attempt to save the planet, through their motives.

Among the short stories discussed, Maracle's story is particularly illustrative of the destructive impact of human activity on the planet. Additionally, its connection

to singing as an emotional and spiritual act adds depth to its themes. Through their conversation, the two central characters critically examine humanity's self-destructive tendencies, greed, possessiveness, and the erosion of spiritual connection to the natural world. Recognizing the urgent need for action, they devise a plan to reclaim agency in an effort to prevent the destruction of the forest, symbolizing a broader struggle for ecological and cultural preservation. Their effort further reinforces empathy, corresponding to what Keith Oatley suggests that as readers engage with literary works, they may find themselves identifying with the characters' goals and plans, leading to a sense of empathy and sympathy (1994, 53). These emotional responses, which are triggered by the reader's personal experiences, can be a significant factor in their connection to the characters and the narrative.

Pamela Banting emphasizes the importance of ecological knowledge as a means of resistance against environmental degradation. She asserts that understanding local ecosystems, such as plant life, water sources, food cultivation, and wildlife patterns, can foster resilience in the face of industrialization and globalization. As she states:

> Learning the flowers, the sources of one's energy and drinking water, how to grow food, the habits of bees and pine beetles, what is causing caribou populations to crash and also how that might affect local people's livelihoods and cultural practices, and what literature has been written about one's local watershed offers compelling, if partial, forms of resistance and resilience in the face of the environmental destruction incurred by development, industrialization, and globalization. (Banting 2016, 731)

This perspective highlights how both scientific and cultural knowledge of the environment plays a crucial role in preserving ecological and community well-being.

3. Closing Remarks

This paper has demonstrated how eco-stories redefine narrative structures by centering non-human perspectives, challenging conventional storytelling forms, and fostering a deeper empathetic engagement with the natural world. By shifting the focus from human characters to flora and fauna, these narratives undermine traditional anthropocentric hierarchies, positioning the environment as an active force rather than a passive setting. This inversion not only brings ecological concerns to the forefront but also urges readers to reconsider the agency of the non-human world in literature.

In each of the eco-stories, non-human focalization invites readers to experience ecological crises from perspectives that are typically marginalized, reinforcing the urgency of environmental responsibility. The emotional and affective dimensions of these narratives deepen their impact, demonstrating that literature is not merely a mirror of ecological realities but an instrument for shaping environmental consciousness. While each story presents a distinct narrative voice, together they articulate a shared

vision of interdependence between humanity and the environment, recognizing nature's personhood and agency.

These narratives move beyond elegy toward a vision of ethical responsiveness—acts of care, renewal, and relational repair that extend storytelling into lived practice. By foregrounding interdependence, they illustrate how the work of witnessing can become a form of pedagogy, how empathy fosters collective reflection, and how narrative art participates in shaping a broader ethics of ecological accountability. Their imperative is not merely to lament loss, but to imagine the reweaving of reciprocal bonds among humans, animals, and the land. In this way, the aesthetic innovations of these eco-stories operate as ethical interventions, revealing ecological storytelling itself as a sustained practice of care—one that keeps open the narrative and affective possibilities of survival, renewal, and shared responsibility.

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