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POSTHUMAN ECOCRITICISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how literature can expand ethical imagination in an age when ecological disruption challenges human-centered ways of thinking. Rather than repeating critiques of anthropocentrism, it focuses on how narrative form itself can open new pathways for care and responsibility across species and ecologies. The paper first outlines theoretical foundations: Cary Wolfe's challenge to human exceptionalism, Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality, and Deborah Bird Rose's ecological existentialism, all of which unsettle the human-nonhuman divide. It then considers ethical tensions in extending moral concern across species, contrasting rights-based approaches with relational ethics of care. It examines narrative and temporal challenges through Amitav Ghosh's reflection on literary form, Rob Nixon's idea of slow violence, and Heather Sullivan's trope of the dark pastoral. Lastly, it the paper turns to models for narrative ethics that foreground interdependence and collaborative survival, drawing on Anna Tsing's model of multispecies storytelling and Ursula K. Heise's notion of a sense of planet. Literature thus emerges not only as representation but as ecological praxis – expanding empathy, reshaping justice, and offering cultural imaginaries of care for more-than-human futures.

KEYWORDS: Anthropocene; Decentring; Multispecies; Kinship; Reciprocity.

1. INTRODUCTION

How can literature help us imagine a world beyond human dominance? In an age marked by resource depletion, geopolitical instability, and the risks of artificial intelligence – the so-called Anthropocene – scholars are exploring how literature and criticism might decentre “Man” and include the more-than-human world. Posthumanist ecocriticism, a growing field, challenges the traditional divide between Humanity and Nature. It raises questions such as: What philosophical and scientific insights undermine the idea of human exceptionalism? How can our ethical values and literary narratives grow to include the voices, needs, and relationships of nonhuman life? What problems arise when we extend moral care beyond our own species, and how can narrative form help connect short human lives to the slow pace of environmental change? Finally, what are the implications of this post-anthropocentric perspective for how we approach environmental ethics, education, and actions in the real world. By examining these issues, this paper explores key foundations of post human ecocriticism, addresses the challenges involved, and surveys how authors and critics are reimagining narrative and ethics within a multispecies perspective. The paper first traces the philosophical and scientific critiques of human exceptionalism, then considers tensions in ethics and narrative form, and finally examines multispecies storytelling as a model for ecological responsibility.

The term “Anthropocene”, popularised by Earth scientists, describes our current age, as one in which humans have become a planetary force, shaping the Earth system (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). It is a stark reminder that human history and natural history can no longer be separated. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty points out that with climate change, “the geologic now of the Anthropocene has become entangled with the now of human history” (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 212). In other words, events that once belonged to deep time – such as melting ice caps, ocean acidification, or mass extinctions – are now happening within a human lifetime. This shift has major cultural consequences. Amitav Ghosh argues that contemporary fiction has largely failed to grapple with such planetary-scale changes, treating climate disasters as “too wild” or unlikely for serious literature (Ghosh, 2016a). He notes that we now live in “a time when the world has become the norm”, yet many literary works, still treat environmental upheavals as mere backdrops or genre fiction (Ghosh, 2016a). Posthumanist ecocriticism takes up this challenge by urging that we reimagine the

human-environment relationship in our literature, ethics, and scholarly practices. Rather than viewing nature as a passive stage for human dramas, it calls for entangled storytelling that acknowledges humans as one strand in a web of life.

1.1. From Exceptionalism to Entanglement: Foundations of Posthuman Ecocriticism

Posthumanist ecocriticism begins by dismantling the Enlightenment-era idea of human exceptionalism – the belief that humans exist apart from an inert, utilitarian Nature. Cary Wolfe draws on recent research in animal cognition and communication to question long-standing claims of unique human abilities. For example, traits that are often considered as exclusively human – such as language syntax or abstract reasoning – are now observed in other species to surprising degrees (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 41-42). Wolfe notes that even Noam Chomsky’s linguistics, historically used to defend the uniqueness of human language, has shifted toward a “continuity hypothesis” that recognises significant overlap between animal and human communication (2010, pp. 41-42). He stresses that the ability to generate “an infinite range of expressions from a finite set of elements” – must be tested empirically rather than assumed on “premises of human exceptionalism” (Wolfe, 2010, p. 41). If birds can manipulate syntax or primates can show self-awareness, then the rigid boundary between human intellect and animal instinct collapses.

Wolfe’s point is not merely descriptive but ethical. If intelligence, self-reflection, and communication appear in many forms of life, then moral worth cannot be restricted to beings with human like capacities. To persist in that restriction is to cling to a humanist tradition of domination. For Wolfe, the task is to “disarticulate” the question of who counts as a subject from the traditional human/animal divide (Wolfe, 2010, p. 41). Nonhumans, too, display “heterogeneous sets of mental tools, complexly and dynamically put together” through evolutionary and developmental interactions (Wolfe, 2010, p. 41). This insight shapes how we approach literature. If humans are not the only subjects, then narratives that erase or reduce nonhuman life to a backdrop merely reinforce an outdated worldview. Instead, literature must consider nonhuman agency – depicting animals, environments, and other species as actors in their own right. In this sense, Wolfe’s argument pushes us to reimagine narratives that reflect evolutionary continuity, cognitive plurality, and multispecies entanglement, rather than ones that depict humans as master over nature.

While Wolfe draws on cognitive science to dismantle human exclusivity, Stacy Alaimo uses environmental science to dissolve the boundary between human bodies and nature. She proposes the concept of “trans-corporeality”, defined as “the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from ‘nature’ or ‘environment’” (Alaimo, 2016, p. 238). Human bodies are not closed systems; they are in constant material exchange with their surroundings through processes like breathing, eating, or absorbing chemicals. In this sense, the environment becomes part of us, and we in turn become part of it. Alaimo stresses that nature is “as close as one’s own skin – perhaps even closer” (2016, p. 238). This perspective radically reframes environmental crisis. Pollution and climate change are not “out there” problems but intimate matters of bodily health: toxins in a city’s water supply circulate in its residents’ bloodstreams; microplastics enter our flesh through the food chain; and viruses jump across species. Once we recognise that “the corporeal substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from the environment” (Alaimo, 2016, p. 238), it becomes clear that questions of justice and survival must extend across species and ecologies. For literature, the challenge is to narrate this interdependence – to reveal how our bodies and environment constantly interact. In other words, to show how human life is always shaped by nonhuman forces: microbes, chemicals, animals, and ecosystems. In this sense, Alaimo adds a somatic dimension to posthumanist ecocriticism. Just as Wolfe urges us to reconsider the boundary of thought, Alaimo compels us to rethink the boundary of flesh – both demanding an understanding that humans are not sealed-off selves but entangled beings living in constant exchange with their environments.

From another cultural angle, Deborah Bird Rose deepens the theme of interconnection by drawing on Indigenous ecological knowledge. Writing in dialogue with Australian Aboriginal traditions, she shows how Western humanism’s belief in human separateness is profoundly misguided. She cites ecologist Gregory Bateson’s assertion that the “unit of survival is not the individual or the species, but the organism-and-its-environment” (Rose, 2011, p. 49). In other words, no creature survives alone; life is always a collective and relational process. A species that destroys its environment is ultimately destroying itself. Rose describes humans as part of “entangled generations of Earth life” – inseparable from land, animals, and ancestors (Rose, 2011, p. 50). Her idea of “kinship modality” reframes life as a

matter of reciprocity and shared vulnerability, calling for humility, care, and responsibility instead of human dominance. This vision – what she terms as “ecological existentialism” (Rose, 2011, p. 2) – encourages literature that highlights Indigenous voices, explores human-nonhuman kinship, and emphasises the ethical responsibility of living with respect for earth’s interwoven systems. In practical terms, Rose’s insights also point toward narratives that highlight holistic land stewardship and movements advocating the rights of nature, which arise from seeing nature as a community of relatives rather than a stockpile of resources.

While Wolfe, Alaimo, and Rose lay theoretical foundations, Heather I. Sullivan shows how these ideas demand new narrative approaches. She argues that classic literary genres like the pastoral – idyllic depictions of humans living in harmony with a benevolent nature – no longer captures the ecological realities in the Anthropocene (Sullivan, 2017, p. 26). Her concept of the “dark pastoral” exposes the toxic underside of modern landscapes (Sullivan, 2017). Today’s countryside often conceals pesticides, monocultures, and pollution, while humans themselves have become a geological force, altering soil, climate, and ecosystems with fossil-fueled technology (Sullivan, 2017, pp. 25-26). In *The Dark Pastoral*, even a green field can hide toxins beneath its soil. Sullivan argues that criticism must “attend to the human cultural imagination” to uncover these hidden costs (2017, p. 25). Our stories often gloss over the power structures behind beautiful landscapes – for example, a rainforest documentary may ignore the nearby land cleared for mining to supply materials for our smart phones. Posthumanist ecocriticism, following Sullivan, instead tells the full story linking local pastoral scenes to global networks of capital and industry. In this way, the dark pastoral becomes a tool for exposing how even our images of “nature” are entangled with colonial histories and human industry. Contemporary climate fiction (“cli-fi”) and eco-dystopian films often adopt this mode, blending natural beauty with ecological catastrophe to foster environmental awareness.

Anna Tsing offers an example of how to tell new entangles stories. Her ethnography *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015) follows matsutake mushrooms across forests and markets exploring how these fungi thrive in human-disturbed forests. She talks about “multispecies storytelling”, where humans are not necessarily the sole protagonist (Tsing, 2015, p. x). She coins the term “third nature” to describe life that emerges in the ruins of capitalist exploitation (2015, p. viii). Even in the landscapes

damaged by logging or mining, organisms like matsutake, rats, or weeds create new assemblages of life. She notes that despite humanity's attempt at "taming and mastering" nature "we find mushrooms and other species thriving in those very ruins" (2015, p. vii).

Rejecting grand narratives of progress or doom, Tsing crafts "a riot of short chapters" that form "an open-ended assemblage, not a logical machine" (2015, p. viii). This non-linear form mirrors fungal spores that sprout unpredictably. She describes mycorrhizal webs as an underground city where agency is diffused: not a single hero but a network of fungi, trees, and soil (p. xi). Matsutake thrive only in human-disturbed forests, symbolising entanglement. They endure our environmental messes yet nurture trees, showing "one kind of collaborative survival" (2015, p. 4). For posthumanist ecocriticism, this demonstrates how narratives can foreground nonhuman protagonists without romanticising them. The matsutake is not just a symbol or resource but an ecological and economic actor, linking Japanese consumers to Oregon forests. Tsing's concept of "collaborative survival" captures a posthuman ethic: survival in the Anthropocene will depend on how humans interact with other species amid precarity (Tsing, 2015, p. 20).

Across these thinkers, a shared theme is entangled becoming. Posthumanist ecocriticism holds that humans are always becoming-with-others – be they animals, plants, fungi, or technological and geological processes. Wolfe (2010) suggests that any rigid boundary setting "Human" apart is both scientifically untenable and ethically limiting. Rose (2011) and Alaimo (2016) remind us that we are materially and spiritually enmeshed in landscapes and communities of life. Sullivan (2017) and Tsing (2015) show that even our cultural narratives and economic systems are infused with nonhuman agencies – whether as hidden pollution or as lively collaborators. Summarising this shift, Chakrabarty (2009, p. 213) writes that to grasp climate change we need an imagination that combines "planetary and global; deep and recorded histories, species thinking and critiques of capital". In effect, we need a new kind of imagination – one that is capable of holding human and nonhuman timelines, values, and perspectives together.

However, as the next section shows, expanding beyond anthropocentrism is not without challenges – ethical, narrative, and political. As Rosi Braidotti suggests, this move is a shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism or zoe-centrism (2013, p. 50) – an outlook that values life as a whole, not just human

life. This raises difficult questions: if humans are no longer at the centre by default, how should we balance our ethical priorities? Who can speak for nonhumans, and how do we handle conflicts between human needs and those of ecosystems? The paper now turns to these and other challenges that posthumanist ecocritics grapple with as they seek to enrich our moral and narrative imagination.

1.2. Critical Tensions: Between Expansion and Ethical Grounding

Expanding the ethical circle to include animals, plants, or even ecosystems is inspiring, but it raises difficult tensions. One issue is how to balance the breadth of moral concern and with the need for solid ethical grounding. Posthumanist ecocriticism wants us to care about the nonhuman world but our inherited moral philosophies fail when stretched too far. Wolfe (2010) critiques the limits of traditional liberal humanism and its rights-based framework in this regard. Thinkers like Peter Singer and Martha Nussbaum argue for extending rights to animals on the basis that any sentient creature deserves moral consideration. But Wolfe warns that simply adding nonhumans into a human-centered model still reinforces anthropocentrism – it measures them by human qualities, like intelligence or the capacity to suffer, and does not necessarily prevent their exploitation (2010, p. 45). Instead, he suggests a foundation based on vulnerability and compassion.

Building on Nussbaum and Cora Diamond, Wolfe argues that our awareness of injustice comes from understanding our own vulnerabilities and seeing them in others (Wolfe, 2010, p. 62). In a multispecies framework, this means seeing that a pig or a dolphin can suffer isolation or fear – as much as we do – even if they lack human speech or legal personhood. Such awareness leads not to abstract rules but to empathy.

Thus, one response to this ethical tension is a relational ethics of care: emphasising empathy, responsibility, and interdependence over strict rules.

Building on Rose's (2011) work, we see a shift from thinking mainly about rights to asking how humans and nonhumans can share the world and live together. The focus becomes how to live with care and mutual respect, rather than only on abstract ideas of entitlement. Yet, questions remain: Can empathy extend to radically different others (like insects, or rivers)? How do we balance care for humans and non-humans, especially when they clash (as in debates over wildlife conservation versus local livelihoods)? We might value a forest as alive and worthy – but if a community depends on logging, then what? Posthumanist thought reframes this

tension: ethical “standing” is not a black-and-white matter of who has rights, but a context-dependent matter of relationships and responsibilities. It asks us to cultivate an ethics of situated negotiation – which means to acknowledge both human and non-human needs and working towards creative solutions (for example, sustainable forestry, community co-management of land, etc). This remains a challenging project, and critics struggle with issue of moral paralysis – the fear that caring for everything leads to caring effectively for nothing.

A second tension is narrative and temporal. Human cultures have evolved to tell certain kinds of stories – typically ones that are human-centred and unfolding over human timescales. Today’s environmental crises occur on vastly different scales – climate change unfolds over centuries and affects the entire planet; extinctions are permanent on a geological timescale; and pollutants like microplastic accumulate slowly. As Amitav Ghosh (2016b) observes, the modern realist novel is ill-suited to depict climate change: such events seem implausible or “hyperobjective”. For example, Ghosh recounts a freak tornado in Delhi that was dramatic yet unimaginable in a realist novel, as if climate were alien. He writes, “it is as though, in the literary imagination, climate change was akin to extra-terrestrials or interplanetary travel” – completely outside the worldly realm (Ghosh, 2016b).

This temporal dissonance creates tensions: ecocritics know that ecological harm is often “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011, p. 2), yet narrative demands urgency. This pressure has pushed writers to experiment with form and genre, turning to science or speculative fiction to handle vast timespans, or adopting fragmentation, multiple perspectives, and non-linear structures to mimic environmental processes. For instance, Richard Powers’ novel *The Overstory* (2018) tells the story of trees and humans spanning centuries and Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour* (2012) links a small Appalachian community to butterfly migrations disrupted by climate change. These works push the limits of storytelling, bridging human “story time” with Earth’s deep time through their narratives.

Another aspect of this challenge is the visibility of slow violence. For instance, a toxic chemical leak in a river may poison communities for decades, or deforestation in one region may contribute to climate changes thousands of kilometres away. Our moral alarms respond to explosions or hurricanes, but not to creeping threats like rising sea levels and soil salinisation (Nixon, 2011). Posthumanist critics seek new modes of witness: for instance, Nigerian writer

Ken Saro-Wiwa turned years of Oil poisoning in Ogoniland into an international cause through his literature and activism (Farbstein, 2015). These efforts show how narrative can make slow violence visible and urgent.

On the theoretical side, Dipesh Chakrabarty highlights a key tension between “the global” and “the planetary” – between human history and Earth system history (2009, p. 213). Environmental humanities must bring these together. The social sciences focus on globalisation, economy, and power, largely within human affairs and injustice, while Earth system science shows humans as just one species capable of mass extinction. To confront climate change, we need both views: the Anthropocene as a product of industrial capitalism (with its inequities and power imbalances) and as a condition where humans act as a geological force (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 221). The challenge is to think of humans as a species shaping the planet without ignoring inequalities – for example, recognising that a farmer’s emissions are not the same as a billionaire. Terms like “Capitalocene” (Moore, 2017) highlight that specific historical and economic systems, not all humanity per se, drive ecological crisis. Still, the idea of the Anthropocene is important as it reminds us that human history is incomplete without non-human forces and deep-time consequences.

Another tension lies between Western frameworks and Indigenous or animistic worldviews. Posthumanist ecocriticism often turn to non-western traditions that emphasise human-nature continuity. These insights are powerful, but they can be misunderstood if taken out of context. Indigenous ethics are place-based, grounded in practices, obligations, and stories (Rose, 2011). Translating such ethics into policy is complex: for example, Colombia’s Constitutional Court recognised the Atrato river as a legal subject, but it had to appoint local communities and state institutions as guardians to represent it. Ecocritics support such movements while warning against romanisation or misuse (Sciences Po CERI, 2025).

A final tension lies between idealism and realism. On one hand, idealism imagines a world where humans respect all forms of life; on the other, realism stresses the urgent need for practical measures – such as reducing carbon emissions, preventing poaching, or adapting cities to heat waves – that must also be feasible and just. Posthumanist ecocriticism cannot solve these issues on its own, but it can influence our hearts and minds, which in turn can shape values and policies. The narrative ethic it offers broaden how we think about ethics and literature, but it also

requires us to navigate tensions: extending care to all beings while still making practical decisions; recognising slow forms of environmental damage without losing a sense of urgency; acknowledging humanity's collective impact on the planet while also addressing unequal responsibility; and learning from Indigenous insights without misusing them. These tensions are not barriers but opportunities that help ecocriticism grow. Living in an interconnected world requires balance, humility and openness; as Rose (2011, p. 51) remind us, even the simple acceptance of "I do not know" can itself be an ethical stance for a shared life. While these tensions highlight the limits of existing ethical frameworks and narrative forms, new approaches are emerging that embody posthumanist principles more directly.

1.3. Multispecies Entanglements in Environmental Narratives

If posthumanist ecocriticism shows why humans cannot be imagined apart from the web of life, then multispecies narratives demonstrate how these entanglements can be lived and told. They refuse to cast humans as sole protagonists, instead depicting forests, rivers, animals, and even infrastructure as co-actors. Such narrative ethics values collaboration and response-ability across species (Haraway, as cited in Tsing, 2015), making visible how life persists even in damaged landscapes. A pressing example is the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove delta, where human communities, tigers, and tides have long coexisted in a fragile balance. Climate change is now disrupting this co-existence: rising seas and intensifying cyclones submerge villages, salinate soils, and force residents to migrate, while simultaneously threatening wildlife. As Amitav Ghosh (2016b) highlights in *The Great Derangement*, such events strain limits of conventional storytelling, which struggles to capture planetary forces and multispecies fates. His novel *The Hungry Tide* (Ghosh, 2004), exemplifies an alternative approach, weaving together the perspective of fisherman, refugees, dolphins, and storms, to broaden the circle of empathy beyond the human and to render the landscape itself a protagonist.

Another instance of multispecies entanglement is Indonesia's rainforests, where deforestation for palm oil and timber leads to catastrophic losses – orangutan extinction, Indigenous displacement, carbon emissions, and destruction of local cultures (Animal Welfare Institute, 2011). Such destruction is gradual and difficult to trace, yet writers and activists have begun to narrate the commodity chain from plantation clearances to consumer products,

revealing how global readers' actions are entangled with local ecological and cultural unravelling. These narratives challenge the invisibility of slow violence and insist that global readers recognise their ethical ties to distant lives.

Indigenous and multispecies perspectives further enrich narrative ethics with models of reciprocity and kinship. Rose, drawing on her work with Aboriginal Australians, develops what she calls an "ethics of story" where people are responsible not only to each other but also to nonhumans (2011, p. 14). In her book *Wild Dog Dreaming* she recounts an elder, Mr Johnson explained that being a good neighbour in country means "telling on and on...that same rolling" – meaning keeping stories in motion – continuously passed from one group to another across the land (2011, p. 14). These flowing stories, carried through "songlines", preserve relationships with people, animals, plants, and landscapes, showing that storytelling itself is a form of care and responsibility. For Rose, this practice reflects an obligation to responds to the presence of other – whether human or more-than-human – by sustaining their stories so they are not silenced (2011, p. 133). She extends, Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of ethics, which centres on the call of the human Other, to ask: what if that call comes from a bird's song or a dingo's howl? (Rose, 2011, p. 103). In this sense, narrative becomes a medium that gives voice to the animal Other, making ethical relations possible. Her chapter titled "What If the Angels of History Were a Dog?" symbolically rewrites the philosopher Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" as a dog watching extinctions makes this shift concrete, urging readers to see history and loss through a nonhuman perspective (Rose, 2011, p. 82). Her approach shows that posthuman ethics is not only about widening the circle of whose stories are told but also about treating storytelling itself as an ethical act.

In sum, narratives of multispecies entanglement – from mushrooms to tigers to dingoes – show the ethical potential of storytelling that recognises human and nonhuman life as bound together. By linking global crises and local struggles, they expand empathy and accountability beyond the human. Such narratives also open new ways of writing that are better suited to the challenges of the Anthropocene. As Heather Sullivan asks, "what stories can contain this contrast?" (2017, p. 27) – the extremes of human power and powerlessness. The answer lies in stories that accept paradox, highlight independence, and give space to voices at the margins of human drama.

1.4. Towards A Narrative Ethics Beyond the Human

The implications of the posthumanist narrative approach are far-reaching: it reshapes ecocritical practice, influences environmental education, and inspires new forms of storytelling. Non-anthropocentric frameworks encourage us to rethink whose perspectives and values matter in environmental narratives. As Wolfe argues, posthumanist thought requires “reconfiguring what philosophy (or ‘theory’) is” by “rethinking the...‘distribution of subjectivity’ across species lines” (2010, p. 125) – in another words, letting go of the idea that humans are the only speaking subjects or moral agents. Ecocritics thus seek to “decentre” the humans not by denying them agency, but by situating it within a web of agencies (animal, technological, ecological). This does not marginalise humans; rather, it relocates us within a wider community of life. By questioning the hidden hierarchy that privileges human voices, these narratives promote a more balanced way of thinking about all forms of life.

In practical terms, a narrative ethic of entangled lives reshapes how we interpret and teach environmental stories. Environmental education can emphasise connection and reciprocity instead of separation. As noted above, Alaimo’s concept of “trans-corporeality” reminds us that what happens “out there” – pollution, climate change – also happens within our bodies (2016, p. 238). Similarly, Ursula Heise’s call for a “sense of planet” urges us to see how daily life is tied to global ecological, cultural, and economic networks (Heise 2008, pp. 55, 61, quoted in Alaimo 2010, p. 16). For educators, this means linking local experiences – like a poem about polluted water – to larger planetary processes, showing students how their own lives are connected to distant environments and species. Such storytelling fosters empathy, responsibility, and a deeper awareness of our place in a multispecies world. Environmental humanities scholars stress that weaving together science, culture, and ethics is crucial if we want to imagine a sustainable future, since science alone cannot drive change. Therefore, posthuman narrative ethics becomes a powerful teaching tool: it uses storytelling to make our interconnectedness clear and relatable.

Lastly, a posthuman narrative ethics also shapes environmental activism and policy by providing cultural narratives that drive change. Narratives of entangled lives carry an implicit call for justice. As Chakrabarty (2009, p. 208) notes, “the mansion of modern freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil fuel use” – our democratic institutions, industries, and lifestyles have been enabled by carbon energy, with all its attendant ecological costs.

A narrative ethic for the Anthropocene, then, must reckon with this moral irony. It must probe our cherished ideals of freedom, progress, and security, and ask how they can be reimagined in a post-fossil future. Speculative and activist storytelling is already working in this direction, imagining futures where societies adopt sustainable practices, or offering cautionary tales if old patterns of abuse persist. These narratives keep both human and nonhuman needs in focus, rejecting the idea that we must choose one over the other. In practice, this means telling stories that neither idealise nor surrender to despair, but instead honestly confront the damage while leaving space for repair.

In the environmental humanities, this balance is seen as key to inspiring action, helping people grasp the scale of the crisis while also believing in the power of collective response. A posthuman narrative ethic supports this by showing humans not as omnipotent masters, but as one powerful species among many – capable of destruction, but also of care, creativity, and ethical responsibility toward the more-than-human world. Through education, criticism, and art – this approach is slowly reshaping how we imagine and respond to the environmental challenges of our time.

2. CONCLUSION

Therefore, reframing culture to include more-than-human perspectives transforms not only literature, but also our collective outlook. When we imagine forest, rivers, and other beings as co-actors in narratives, writers and thinkers instill humility and a sense of shared destiny. As Braidotti (2013) describes, a zoe-centred ethic reframes humanity’s role from controller to co-actor within the ecology. In this light, storytelling becomes a form of ecological praxis. By connecting human dramas with planetary processes, literature expands our understanding of justice and care (Chakrabarty 2009; Nixon 2011). Such narratives are crucial as they foster a “planetary consciousness”, linking local experiences to global ecosystems (Heise 2008). By blending science with human values, they invite readers to face complexity rather than retreat into despair.

Looking forward, this approach invites interdisciplinary collaboration and new media in storytelling, while reminding us to stay vigilant about anthropomorphic bias. These narrative changes have concrete implications: they inspire by granting rivers or forests legal personhood; and they reveal hidden connections between environmental change and social justice, thus mobilising collective action. Reframing our ideals of progress with

ecological limits guides towards more equitable practices, while acknowledging uncertainty reflects an ethical openness (Rose, 2011). By sharing stories that include all beings, we begin to lay the groundwork for a sustainable and just world.

Ultimately, posthumanist ecocriticism asks us not just to tell new stories, but to live them – through everyday acts of justice, care, and creativity that honour the entangled lives we share with other beings.

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“We are brothers and sisters of the world. Doesn’t matter if you are a bird, snake, fish, kangaroo: One Red Blood.” David Gulpilil (qtd in Rose, 2011, p. 4).

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