

Climate Change and the Animal Kingdom: Responses to A Warming World

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the impact of climate change on animalization. In analyzing various texts it reveals a theme; the concern of climate change and its effects on animals and their eco systems. Drawing from this review of key literature, the paper demonstrates that a shift in narrative focalisation -from an anthropocentric point of focalisation to an ecologically centred one- is evident, highlighting how literature offers a way toward enabling and enacting more imaginative ecological engagement.

Keywords: Animal Kingdom, Climate Change, Anthropocene, Warming World, Overstory

Introduction

Climate change has been acknowledged as one of the most critical and widespread global challenges, associated with higher temperatures, changes in seasonal patterns and more frequent extreme weather events. With the slow accretion of scientific data confirming the wide-ranging effects and impacts that climate change is having on biosphere we are familiar with; it should come as no surprise that these themes have been prominently expressed in literature for several years now. In the wake of environmental upheavals tied to climate change, literature has followed suit in subtly charting shifts occurring very close by — on burgeoning or sinking animal populations and their habitats. In this paper, we go into the effects through how modern literature presents them on nature and wildlife. It looks at the ways in which climate change narratives work to express these anxieties, and imperatives while connecting broader social issues with a range of environmentalist positions. This article traces the shift in narrative perspectives from focus on humans to a more ecologically inclusive perspective with respect to some of major literary texts.

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In literature we usually call the consequences of global warming as climate change, but essentially it is not only about changing weather patterns; it's also to do with animals — how they are suffering and coping up in this condition. It was an effective trick, with which the impact of climate change could be brought to the reader by giving enough meat to hold while lowering directly into his close heart's flesh Literature serves as an anthropomorphism and offers symbolic representations for understanding the changing destinies of animals due to climate shifts. The most important change that can be noted in contemporary literary texts is from anthropocentric narratives to ecocentrism which underlines the unity of all life forms. This shift in orientation indicates a greater appreciation for life other than human and an understanding of how the balance of ecosystems are dependent on animal populations being healthy.

Novels and stories about climate change capture these risks and losses in animal homes, showing how environmental changes affect animals as well has habitat to show us the more global consequences of climatic shifts. If we think about, say a bird migration of species it likes to follow on its way this is much more global in proportion showing what has been happening for quite some time now with natural habitats/ the harmony between humans and nature being disturbed due human driven change. Literature has the invaluable power to raise awareness and catalyse action by bringing these issues into public discourse.

Literature also acts as a podium to foster understanding of environmental problems. Literature, a medium that can instil reading on grant-morality and familiarize readers with the same, engenders empathy and causes people to think...encourages moral accountability for this world. Literature, for its part in tackling the emotional and existential aspects of climate change helps shape a larger conversation about environment ethics ad desired sustainable behaviors.

Literature Review

The formal name is Anthropocene and refers to the current geological age of human impact on Earth's climate, environment. The culture of this age has not rooted on the fact, that natural processes are no longer characteristic drivers for environmental change and has established ideas to be replaced with a new paradigm: one where human action dominate. The Anthropocene is that story extended over the entire planet, on a scale and with ramifications quite beyond conventional forms of fiction.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most influential intellectuals in his book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) who problematizes contemporary literature's ability to deal with deep transformational processes within humanities. Traditional literary forms, in Ghosh's view, are unable to cope with the scale of climate change or its urgency—a fact that requires a new approach for narrative. He suggests that the Anthropocene is a plot crisis because it features events and processes unsuited to existing genres of narrative or character development. Climate change itself is a dauntingly complex phenomenon, moving slowly at the scale of centuries even as environmental events become more frequent and extreme (or both), shaped by innumerable and difficult to decompose interacting pieces that involve not just human systems but also non-human ones — meanwhile literature develops narratives precisely because they are composed of threads.

Ghosh demands something else: a new and urgent kind of literature, which will be able to respond adequately to the exasperations caused by hyper-modernity on natural systems and determine nothing but mutual fears. A new literature is necessary, he states a number of times; one that does not just represent the devastated surfaces of climate change but considers more broadly what human primacy over earth actually means. Literature itself needs to be mechanized in order to help us learn how better we may address and engage with the existential threats posed by the Anthropocene.

As the Anthropocene continues to be written into reality, literature is also rendering it legible by exploring some of its most pressing themes — how different human realities intersect with and impinge on nonhuman ones (and vice versa), how they are at once continuous and discontinuous in shaping worlds today. Recent books by writers like Barry Lopez and Rachel Love Nuwer describe how climate change is transforming animal lives, underlining the essential connection between all life in an era of environmental peril. Perhaps the best example of this comes from Richard Powers, and his epic novel *The Overstory* (2018) which tells multiple human stories as well pinning them to complex tree life-cycles. Powers' book depicts a great mutualism of human and non-human life culminating in one cannot prosper or suffer without the other.

In *The Overstory*, trees are characters in their own right, quietly repeating life spans that dwarf the blundering lengths of our human lives. The book argues that, even as human activity increasingly becomes the most prominent and immediate driver of environmental

transformation in our world today, so-called nonhuman forms of life — such as trees – remain vital participants in understanding changing socio-ecological conditions. In this work, Powers depicts trees as intelligent actors in the drama of time and provides insight into human struggle against plant resilience. This transition to a more ecocentric from an earlier anthropocentric outlook mirrors the wider body of literary responses towards the Anthropocene, as regards non-human actors ever gain greater prominence and agency in ecological transformation.

In the *Overstory*, Powers suggests that literature can be important in changing how we perceive our relationship to nature; novels like his could help readers see themselves as included within an ecological continuum rather than outside of (or above) it. Amonoo, Powers' novel's portrayal of the deep interconnections between humans and trees reminds us oh so powerfully what happens when we break these bonds. In doing so, Powers' work serves to illustrate the type of narrative Ghosh envisions: A literature in tune with the specifics about how we live today—laundry-detergent algorithms and all—that is able not only to name these challenges at a time when they are more urgent than ever but also convey their enormity. Ghosh and Powers together represent a larger literary trend addressing the narrative calls lost in translation by the Anthropocene. They call for stories that do more than just depict the scale and complexity of climate change; they ask to be a prompt toward reconsidering humanity's place in nature. In allowing us to see outside of the limitations created by our human-centric thinking, these authors help contribute to a larger cultural movement towards understanding that all life is connected and we are in this together for better or worse.

Observations

1. Climate Change and Animal Representation

For some time, animals have been owned as players in this broader environmental iconography — potent symbols that can be called upon to illustrate the impact of climate change on nature. In Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*, we see the same pattern with a species of monarch butterflies displaced by changing climate. Migrating animals that would normally end up in Mexico have made their way to the Appalachian Mountains instead, because of unseasonably hot temperatures. This is not simply a metaphor about muddling through but, ultimately, sadness at the consequences of climate change — for both butterflies and humans alike. Kingsolver draws a parallel to the changes in the pattern of weather, which forces species to adapt to new, mostly inhospitable environments, or face the grim prospect of extinction.

Precariously, the novel balances ecosystems that, in any climate change scenario, have become increasingly threatened. This is a way of Kingsolver advocating that one become more aware of the ecological effects of climate change and impressing upon society that adaptation and conservation are urgently needed to protect these species and ecosystems from further harm.

Complementing Kingsolver's approach, Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* gives another turn regarding how human conduct is inextricably linked with the fate of wildlife. Abbey's novel focuses on a group of environmental activists who resort to direct action, even to the extent of sabotage, to prevent the ravaging of the natural world. While their interactions with wildlife and radical environmental acts of defence on one hand, comments about the ethical dilemmas or practical challenges associated with environmental activism on the other. Abbey utilizes the narrative to drive the grim realities of environmental degradation most importantly the devastating impact of industrial development on animal habitats to the readers' immediate and personal attention. The novel is a discourse on moral ambiguities involved in battling to save nature and raises very pertinent questions on how far to go to save the environment. Abbey accounts for such activists by giving a reason—an urgent need of deeper ethical commitment to the protection of wildlife through exposing complexities and moral imperatives of environmental stewardship in the face of relentless human encroachment.

Anthropomorphism is another powerful literary device that involves giving animal characters human characteristics, which has been employed by authors to narrate both the emotional and existential impacts of climate change. By allowing such a device, writers can get more relatable and emotionally resonant depictions of the struggles faced by animals in a changing world. Rebecca Alexander does this and then some, deploy ants for anthropomorphic elephants as vivarium of loss in a time of post-environmental apocalypse. Alexander's elephants, in her telling, are just much more than animals; they are personified with human-like traits and human sentiment, thusly making their plight more relatable and palatable for readers. Alexander adds an emotionally impactful twist to the fable by using anthropomorphism on the elephants or giving them human emotions like ours so that we feel for their story as if they were people too. The anthropomorphised elephants symbolise many broader implications of the trouble we face as a species: loss of home, struggle to survive and this sense deep flight which seems commiserable with an environment moving too fast. In this metaphor, Alexander creates a saga of pathos paralleling the broader environmental catastrophes many species face, encouraging the readers to ponder their own role in the ongoing struggle for ecological preservation.

Similarly, Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* uses anthropomorphic birds as a storytelling device to describe the psychic and existential dimensions of climate change. In Murakami's novel, these birds are iconic foils to the inner turmoil of the protagonist, Toru Okada, and reflections of the general ecological issues at work. The birds in Murakami's story are not background characters; rather, they find a deep interrelation with the narrative threading human emotions and the natural world together. It's through the interactions between Toru and the birds that an idea of connectedness between human and nonhuman experiences forces to the front that the psychological effects of climate change occur not solely in humans. The novel broaches the idea that the existential fears environmental degradation triggers are not confined to humanity but also extend to the animal realm as well. It is through these anthropomorphic birds that Murakami examines the intricate relations between humans and nature, going so far as to propose that the fate of the former depends much upon that of the latter. By walking a thin line between the logics of human and animal experience, Murakami presses the idea that the premise of shared vulnerability in the face of environmental change encourages readers to consider broader implications for action within a natural world.

2. Environmental Justice and Animal Rights

Works of environmental literature often intersect with moral concerns about animal rights and climate justice, offering powerful critiques of human activities that harm the natural world. These stories are not merely relics of environmental destruction; they question the morality of our treatment with nature, working to underscore potential ends for unbridled technological and economic growth.

Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, published in 2003, is a seminal work of dystopian fiction that tries to paint in graphic detail the implications of genetic modification and environmental degradation. It graphically describes a world wherein the hubris of humanity has brought it face to face with a future desolate, where the untrammelled pursuit of technological advancement and profit has come to mean the exploitation and possible extinction of many species. Through Atwood's narrative comes a rebuke of one's moral failings within a society that chooses progress at the expense of the salvation of nature. The novel shows genetic engineering gone awry—a doomsday warning of a nature that, in the immediate future, will be tampered with, heedless of the consequences. Through species extinction and ecosystem collapse, *Oryx and Crake* indicate the ecological tightrope between human beings and the

natural environment and the catastrophic consequences that could be expected when this is broken. Atwood, 2003. In *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, Rachel Carson laid foundational environmental literature for the modern environmental movement. Carson's work offers, perhaps for the first time, a scathing critique of industrial practices in general and the indiscriminate use of pesticides and their devastating impacts upon wildlife and ecosystems. Her painstaking record of what actually happens to birds, insects, and other forms of life as a result of pesticides amounts to a powerful call for reconsideration of the ethical dimensions of environmental policy. Carson's evocative, scientifically founded prose served to do much more than raise the alarm on chemical pollutants; through it, readers were forced to confront the implications of humanity's efforts at dominance over nature. By focusing on the web-like nature of life, *Silent Spring* makes a case for conservation of animal welfare and ecological balance as an ethical duty.

Indigenous literature makes a profoundly important contribution to the discussion of climate change and its relationship to animals, fusing traditional ecological knowledge with contemporary environmental concerns. Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* gives insight into Indigenous perspectives on environmental stewardship and the impact of climate change on traditional ways of life. Alexie's novel is the story of one young Native American boy's life, but in a larger perspective, it becomes an important hub through which some ecological balance and the humans' relationship with nature are set aside and even denied. The novel presents a world perspective wherein environmental health is interrelated to human community health and where harmony with nature has been paramount. This perspective points out a long-settled cultural practice of living harmoniously and having respect for all life, sharply in contrast to the exploitative attitude that dominates most of the climate change discourse in the Western world.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) is a deep exploration of the human relationship with the natural world by weaving scientific knowledge with indigenous wisdom. A trained botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation herself, Kimmerer speaks from the intersection of Western science and Indigenous traditions' wisdom. *Braiding Sweetgrass* is her advocacy for a more reciprocal relationship with the environment—one that recognizes the intrinsic value of all beings and one whereby human work out how to live in harmony with nature. Kimmerer talks about Indigenous ways, such as an "Honorable Harvest," where people take only their need from the environment and give back to it in return for its

continuance of life. This is an ethic of reciprocity that challenges the dominant consumerist culture to urge a much more cyclical and respectful way of managing environments. Braiding indigenous stories, science, and spiritualities, Kimmerer makes a powerful case for reimagining human relationships with the natural world and offers one vision for environmental stewardship that is at once profoundly ethical and profoundly hopeful. Kimmerer 2013.

These literatures not only represent the ecological devastation wrought by climate change but also each, in their own particular way, presses its readers to deeply consider what moral imperatives attach to Earth stewardship. They stress the need to recast environmental policy in a more reflective and responsible form, one that is sensitive both to the needs of all species, not just humankind, and sensitive to the health of the planet in the longest of terms. In combining narrative with ethical inquiry in this manner, these authors add to a growing body of literature meant to inspire action and foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms.³ The Significance of Intellectual Works in Climate Promoting

Literature can be an excellent platform for bringing out the huge shift in climate affecting the entire animal kingdom. Through developed narratives and evocative descriptions, various works of literature like Richard Powers' *The Overstory* have hosted the call towards a far more ecologically aware reader. The book by Powers is not mere fiction, but a complex web connecting the human lives with the lives of trees and, by extension, with the fate of the greater environment. It is in the articulation of the natural world and the dire consequences that human activities have on it that the novel shockingly intends to make its readers believe in the seriousness of ecological disasters. The literature does much more than inform but obliges readers to sympathize with a non-human world, probably stirring them into action with regard to these environmental crises.

The Overstory puts a face and form to the rapid-environmental-change problems that animals and plants are going through everywhere through storytelling, which gives this generally abstract notion of climate change a meaningful, heartfelt resonance. Making the natural world's struggles the forefront of the narrative, Powers helps readers grasp the interconnection of all forms of life and how critical, destructive, or salvaging the role is of humans in regard to environmental destruction. This increased awareness perhaps would spur them into further activity on behalf of the environment, as literature has that singular ability to translate scientific data and environmental statistics into stories that reach people on a personal level. The

Uninhabitable Earth by David Wallace-Wells strikes a more direct approach in portraying the grim truth regarding climate change in stark, unflinching detail. Wallace-Wells does not spare us from the terrifying possibilities ahead, presenting a vision of the future both as a warning and as one urging action. His work immaculately documents what has been happening and could happen with climate change to wildlife and ecosystems in the future, forcing the reader to come to terms with the urgent need for immediate action. Through his real-time presentation of these issues, Wallace-Wells' story is one of a wake-up call to the readers of a very severe consequence of inaction. The idea that these are not just future concerns but immediate crises gets deeply reflected in each detailed narration of the threats that climate change poses to the natural world. History is rife with different representations of animal struggles that make them very powerful motivators for environmental activism and nature conservation. The exposition entitled *The Last Animals* by Rebecca Alexander, published in the year 2018, revolves around the struggles of endangered species—a pitiful, heart-rending representation of their struggles in an increasingly hostile world to their very survival. Alexander gives an exposure to the particular problems that all these species encounter, while being an eye-opener for the reader of the greater ramifications of the loss of biodiversity. The emotional bond that readers can establish with the animal characters of such works is often a catalyst toward deeper involvement and advocacy on behalf of endangered species.

Similarly, Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* (1989) engages with the same anxieties about human values and practices in need of total transformation if nature were to exist indeed for the forthcoming generation. McKibben provides evidence that what is potentially anticipated is re-organization and reordering of the way the linkage between human and nature is interpreted as one of the means to help reduce the pace of destructive climate change. His work calls for a change in the way people relate to the environment, suggesting that the only way to take care of the environment is by engendering deep respect for it. McKibben's emphasis on a paradigm shift underlines how important literature can be in reshaping public attitudes toward environmental stewardship. The challenges of animals and ecosystems in the framework of climate change are depicted in literature to raise awareness that may also inspire readers to think about their relationship with nature. Such kinds of narration could make the advocacy stronger in urging readers to take part in the protection of the environment and its inhabitants. In this respect, literature is not only a reflection of the world but a guidebook for how it should be, in the sense that literature can encourage proactive steps toward a more sustainable future.

Conclusion

The more concrete the literary reactions of climate change, the greater the growing interdependence between human beings and the animal world they create. Such ecological productions do not only echo environmental concerns but incite readers into rethinking the relationship between human beings and nature. Readers learn from contemporary literature about the deep changes taking place both in the natural world and within the animal kingdom. All these thematic explorations and narrative techniques used by authors capture the complex web of relations between humans and other species, making the outcomes of environmental degradation tangible and real. The main contribution literature might make is to concretize an abstract, over-oppressing idea of climate change and make it relatable. Literature personalizes the implications of global warming, deforestation, pollution, and other environmental problems by narrowing their focus to specific species, ecosystems, or experiences. This invites a powerful affective response and a collective sense of responsibility from readers, who begin thinking of animals no longer as part of some fatuous, faraway kingdom but part of the very same ecological web to which humans are attached. It is through literature that stories can come alive-realizing the effects of climate change on specific animals or habitats-which in turn encourage a more sustainable and compassionate approach to environmental stewardship.

In addition, literature reflects anxious undertones of our times. In this world, increasingly vulnerable to the onsets of climate change, stories of loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, and the suffering of animals strikingly appeal to a wide audience. These narratives often contain implicit or explicit calls to action by requesting the readers to revisit their own complicity in perpetuating or halting environmental damage. In this sense, literature not only creates awareness but also brings a change in behaviour and therefore is a formidable ally in the battle against climate change.

The diversity of various thematic explorations within the literature of climate change further speaks to the multifaceted nature of the problem. While some works contemplate the ethical implications of human activity for the environment, the perspective of others sheds light on exploitation, extinction, and the moral debt we owe to other species. Others may address the psychological and emotional impact of climate change or show just how much the shifting environment touches upon human identity, culture, and mental health. Whereas others are more speculative, projecting worlds of the future in which the effects of climate change have reached

their apex-the cautionary tales of what could happen now if current trends within the human environment were to continue unabated. The narrative techniques of climate change literature are just as diverse, ranging from the realistic portrait of environmental problems to allegorical or symbolic representations of the hum-animal relationship. Others employ anthropomorphism, or giving human characteristics to animals, so that the latter's experiences can be understood by readers. Still others may use multiple perspectives, including that of the animals themselves, to provide a more holistic understanding of the ecological crisis. Employing such devices, literature is bound to bridge the gap between human and animal experiences and thus reinforce the idea that all living beings are connected and whatever happens to one species necessarily affects the rest.

If climate change daunts the imagination, literature will be a means of investigating such complex issues. It uniquely provides an ability to deepen our awareness of the interdependence of all living beings, fostering a sense of shared destiny between humans and the natural world. It is at this point that literature reflects the anxieties that are pressing contemporary society and opens a space to imagine more sustainable futures. Readers of such stories are invited, through the readings of such stories, into a compassionate and more informed contributor toward the global imperative of climate change mitigation, realizing that the fate of the animal kingdom is inextricably linked to our own.

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