



Salience and activation in Susan Fennimore Cooper's Econarrative: (a Feminist) Ecocritical Perspective on *Rural Hours*

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Abstract

How can econarratives help us restore our deepest (repressed) relations with the non-human world and positively contribute to saving and solving today's pressing ecological issues? This question drives the spiral development of this essay which analyzes the ethical narrative and the econarrative of Susan Fennimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* from a feminist ecocritical perspective. The article analyzes how the more than human world is represented in Cooper's econarrative. As such, the essay focuses on Cooper's language of enchantment, activation and salience of non-humans through vividly describing animals' relations to their environment and to the human whose actions greatly affect the natural world and drive several species to extinction.

Keywords: Econarrative, *Rural Hours*, Feminist Ecocriticism, Language of Enchantment, Activation, Salience.

Introduction

Rural Hours is Cooper's journal which describes her aesthetic experience of nature and the human-induced changes in the environment of Cooperstown, New York. Due to the relative difference of time between the publication of the first and last essays and equally the rapidity of the environmental changes and pressing issues, *Rural Hours*' tone perceptibly changes from a reflective tone to an alarming and warning one. This change was coupled with a change from a slight anthropocentrism to a perceptible biocentric and ecocentric attitude. As such, the reader of *Rural Hours* can easily sense a shift from a tone celebrating American landscape and rurality

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to one that laments the “sad” changes in Cooper’s surrounding environment. For example, the dramatic decrease in birds’ population, the encroachment of green spaces, the erosion of place, the rise of consumerism in the American culture and the commodification of nature are just few issues that draws Cooper’s attention.

Notwithstanding Cooper’s earliest articulation of biocentric attitude and ecocritical reflections on the previous nations’ relations to, and conceptions of, the natural world, she received little attention in the so called “narrative scholarship”. Greta *et al* have recently expressed similar remarks on the backgrounding and marginalization of the feminist roots of ecocriticism. Gaard *et al* in *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* (2013), note, “in the two book-length introductions to ecocriticism to date, Lawrence Buell’s *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) and Greg Garrard’s *Ecocriticism* (2004), the retelling of ecocritical roots and developments marginalizes both feminist and ecofeminist literary perspectives.” (2013, p. 3) The situation prompts the ecocritic Simon Estok to devise the concept feminist ecocriticism while Gaard suggests what she calls “critical ecofeminism”. Timothy Morton, on the other hand, invites scholars to be critical and self-critical and reminds us that “putting something called Nature and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of woman” (Morton, 2007, p. 5).

This article reads Cooper’s *Rural Hours* representation of non-humans in light of the environmental ethics and, particularly, the more recent contributions in the econarratology studies, notably Arran Stibbe’s works. As such, the essay suggests that reading *Rural Hours* showcases women’s 19th critique of the language of disenchantment and the mechanical scientific worldviews through ascribing to nature a good deal of agency, renewal and even an intrinsic value that is independent of human utility.

Species extinction representation in *Rural Hours*

Throughout *Rural Hours* Cooper not only laments the decrease of birds’ number but also evinces a great deal of knowledge of various species and their habitat in the region of Cooperstown, New York. As Cooper gradually moves from exploring the earliest nations’ conception(s) of nature to the tangible environmental issues of her time, the book’s tone remarkably changes. Representing these issues with an aesthetic bend gives *Rural Hours* a kind of moral and environmental plot as well as an ethical narrative to elicit an influence in the readers’ mind.

Cooper represents the non-humans, especially birds, in two different ways in which one of which is ecological while the other, we can argue, is aesthetic and/or instrumental. Birds, for example, are depicted in terms of beauty and delights regarding their cheerful songs. Cooper notes about birds, “They were the companions to the greatest poets; they sung with Homer and Sappho among the isles of Greece, sang for Virgil and Horace on the plains of Italy; they cheered Dante in his life-long wandering exile, and Petrarch in his solitary hermitage” (1850, p. 57). In a chapter entitled “Later Hours”, Cooper writes, “There is something peculiarly delightful and spirited in the song of the Lark” (1850, p. 53). Birds are also depicted as symbols for “freedom and open country” (1850, p. 54). Listening to their songs are indeed moments of an aesthetic appreciation while the sublime is associated with awe, fear and wonder at the sublime natural objects. The ways birds’ songs bring delight and joy to humans can be construed in an ecopsychological framework since birds’ companionship and songs endow humans with an aesthetic experience of joy and a deeply-felt interconnection to the non-human world. Another reason why Cooper certainly favors the country over the city is its distressing noise and overpopulation that cause a deeper lack and longing for birds’ songs, river’s sound and the openness of the country. The disturbing sound of steamboats and modern machines, for example, frighten these little creatures and pushes them to flee the city towards uninhabited or less inhabited places. The intimate relationship between birds and the human spirit, however

repressed and depleted may be, is ecological albeit on a deeper level of analysis may turn out to be more or less aesthetic experience. At this level, these relationships, one might also argue as counterargument, are not deeply ecological at all simply because the birds are here similar to aesthetic objects that reflect back moments of joy and beauty to the human. Cooper, nevertheless, points out that birds' songs are not only for humans to enjoy. For Cooper, "He sings for the pleasure of his wife. He sings for the instruction and entertainment of his numerous little family... The birds sing to us nothing but Truth" (1850, p. 79-80). Cooper's basic message is that we are deeply enmeshed in the non-human world where everything is connected to everything else and that birds' crucial role in the ecosystem is not to be reduced to an aesthetic value of joy, delights and decoration. As Cooper already mentions in *Rural Hours*, migratory birds help transport seeds from one place to another and hence enrich and diversify their new home's ecosystems.

The other way through which Cooper represents birds can be described as instrumental or pragmatic. It is instrumental in the sense that the non-human other is viewed in terms of what it can do or bring in terms of benefits to the human. Peter Sopelsa suggests that horses, especially before cars were widely used, were instruments of transportation and carrying people's loads (Boddice, 2011, p. 245-265). In similar ways, Cooper observes that various birds' species are domesticated to feed on insects and help farmers "clear the trees from insects." She writes of birds that "are becoming domesticated" as "public pets" due to "their usefulness in clearing the trees from insects" (Cooper, 1850, p. 53). Moreover, people, particularly women, decorate their hats with dead birds' feathers for aesthetic purposes and decoration. This fashion accelerates overhunting birds and the commodification of nature when America was developing its identity regarding the natural world and expanding towards the west. Cooper, in this respect, blames women for negatively contributing to accelerating the decline of birds' population in America and hence affecting the stability of ecosystems. "This is a sad change", Cooper observes in a tone full of melancholy. She writes, "Dead birds cannot build nests; they cannot sing for our joy and their own delight; they are mute, but, unhappily, they are considered a pretty ornament when pinned down among ribbons, flowers, fruits, beads, and bugles, on that composite exaggeration to which Fashion, forsooth, has given the name, but not the uses, of a hat" (Cooper, 1850, p. 85). Cooper's passage criticizes hunting birds for pleasure and decoration. "All smaller birds", she continues, "with any beauty of plumage, are now murdered to satisfy this *whim* of *Fashion*" (1850, p. 85; emphasis added). In these passages, Cooper is aware that these actions are wrong because they have unforeseen ecological consequences. For instance, "The increase of insects is a tremendous evil", Cooper observes, "but it is the inevitable result of destroying the birds" (1850, p. 86). The evident ethical narrative of these passages emphasizes the wrong actions of Americans in the 19th century by shedding light on the dramatic consequences of those actions and equally the right of birds and nature to live and flourish in terms of their intrinsic value.

Cooper also mentions the skulls of dead animals that people used to preserve in order to remember their non-human companions. These skulls "were the skeleton heads of horses, cows, and oxen, once inhabitants of the Great Barn" (Cooper, 1850, p. 94) and "Every dead animal belonging to the farm whose skull was sufficiently large for the purpose was honored with a post" (Cooper, 1850, p. 95). These skulls were used as ornaments and equally as homes to birds' nests. As Cooper explains, "There was, indeed, a double motive in this array of white skeleton heads; they were intended quite as much for bird-homes as for the adornment of the fence" (1850, p. 95). This passage showcases the extent to which the human can live in harmony with non-human others in the sense that these animals are remembered as they ontologically exist differently in the farm. It is clear that for the farmers the skulls represent more than memorials to some dead animals. The farmers, in a sense, feel they owe something to these animals that were their non-human companions for a while. Crucial to Donna Haraway's book *When Species Meet* (2008) is the notion of "becoming with" which emphasizes a harmonious coexistence of humans and the more-than-human world. Haraway

notes, the “human nature is an interspecies relationship” and that “to knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who* and *what* are is precisely what is at stake” (2008, p. 19; her emphasis). The skulls are both memorials for farmers and also homes for birds. The skulls are therefore used as instruments through the mediation of humans.

Cooper's econarrative and language of enchantment

The term econarrative (or eco-narrative) is relatively recent in the studies of narratology. The term is defined in various ways. Soloshenko, for instance, observes, “eco-narrative is regarded as a type of environmental writing, a text that conveys ecological principles through rhetorical, linguistic, and cognitive methods” (2016, p. 3). Ursula Heise suggests that econarrative is a form of environmental storytelling, including nature writing and narratives that shake the tree of anthropocentrism, in ways featuring an animal narrator. Donly, however, points out to the ways econarratives usually express a sense of ecosystems by means narration. She emphasizes stories involving nonhumans and narratives which “compose with, not for, the nonhuman other” (2017, p. 2). James and Morel consider econarratology as “the paired consideration of material environments and their representations and narrative forms of understanding.” (2020, p. 1). In their introduction to *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey *et al.*, stress the crucial role narratives play especially in “drawing attention to and shaping our ideas about catastrophic and long-term environmental challenges such as climate change” (25). Moreover, they also note, “a critical study of narrative... is essential to determining how we interpret and mitigate environmental crisis” (ibid). Ursula Kluwick's work, on the other side, focuses on calling attention to specific narratives that are deeply entrenched in climate change discourse. She notes that public conceptions of environmental issues are “intrinsically tied to narrative strategies” (ibid). Since non-humans are frequently characters in human narratives, all narratives showcase, to a lesser or greater extent, aspects related to econarratives. Arran Stibbe defines econarrative as narratives in which non-humans frequently feature along with human characters. As Stibbe rightly points out that all narratives have an ecological aspect since they do, by and large, include human and non-human characters. According to him, however, there are weak and strong econarratives (*Econarrative*, 2024, p. 30). He discusses some of the crucial aspects of (a stronger) econarratives such as the use of the language of enchantment, brining non-humans' lives to salience and activation. The ensuing paragraphs take Susan Cooper's *Rural Hours* narrative to the ground of econarratology and analyze her journal's econarrative in light of Stibbe's notions of salience, activation and language of enchantment. Therefore, the linguistic and narratological features that Cooper uses in *Rural Hours* are going to be uncovered. In short Cooper's ecological entailments or messages are going to be unearthed in relation to ecocriticism.

Activation and salience in *Rural Hours*

Rural Hours' econarrative intermingles the personal narrative, environmental history and the ecological relations between humans and the more-than-human world. As such, Cooper unearths the multifarious agencies and forms of communication along the interrelations between humans and the environment. Robins, trees, hawks and even the wind feature as characters in her econarrative. Cooper's aim, in this journal, is to uncover the dramatic environmental changes and the importance of biodiversity in the surrounding environment of Cooperstown, New York. The focus of her journal is to describe and address the reasons for the changes in her surrounding environment and ultimately call for attention to the human-environment nexus. She historically analyzes the ways the previous nations like the Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese and the Indians related to, and conceived of, the natural world. Cooper

contends that nature, for the Greeks, serves as a background object in their works, and that their relations to the environment were basically homo-centered or anthropocentric.

Rural Hours represents the non-human nature as actors and players in their environment. In a chapter entitled “Later Hours”, for instance, Cooper describes a couple of robins’ nest being attacked by a hawk to an extent that she anthropomorphizes and even dramatizes the conflict between the hawk and robins. She writes, “the arrogance and impudence of the hawk were intolerable to behold...He picked out another nestling from the young brood, and again sailed away (1850, p. 48). In the same chapter, Cooper writes: “the poor little robins are consoling themselves; they are building a new nest, and they have chosen a very singular position...They have determined to be safe from the wicked hawk this time, and they have come to us for protection” (1850, p. 49). Moreover, Cooper also writes:

The hawk has again made his appearance, attacking a nest on the opposite side of the house, to the great-anguish of the bird-people in that direction. We have noticed the first bereaved pair of robins almost hourly since the cruel onslaught upon their nest...the sharp cry of trouble and sorrow is peculiar, and cannot be mistaken (1850, p. 48-49).

In these passages, the robins and the hawk are clearly non-human characters and important players in their environment. Cooper selects from the surrounding environment the interrelations and interconnectedness in terms of predation and food chain in order to demonstrate the struggle of birds to protect their nests from the hawk’s attacks. In this way, Cooper brings these non-human relations into salience and prominence. Verbs such as “consoling”, “building”, “chose”, “determined”, “made his appearance”, and “picked out” (for the hawk), suggest that these birds are actors and subjects who enact material and even mental processes in their environment. Cooper’s focus in this chapter sheds lights on non-human lives by means of activation and using sentences in the active form where birds and the hawk are subjects and players and not used in terms of objects in sentences where the head, the subject is always the human.

Cooper also uses pronouns reserved exclusively for human use. When she refers to the hawk in terms of ‘he’ and ‘him’ or ‘his’, Cooper not only activates these non-humans but also in a way or another humanizes them, thus suggesting the limitations of the human grammatical systems regarding the non-human pronouns. Even the choice of a series of action verbs such as “choose”, “determine”, “come”, “build” etc., for example, suggest that birds are crucial agents in their environment in which they enact material processes (come, appear, build...) and “feelers” or “sensors” of mental processes (console, sorrow). Notwithstanding that these kinds of feelings do clearly belong to the human, Cooper ascribes them to non-human others for purposes of agency and intention. The pronoun “us” stresses and destabilizes the human-non-human boundaries by noting that humans and the various forms of life-forms are enmeshed and deeply interconnected. The boundaries are clearly destabilized when Cooper notes “If one could make them understand how safe they are—how little they have to fear—how very much we are their friends, all would go well. But who can talk robin to them!” (1850, p. 50). Interestingly, Cooper’s passage questions the linguistic gap between the humans and the rest of non-humans while she equally points out to the various non-human forms of communication existing between the various forms of life. Her exclamation mark at the end of her passage strongly suggests that birds have their uniquely different way of communication to which humans have little or little access.

Cooper is equally attentive to air and winds of the surrounding environment. She writes “the softening haze of the Indian summer, so common at the same season, adds to the illusory character of the view” (1850, p. 3). Despite that air is an animate non-human phenomenon, Cooper ascribes to it agency and the ability of “adding” illusion to the view. In the same chapter, which is entitled “A Dissolved View”, Cooper goes further and inscribes feelings to trees. She writes, “A group of young oaks close at hand had also *felt* the influence of the frosty

autumnal dews.” (4; emphasis added) “The maple or oak”, she continues, “which last October was gorgeous crimson, may *choose* this season to wear the golden tint of the chestnut, or the pale yellow of duller trees” (4; emphasis added). Birds, on the other hand, are described as ‘doers’ of their daily activities in the environment. “A noisy flock of blue-jays”, Cooper writes, “were chattering among the oaks whose branches overshadowed our seat, and a busy squirrel was dropping his winter store of chestnuts from another tree close at hand” (1850, p. 5). Cooper opens up her readers’ senses to the difference between winds of each season. She writes, “There is a difference in the music of the woods as the seasons change...and there is also a change of key from the softer murmurs of the fresh foliage of early summer, to the sharp tones of the dry and withering leaves in October” (1850, p. 5). In these passages Cooper meticulously describes the surrounding environment and showcases the various enmeshed forms of life and their interrelations and harmonious coexistence. Despite that she previously depicted “the onslaught” of the hawk and the robins, Cooper recognizes that predation and food chains are ecological and natural. Furthermore, these passages bring these non-human characters to salience and depict them as players and actors enacting their usual activities. In Cooper’s econarrative, the tree “chooses” and “feels”, the wind which equally “whispers”, birds “chatter” and robins “console” each other. These passages not only depict non-human others in human pronouns, but also interestingly write non-humans in the active form. These linguistic features are crucial for activation and the depiction of non-humans in terms of agents, actors and important players in their surrounding environment. By means of a “slight anthropomorphism”, Cooper stresses how non-human companions are sentient beings with whom we share the “oikos”, home.

Rural Hours shows the importance of nature as central to human identity, especially woman’s subjective experience and identity. Cooper’s econarrative often represents nature not as a mere backdrop but as central to human life, experience and identity. In *Rural Hours*, the narrator (Cooper) observes the natural world throughout the seasons, describing its cycles and rhythms with a deep sense of connection. She reflects on how nature shapes the lives of those living in rural America, weaving environmental observation with personal reflection and aesthetic appreciation of nature through a theistic approach. This portrayal of nature as a defining force mirrors the ecocritical ideas of environmental interconnectedness in which humans are seen as deeply enmeshed in ecological systems around them rather than separate from, or superior to, the natural world. The human identity is for Cooper defined in terms of interconnectedness and interdependency.

Cooper’s narrative also showcases the human negative impacts on the environment. Throughout her work, Cooper is keenly aware of the multifarious ways through which human activities affect the landscape and the fate of the non-humans. *Rural Hours* is filled with observations on deforestation, agricultural practices, and the consequences of these actions on local ecosystems of Cooperstown. For instance, she observes how modernism’s erosion of place and land for farming leads to the destruction of native habitats and the disruption of local biodiversity that ultimately greatly affect the fate of various non-human companions. This early awareness of environmental degradation can be aligned with the ecocritical discussions of how literature is able to reflect, critique, and resist our environmentally exploitive mindset(s). Another important ecocritical aspect of *Rural Hours* is Cooper’s critique of the overexploitation of natural resources and the unsustainable practices of people in her time such as overhunting birds and building railroads at the expense of green spaces. Her writing suggests a need for a more harmonious relationship with the more than human, one recognizes nature’s independent intrinsic value and respects the balance of nature.

Chief among the significant characteristics of Cooper’s econarrative is her gradual movement away from an anthropocentric (human-centered) perspective toward more ecocentric (nature-centered) worldview. In *Rural Hours*, the narrative doesn’t simply focus on how humans use nature for their benefit but also seeks to understand the intrinsic value of

nature itself. The detailed descriptions of plants, animals, and seasons evoke an appreciation for nature that is not just instrumental but also aesthetic and spiritual. This shift away from human-centeredness challenges the Enlightenment and industrial-era belief in human domination over nature and the metanarratives of progress and technological advancement. Cooper suggests that nature has value beyond its utility to human beings, a perspective that can be seen in light of the contemporary ecocritical thinking which advocates a deeper and more ethical connection with the environment, hence an ethical biocentrism.

Rural Hours represents the American rural environment using conventions related to the pastoral tradition. Cooper's writing is an example of the pastoral genre through which she idealizes the rural lifestyle in contrast to urban expansion and industrialization. Cooper's focus is on the small-scale and sustainable practices of rural communities that are in balance with the environment. She contrasts the harmonious relationship(s) of the country man, who is portrayed as wiser, simple and endowed with wider field for observation, and the disruptive forces of modernization, industrialization and urbanization that threaten the natural world. The pastoral ideal in *Rural Hours*, however, can be construed as a critique of industrialization and its destructive impact on both nature and human society, namely the psyche or mindscape and the external landscape. Cooper's portrayal of the rural landscape promotes an ecocentric worldview that emphasizes harmony and sustainability through prioritizing non-human considerations.

Rural Hours represents the American rural setting using elements associated with the pastoral tradition. Cooper's *Rural Hours* is an example of the pastoral genre where she glorifies the countryside life in opposition to city growth and industries. Cooper is concerned about the rural areas with their traditional and ecological sustainable way of life. She contrasts the wise, simple, observant country man with the clashing forces of modern industrial and urban development that endangers the natural environment. However, the pastoral ideal in *Rural Hours* can also be regarded as a rebuttal to industrialization due to its devastating effects on nature and society as a whole, meaning the mind or spirit and the physical landscape. Cooper's rural landscape description encourages an ecocentric perspective where nature is the basis for harmony and sustainability and not human activities.

Cooper's work raises attention to the importance of biodiversity and the seasonal changes of nature. Cooper's keen observations of the flora and fauna of the surrounding environment reveal a deep reverence and appreciation for biodiversity. She details the changing seasons, the migration of birds and the variety of plant life in her environment, hence stressing the interconnectedness of all living things. Her writing often reflects a sense of wonder at the natural beauty and sublimity which invites readers to consider the diversity and complexity of ecosystems. Indeed, the celebration of biodiversity and seasonal rhythms aligns with the ecological ideas that highlight the importance of preserving diverse life-forms and respecting the natural cycles.

***Rural Hours* and the language of enchantment**

Language of disenchantment is characterized by reductionism and abstraction. Reducing the non-human identity to its function (reductionism) is a common feature of narratives that rely on language of disenchantment and patriarchal conceptions of "otherness". Explaining the significant features of the language of disenchantment, Arran Stibbe observes:

Another form of disenchanting language is when animals and plants are not represented as individuals who can be counted (and therefore 'count') but become instead mass nouns such as *biomass* or *timber*, measured in mere tonnages of stuff. Another form of disenchanting language is when animals and plants are reduced to the function that they perform in expressions such as *pollinators*, *primary producers*, or *dispersers* (2023, p. 109; his emphasis).

Stibbe compares the two types of language which are dominant in various narratives. The language of enchantment, on the other hand, recognizes the deeper connection and interdependency between the various life-forms including, of course, the human. This type of language brings non-humans to salience and activation; that is, “represents animals and plants with high activation, as count nouns, as concretely as possible, as beings in their own right rather than resources or human possessions, and... represents humans as engaged in relationship with them rather than being detached and objective observers” (Stibbe, 2023, p. 110). According to Stibbe, language of enchantment emphasizes wonder, beauty, sublimity and self-environment deeper interrelationships and, in some contexts, even the supernatural or magical effects and aspects of the natural landscape (ibid; p, 111). He also distinguishes between what he calls “immanent” and “transcendental enchantment” and focuses on the former that centers on a direct experience in the natural environment (ibid; pp, 108-110).

Rural Hours' econarrative employs the language of enchantment and its immanent dimension. Immanence is based on human and non-human encounters and an engaged, if not phenomenological, experience of nature. “A sense of mystery”, Cooper asserts, “hovers over the natural world” (1850, p. 7). Cooper also writes, “The magic wych-hazel thrown aside, the spell was over; the country had resumed its every-day aspect” (1850, p. 16). This passage attributes agency and restorative power to nature in spite of the negative impacts and artificiality that human culture imposes on the surrounding environment. She writes, “the growth of both (grass and trees) has been fostered by the showers and the sunshine of the open heavens; and in spite of so much that is artificial in our daily life and habits, there are hours when all our hearts gladly turn to the natural and unperturbed gifts of our Maker.” (1850, p. 17). Unlike the scientific perspective, which attempts to treat the natural world as dead and mechanical, (hence the use of language of disenchantment), Cooper showcases the various mysteries and agency of nature. She writes, “it was a vast wilderness, full of mysteries. And much of the mystery of that leafy wilderness can never be revealed to human ken” (1850, p. 97). Indeed, nature for Cooper is silent or, perhaps, silenced. “But she is mute”, she notes, “utterly mute- mute forever. Silence is her doom.” (1850, p. 97) Irrespective of gendering the environment, Cooper ostensibly criticizes nature's silence and the mechanical treatment of science to the natural world. The way Cooper genders the environment and feminizes the environment renders nature a feminine site of spiritual renewal and power.

Cooper compares the effects of nature to the magical and supernatural. This set of lexicon shows the unpredictability of the natural world. For instance, she writes “I had gathered a sprig of wych-hazel, and, waving it over the valley, determined to make a trial of its well-established magical powers” (1850, p. 14). In fact, throughout the essays of *Rural Hours*, she overuses the lexicon of ecological wonder that conveys spell, magic, supernatural and mystery. She also foregrounds the change in the attitude of modern societies due to technology and the introduction of steam machines that greatly affect the environment. “But a change seems now at hand”, she writes, “and this change has been effected by steam. Some of the more pleasing birds of Europe have been carried in steam vessels from England to Australia and to New Zealand, where they are becoming domesticated” (1850, p. 53). Although science's perspective objectifies nature and generally treats it in terms of its usefulness to humans, Cooper highlights its intrinsic or inherent value that is independent of its utility. Words like mystery, magic and spell indicate the unknown and unpredictable aspects of the natural world, but these words also emphasize the intrinsic value, independency and agency of the natural world.

Above all, Cooper celebrates and favors the rural and pastoral. Cooper's *Rural Hours* also falls within the tradition of pastoral literature that idealizes rural life and nature in terms of sources of purity, peace, and spiritual renewal. An exploration of the language of enchantment in *Rural Hours* can indeed reflect an appreciation of the pastoral world as both a refuge from urban life and a place where nature's enchantment is experienced in a wild and

unspoiled form(s). This contrasts with the often destructive and alienating tendencies of urbanization and industrialization that the environmental approaches criticize for repressing and “uprooting” humans from their natural roots.

In *Rural Hours*, Cooper’s language of enchantment can be interpreted as a way of reimagining woman’s relation to the landscape and highlighting the mysterious and enchanting qualities of the rural environment. The language she uses to describe nature’s features, from the way light falls on a hill to the way trees sway in the wind and even the slight change of wind and wood’s music, conveys a sense of deep enchantment, as if the land(scape) itself is speaking. This approach should be read as a form of ecological advocacy through which beauty of nature is celebrated in ways that encourage conservation and even a deeper appreciation of the environment. since ecocriticism often explores how non-human voices are represented in literature, Cooper’s language of enchantment, in this respect, gives voice to several elements of nature which are usually overlooked (but also silenced) in mainstream (eco)narratives. In nature writing these elements are described with a sense of reverence, and in Cooper’s case, nature itself is an active and agentic participant in the world’s stories and narratives. Nature is equally depicted in terms of discourse of determinism that ascribes to the surrounding environment deterministic roles in shaping and even exercising significant effects on human culture.

More importantly, however, is that Cooper stresses the role of the imagination in environmental consciousness as a major factor in aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment. This aspect brings her aesthetic appreciation of nature in line with non-cognitivist orientations in the field of feminist aesthetics of the environment. subjectivity and (environmental) imagination are, for Cooper, distinctive features of human and nature relations. Additionally, the language of enchantment can also be seen as a tool for cultivating environmental consciousness. Indeed, through weaving enchantment into her descriptions of nature, Cooper invites her readers to conceive a world in which nature is not simply a resource for humans but certainly an independent realm of beauty, mystery and agency that must be urgently preserved. This imaginative approach fosters a connection to the natural world; an approach that is based on imagination, emotion and spirituality.

Exploring the language of enchantment from an ecocritical framework reveals the profound interrelations between language, nature and human (moral) responsibility. Through her enchanted depiction of nature, Cooper invites readers to view the world not as a resource to be exploited, but as a living and sacred entity deserving of awe, aesthetic appreciation and protection. Therefore, her writing encourages a deeper and more respectful engagement with the environment, hence promoting a vision of the natural world as a space for both wonder and ethical reflection. In this way, her work contributes to today’s broad conversations and debates in environmental humanities over how can literature influences environmental awareness, action and ultimately an ethical treatment of the more-than-human world.

Conclusion

Cooper’s engagement with nature can take several forms of calls to take seriously the issues of the environment. Her conception of nature is not only ecological, adhering to the group B in the “A B cleavage” suggested by Leopold but also recognizes nature’s aesthetic and instrumental aspects. She invites her readers to phenomenologically experience the natural world and aesthetically appreciate the aesthetics of nature through immanent enchantment and an outward (not inward) appreciation of the landscape. Cooper’s conception also recognizes and celebrate the importance of diversity (both biological and cultural) and intrinsic value of nature beyond any utility-leaden understandings, relations and even the so called Kantian “correlationism”. The set of lexicon Cooper employs while invoking the wildness undergirds her language of enchantment as based on immanence and direct experience where any sense of divinity lies in the material and natural world, hence immanent enchantment.

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Bio-note

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