

13. Ecofiction as a Genre: Crossing Genre Boundaries in Michael Christie's *Greenwood*¹

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Abstract

Michael Christie's *Greenwood* (2019) is analysed within the context of ecofiction and genre theory, arguing that the text not only utilizes ecofiction as a genre dealing with environmental themes but also presents a narrative practice that transforms the narrative and discursive boundaries of its genre. The study proposes that *Greenwood* reconstructs ecofiction along three key axes: nonlinear ecological temporality, placement of scientific discourse at the centre of fictional narrative, and representation of nature as a sacred realm of meaning. Cumulative understanding of time, constructed around metaphor of tree rings, questions anthropocentric narratives of progress, allowing for a rethinking of environmental processes within an intergenerational continuum. Besides, use of botanical and ecological terminology as an aesthetic and rhythmic element within the narrative demonstrates that scientific discourse transcends mere background knowledge and becomes a discourse that forms epistemological foundation of the narrative. On the other hand, portrayal of forests as "cathedrals" and visitors as "pilgrims" positions nature as a sacred space requiring respect and ethical responsibility, thus bringing ecological narrative closer to a semi-sacred and normative form of narrative. In this context, this study examines *Greenwood* as an example that embodies hybrid and relational nature of ecological narrative and demonstrates that genres are not fixed categories, instead, they are dynamic structures that constantly transform through interaction with different discourses. Consequently, the article reveals that Christie's novel offers a powerful narrative model that prompts us to rethink not what ecological narrative tells but how it transforms into a genre.

Keywords: Genre theory, Ecofiction, Genre Hybridity, Genre Transformation, Mixed Genres

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Bir Tür Olarak Ekokurgu: *Greenwood*'da Tür Sınırlarının Aşılması ⁴

Öz

Bu çalışma, Michael Christie'nin *Greenwood* (2019) romanını ekokurgu ve tür teorisi çerçevesinde incelemekte ve metnin yalnızca çevresel temaları ele alan bir anlatı türü olarak ekokurguyu kullanmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda türün anlatı ve söylemsel sınırlarını dönüştüren bir anlatı pratiği sunduğunu savunmaktadır. Makale, *Greenwood*'un ekokurguyu üç temel eksen boyunca yeniden yapılandırıldığını öne sürüyor: doğrusal olmayan ekolojik zamansallık, bilimsel söylemin kurgusal anlatının merkezine yerleştirilmesi ve doğanın kutsal bir anlam alanı olarak temsil edilmesi. Ağaç halkaları metaforu etrafında inşa edilen zamanın birikimli anlayışı, insan merkezli (antroposen) ilerleme anlatılarını sorgulayarak, nesiller arası bir süreklilik içinde çevresel süreçlerin yeniden düşünülmesine olanak tanımaktadır. Bununla birlikte, botanik ve ekolojik terminolojinin anlatı içinde estetik ve ritmik bir unsur olarak kullanılması, bilimsel söylemin salt arka plan bilgisi olmaktan çıkıp, anlatının epistemolojik temelini oluşturan bir söylem haline geldiğini göstermektedir. Öte yandan, ormanların "katedral" ve ziyaretçilerin "hacı" olarak tasvir edilmesi, doğayı saygı ve etik sorumluluk gerektiren kutsal bir alan olarak konumlandırarak ekolojik anlatıyı yarı kutsal ve normatif bir anlatı biçimine yaklaştırır. Bu bağlamda, çalışma, ekolojik anlatının melez ve ilişkisel doğasını somutlaştıran bir örnek olarak *Greenwood*'u inceler ve türlerin sabit kategoriler değil, farklı söylemlerle etkileşim yoluyla sürekli dönüşen dinamik yapılar olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak makale, Christie'nin romanını, ekolojik anlatının ne anlattığını değil, nasıl bir türe dönüştüğünü yeniden düşünmemizi sağlayan güçlü bir anlatı modeli sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tür Kuramı, Ekokurgu, Tür Melezliği, Tür Dönüşümü, Karma Türler

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Introduction

Genres, like trees' trunks, are not fixed; that is, each text extends its own form. History of genre or 'labelling' some specific texts is as old as history of civilization. In early history, to some degree humans had schematic classification of texts that they produced—be it spoken or written. It was not until Ancient Greek scholars studied literary texts that genre studies had come to be acknowledged as an independent discipline of its own. In fact, before 20th century, there had been only a few dozens of genres if one needed to classify a specific text within some boundaries. However, since middle of the 20th century genre studies have gained critical momentum in social sciences, and many scholars from various disciplines have addressed it within their specific field of interest. Advent of screen technology, that of TV, and cinema culture have paved the way for springing up countless unfamiliar and time-bound genres. Predictably media studies today mostly revolve around genre theory. Poststructuralism, too, has contributed a lot to genre studies, especially with its concept of intertextuality. Thus, literary scholars are still debating whether there is or should be a fixed genre to define a particular text as there have been some fundamental conjectural shifts after modernism and particularly postmodernism. Hence, 'post-genre' or 'meta-genre' or even 'hyper-genre' are concepts hotly debated on their agenda. They suggest that existence of intertextuality, perpetual shifts in culture, politics, technology, and so forth have tied genre studies into knots. Because anyone who tries to separate a text from other genres and confine it entirely within the boundaries of a single genre inevitably encounters the problem of 'genre overlap.' In his seminal article titled "An Introduction to Genre Theory," Daniel Chandler touches upon this issue with the following words, "It is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between one genre and another: genres overlap, and there are 'mixed genres'" (1997, p. 2).

Additionally, transitivity among different genres is a known phenomenon. Each genre can effortlessly permeate into other genres, hence crossing its known boundaries to establish new concepts such as 'hybrid genre' or 'cross genre,' or as Chandler puts "mixed genres" (1997). For instance, it is rather difficult task to classify, i.e. categorize, a literary text such as that of novel form. Today, when it comes to novel form, any sort of text cannot be absolutely isolated within its fixed boundaries of a genre. In other words, a novel—e.g. that is labelled as 'ecofiction'—can include such texts as political, ecological, economic, historical, lyrical, mythical, dystopian, utopian, romantic, gothic, science, climate, biblical, ethical, and so on. Consequently, it is impossible to mention that there is a single fixed genre to define a specific text because the given text may also carry various elements from other genres to some extent.

On the other hand, ecofiction and its critical counterpart ecocriticism have gained critical recognition since their first emergence in the 1970s when environmental issues were raised by public and scholars alike. As the name suggests, ecofiction—alternatively ecological fiction—denotes literary texts that deal with ecological issues. Writers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, living in the Anthropocene era, realized that as environmental issues such as global warming became more prominent, they needed to address ecology in their fiction. Hence, nature, ecology, or environmental elements are considered central characters in their texts, finding themselves especially in the novel form. Ecofiction is a remarkably flexible concept as it can encompass a wide range of fiction genres that explore relationship between natural environments and human communities that inhabit them. Indeed, ecofiction, as a term, appeared in the second half of 20th century when ecology gained popularity as both a scientific approach and a cultural sensibility (Levin, 2011, p. 1122).

Moreover, ecofiction is an interdisciplinary field of study that draws on many fields such as science, ecology, philosophy, ethics, history, to name a few. Moreover, ecofiction is a hybrid genre that combines

narrative styles ranging from modernism and postmodernism to magical realism and science fiction—though this list is by no means exhaustive. This narrative genre can be found in a wide variety of genres, from mainstream novels and westerns to detective fiction, romance, and speculative fiction. Speculative fiction, on the other hand, encompasses science fiction and fantasy, sometimes interweaving with elements of realism, as in works of Ursula K. Le Guin (Dwyer, 2010, p. 3). This hybridity makes ecofiction a fruitful field of study because the genre transcends its limited genre boundaries by incorporating elements from other genres such as mythology, history, and family saga.

This study attempts to uncover other distinct genre elements in order to claim that no genre can be purely 'isolated' within itself and that boundaries among various genres are quite permeable, by delving into one of the most recent novels deemed ecofiction: *Greenwood* by Michael Christie. This novel transforms ecofiction from a fixed genre into a hybrid narrative form in which science, mythology, history, and ethical narratives fuzzily merge, redefining boundaries of ecofiction.

Genre Theory and Genre Studies

Today genre studies in conjunction with genre theory have gained some serious momentum. It is partly because of increasing hyper media content that are consumed by modern individuals. The number of genres among all diverse fields has increased dramatically; as a result, one might have difficulty in placing a text in relation to its specific genre. At this point, Chandler aptly poses the problem of definition through a metaphor by stating that "Defining genres may not initially seem particularly problematic but it should already be apparent that it is a theoretical minefield" (Chandler, 1997, p. 2). Therefore, genre studies are similar to a complex endeavour with no easy solution, where each definition gives rise to a new distinction.

The word 'genre' is French origin, and it simply suggests that of classification, categorization, or exclusion of any piece of text from all other texts available. As defined in the Oxford Classical Dictionary, genre refers to "A group of texts related within the system of literature by their sharing recognizably functionalized features of form and content" (Conte & Most, 2015). David Duff provides an alternative definition, suggesting that genre is "a recurring type or category of text, as defined by structural, thematic and/or functional criteria. A term increasingly used in the classification of non-literary (and non-written) as well as literary texts; notably films and media programmes" (2000, p. xiii). These definitions show that genres have certain distinct characteristics that provide clues about both their content (theme) and form (structure). However, placing texts within narrow boundaries is not as easy as it seems because issues such as intertextuality, hybrid genres, hybridization, and genre transformation constantly complicate this classification. Genre studies, therefore, is a subjective field of study as "the classification and hierarchical taxonomy of genres is not a neutral and 'objective' procedure. There are no undisputed 'maps' of the system of genres within any medium" (Chandler, 1997, p. 1). Furthermore, according to Jacques Derrida, the moment the word "genre" is uttered or conceptually thought, a certain demarcation process simultaneously sets in (1980, p. 56). In other words, naming or defining a genre inevitably means drawing its boundaries and producing a distinction that distinguishes it from other forms. Even so, in modern genre theory, demarcation or limitation of a genre cannot be certain and thus it is not possible to make mention of clear-cut genre boundaries.

Genre theorists also frequently ask questions in their work such as: Is it possible to transcend the boundaries drawn by each genre? Can one genre infiltrate another? If so, what should this newly formed genre be called—a 'hybrid species,' a 'mixed species,' or something entirely different like a 'transitional

genre'? Additionally, how can these 'complex' genres be positioned within genre studies? Similarly, can genres evolve or transform over time? If so, how can these changes be detected, and what should the resulting genre be called? These difficulties, and many more, continue to occupy researchers in their studies. Robert Stam points precisely to this issue and makes the following observation:

A number of perennial doubts plague genre theory. Are genres 'out there' in the world, or are they merely the constructions of analysts? Is there a fine taxonomy of genres or are they in principle finite? Are genres timeless Platonic essences or ephemeral, time-bound entities? Are genres culture-bound or transcultural? (2000, p. 14).

This quote shows that genres are not static; instead, they transform and evolve over time. For instance, a novel within sci-fi genre from the 1950s might be rather different in its content and form than its modern counterpart although both are considered within 'sci-fi' genre boundaries.

Genres, being dynamic by nature, constantly acquire new meanings and positions through continuous flux. Tzvetan Todorov argues that genres originate from other genres because every new genre arises from transformation of pre-existing ones. This transformation sometimes occurs through inversion, sometimes through displacement, or through combination of various elements. For example, literature has never been independent of genres; on the contrary, it has developed within a constantly evolving system of genres (1976, p. 161). In this way, genres continuously evolve until a new one emerges. This is essentially a cumulative process based on the evolutionary systematization of genres. Indeed, this fluidity of genre boundaries is a phenomenon that Chandler emphasizes:

Traditionally, genres (particularly literary genres) tended to be regarded as fixed forms, but contemporary theory emphasizes that both their forms and functions are dynamic...Each new work within a genre has the potential to influence changes within the genre or perhaps the emergence of new sub-genres (which may later blossom into fully-fledged genres) (1997, p. 3).

Hence, it can be claimed that while traditional approaches tend to view literary genres as fixed and unchanging forms, contemporary theory emphasizes that genres are dynamic structures in terms of both form and function. According to this perspective, each new work produced within a genre not only repeats characteristics of that specific genre but can also contribute to its transformation, even paving the way for the emergence of new subgenres over time.

An Elastic Genre: Ecofiction

Regarding genres' dynamic and evolutionary nature, David Duff explains why modern genre theory is rather different from its conventional counterpart when he states the following, "...the perception that literary genres are dynamic rather than static entities – that they change or 'evolve' across time – is the single most important factor separating modern from earlier genre theory" (2000, p. 232). In a similar vein, in his seminal work *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*, Todorov writes, "evolution operates with an altogether different rhythm: every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species" (1973, p. 6). Elsewhere, he remarks the following, "a work can, for example manifest more than one category, more than one genre" (Todorov, 1973, p. 22). Therefore, it can be safely said that a genre like ecofiction exists almost everywhere, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly infiltrating other genres.

Ecofiction, for example, as a genre emerged mostly out of amalgamation of scientific studies and ecological awareness. Although it mostly deals with ecological matters that outsprung for the first time in the 1960s, particularly with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, ecofiction as a genre can also carry

elements particular to other genres, as well. Ecofiction has also recently gave birth to 'cli-fi' (climate fiction) that can be considered as a sub-genre. Today this recent and fully-fledged genre yields many works, especially through novel form all around the globe.

Many difficulties are encountered when trying to define ecofiction as a genre or to place a work of fiction within this genre. In simplest terms, as a compound word, ecofiction is made up of two independent words that are 'ecology' (and its prefixed form 'eco') and 'fiction.' This means that ecofiction, within its fictional form, must necessarily be related to an ecological theme or content. Broadly, any work of ecofiction might be expected to deal with environmental issues either on a local or a global scale. However, a work considered within this genre may also incorporate characteristics of other genres; therefore, it is not surprising that this genre—like many genres—is quite fluid and flexible, exhibiting a kind of plasticity. For, owing to its dynamic nature, genres overlap one another either implicitly or explicitly. In his guidebook to ecofiction, Jim Dwyer (2010) also offers a definition, "Fiction that deals with environmental issues or the relation between humanity and the physical environment, that contrasts traditional and industrial cosmologies, or in which nature or the land has a prominent role is sometimes called ecofiction" (p. 2). According to Mary Woodbury (2022), in some examples of ecofiction narratives, human element is entirely relegated to the background, and narrative is shaped solely around a network of ecological relationships. Also, ecofiction as a genre continues to evolve alongside transformations in the world, influenced by current and increasingly accepted scientific findings such as climate change. Thus, genres can generate dynamic responses to circumstances, while also being able to reshape themselves through combination of genre-specific elements activated as a strategic response to a given situation (Jamieson & Stromer-Galley, 2001, pp. 361-363). Lastly, increased social anxieties and the need to express complex forms of experience are leading to the emergence of more complex narrative forms. In this process, a reciprocal transition occurs between fiction and non-fiction narratives, hence, new genre possibilities "germinate" in the intersecting genre zones of these two fields (Grishakova, 2013).

In a broad sense, it might be suggested that although ecofiction as a genre presumably deals with the relationships between human and non-human environments, it is quite dynamic in its nature by transcending its generic boundaries to encompass a more all-inclusive stance. Accordingly, in the following sections of this article, a single work of ecofiction—*Greenwood*—will be examined to demonstrate that a genre does not remain fixed within predetermined boundaries and that genres mutually reinforce each other through crossbreeding. In this context, ecofiction becomes one of few narrative forms that most clearly demonstrate genre hybridity or genre blending in modern literature. Crossing its genre boundaries (mostly considered within ecofiction), *Greenwood* shares some distinct characteristics of other genres, hence becoming hybrid one ultimately.

***Greenwood*: Genre Transformation Within**

Michael Christie wrote *Greenwood* in 2019 while living in a forested area of British Columbia, Canada. Largely inspired by the trees and forests around him, these impressions ultimately shaped his ecological narrative. As for the novel's subject matter, *Greenwood* examines the long-term impacts of human activities on forests through the story of the Greenwood family spanning generations. Its unusual and non-linear narrative structure brings together themes of environmental destruction and sustainability, placing the human-nature relationship at the centre of the text. However, *Greenwood* does not merely present ecofiction as a narrative dealing with environmental issues; rather, it presents a narrative practice that expands the ethical, narrative, and conceptual boundaries of the genre from within through

intergenerational temporality, ecological heritage, and non-human continuities.

Greenwood's unique narrative that is structured like the rings of a tree is worth mentioning as it deviates from conventional narrative structures of texts within ecofiction. In conventional narratives there is a linear timeline of events that unfold as text progresses. In some other cases, there is a narrative structure in which time is warped by utilizing such literary techniques as flashbacks and flashforwards. *Greenwood*, with its tree-trunk-like structure, begins with a chapter set in 2038 and then travels back in time to 1908, the year the Greenwood family first appeared. Midway through the novel, time flows forward again, arriving back at 2038; thus, the reader returns to the first chapter and its setting. Thus, paradoxically, when the reader reaches the end of the novel, they find themselves back at the starting point. Christie articulates this point as follows:

This book's somewhat unique narrative structure came to me after I had cut down a small tree on my property and looked at the rings of growth in the stump. I realized then that a tree tells its own story with its rings, layer by layer, and that I could use that idea to give shape to the novel I had just begun to write. It turned out to be a pretty good way to tell a story (2020).

This reverse-chronology narrative structure is just one of significant features of the novel that demarcate it from other ecofiction narratives. In classical ecofiction, time often revolves around the following issues: current ecological crisis, recent past or upcoming future, and a sense of urgency. However, *Greenwood* treats time in a diametrically opposite way. The novel constructs its narrative spanning over a century, extending environmental consequences across generations, and treats nature not as an 'immediate crisis' but as a long-term system. Indeed, Christie's novel enables ecofiction to evolve from a short-term crisis narrative form into a genre built on long-term ecological temporality. In this regard, several passages in the novel focus specifically on the question of time:

Time, Liam has learned, is not an arrow. Neither is it a road. It goes in no particular direction. It simply accumulates—in the body, in the world—like wood does. Layer upon layer. Light then dark. Each one dependent upon the last. Each year impossible without the one preceding it. Each triumph and each disaster written forever in its structure (Christie, 2019, p. 445).

By explicitly rejecting linear 'path' metaphors and embracing a dendritic accumulation model, Christie shifts eco-narrative from an anthropocentric timeline to an ecological one. The novel's interwoven structure—moving from 2038 backward and back again—mimics growth of a tree, compelling the reader to experience time not as a simple sequence of events but as a physical, biological record. Indeed, throughout the whole narrative time is nested like tree rings, and it does not follow a traditionally linear order, otherwise called chronological order. Previous excerpt from the novel explicitly rejects linear and progressive understanding of time that dominates modern narratives. Time is conceived neither as an arrow pointing forward nor as a path leading to a specific destination; rather, it is conceptualized as a directionless, cumulative, and irreversible process. Here the novel's form transforms into a metaphor for nature; in other words, the genre's structure is shaped according to the model of nature. Moreover, this cumulative understanding of time makes irreversibility of environmental impacts visible, transforming time into a structure in which ethical consequences of human actions are permanently recorded. In this respect, *Greenwood* moves ecofiction beyond a narrative of immediate crises, opening it up to rethinking in terms of long-term responsibility and intergenerational ecological accountability. Briefly, this cyclical narrative structure leads ecofiction to transcend limitations of conventional linear fiction. In a similar vein, time is depicted not as a linear progression centred on humans but as a process that accumulates and layers within nature's own rhythms. This understanding is particularly evident in the following description established through tree rings:

Each year of its life, this tree has expanded its bark and built a new ring of cambium to encase the ring of growth that came that year before it. That's twelve hundred layers of heartwood, enough to thrust the tree's needled crown into the clouds (Christie, 2019, p. 7).

Jake's address to "pilgrims" of the island succinctly illustrates the novel's ecological understanding of time. This cumulative structure, depicted through tree rings, shows time not as a linear progression but as a process that accumulates layer by layer. Thus, the novel questions anthropocentric, rapid, and progressive understanding of time, highlighting an ecological temporality that operates with nature's much longer and cumulative rhythms. In this context, tree rings function not only as a biological phenomenon but also as a narrative metaphor in ecofiction, emphasizing the continuity and interdependence between humans and nature.

Furthermore, the novel contains some critical moments where Christie's ecological narrative directly addresses scientific facts. When the reader encounters these sections, they may think that what they are reading is not a work of fiction but a purely scientific discourse. In other words, at these points where fiction and non-fiction merge, scientific language permeates the novel. In the first chapter of the book, Jake Greenwood, a tourist guide as well as a dendrologist, draws on scientific discourse when she describes one of the last remaining trees on the planet:

These trees act like huge air filters,' she carries on. 'Their needles suck up dust, hydrocarbons, and other toxic particles, and breathe out pure oxygen, rich with phytoncides, the chemicals that have been found to drop our blood pressure and slow our heart rates. Just one of these mature firs can generate the daily oxygen required by four adult humans (2019, p. 5).

As the passage indicates, scientific language functions not as a didactic toolkit for ecofiction but as a fundamental element that determines ethical and ontological orientation of the narrative. Here trees are presented as biological actors directly affecting human health, moving beyond a passive natural backdrop. Language of scientific measurement reconstructs relationship between nature and humanity from a romantic or symbolic plane to one of vital interdependence. In this context, *Greenwood*, by incorporating scientific reality into a fictional narrative, transforms eco-narrative from a genre that transmits information into a hybrid narrative practice that helps to generate ethical awareness and responsibility. That is, scientific knowledge blends in fictional narrative smoothly.

The scientific—particularly dendrological—discourse subtly embedded in the novel is another example of this genre deviation. For instance, since Jake is the only educated and academic character in the story, the third-person narrator conveys scientific details through this figure. By spreading scientific terms throughout the narrative, the author demonstrates that ecofiction can necessarily, even naturally, include this type of content, "In Canada, aside from a brief engagement to a fellow biology student, Jake devotes herself wholly to tree rings, and tap roots, to polyploids and triploids, to pollen dispersion, gametes, ovules, and seed genetics" (2019, p. 20). Scientific terminology functions not as an encyclopaedic transfer of information but as a language that defines central theme of the narrative. While Jake's personal life and human relationships are relegated to the background, the narrative focus shifts to dendrological processes and biological concepts. Rhythmic and repetitive structure of these scientific terms demonstrates how knowledge is transformed into an aesthetic narrative element. In this regard, the text uses science not as an externally added element to fiction but as a component that forms the narrative and epistemological foundation of ecofiction. The following excerpt from the novel captures this idea further:

As a dendrologist—a botanist specializing in trees—Jake knows that many tree species suffered catastrophic die-offs long before the Great Withering struck: the American chestnut in the 1900s, the

Dutch elm in the 1960s, and the European ash in the 2000s. Insects, fungi, cankers, blights, and rusts: the enemies of trees are many, and include supervillains such as the emerald ash borer, the Asian long-horned beetle, the dreaded fungus Chalara. But no single organism is responsible for Great Withering... (1997, p. 10).

This passage makes it clear how scientific discourse becomes a crucial component of the narrative by grounding the “Great Withering” in the reality of plant pathology. Use of detailed terminology relating to dendrology, tree diseases, and ecological threats reveals that nature is represented not merely as an aesthetic backdrop, instead shown as a complex ecosystem understood through scientific knowledge. This reveals that *Greenwood* transcends romanticized nature narratives by creating a hybrid narrative structure that intertwines scientific discourse with fictional storytelling. Thus, the novel shows that ecofiction has moved beyond being a genre dealing solely with environmental themes and has become a dynamic narrative space where scientific knowledge and literary storytelling intersect.

From ancient classical times to the Renaissance, and especially from the Romantic period to the modern age, humanity has always approached nature with admiration and wonder. This sense of sublimity is inherent in being human. Whether facing a mountain or an ocean, whether from prehistoric or modern times, humanity has regarded nature as sacred and attributed divine qualities to this entity called Earth. Therefore, approaching nature through a sacred textual discourse has become part of the cultural and intellectual heritage of every society that has lived on this planet. *Greenwood* also reproduces this tradition in a contemporary ecofiction because in the novel, forests are presented as “cathedrals,” and trees as meaningful texts waiting to be read.

When it comes to attributing divine qualities to nature, *Greenwood* stands out among other ecofiction narratives because it transcends common characteristics of its own genre, almost becoming a “supergenre.” Ralph Cohen (1986) argues that genres are not structures that exist independently; rather, they are named and positioned within specific genre systems and hierarchies. Therefore, a genre can only be defined through system to which it belongs and relationships it establishes with other genres (Cohen, 1986, p. 207). That is, through its ecofictional narrative constructed via previously mentioned time concept and scientific discourse, it further expands ecological horizons of the genre by reframing nature as a sacred and ritual realm of meaning.

Particularly, first chapter of this eco-narrative is mostly concentrated on one of the last remaining forested islands on the planet—Greenwood Island—and on how it is read in a sacred discourse. Jake, a tour guide of a sacred forest called “Cathedral,” takes some elite tourists who are apparently called “Pilgrims” on an excursion (i.e. ‘pilgrimage’) throughout the Greenwood Island. Attributing religious or sacred characteristics to trees and forest, Christie practically makes the text read as a ‘scripture’—in a biblical tone. This, in return, establishes another niche in ecofictional genre by crossing genre boundaries already defined. In the very beginning of the novel, for instance, the reader is introduced to “The Greenwood Arboreal Cathedral” and its *church*-like trees, which are visited by various well-to-do *pilgrims* around the world. The rich specifically come to visit these last remaining trees in order to “smell their needles. To caress their bark. To be regenerated in the humbling loom of their shadows. To stand mutely in their leafy churches and pray to their thousand-year-old souls” (Christie, 2019, p. 3). The forest is directly referred to as a “church,” and the trees possess “thousand-year-old spirits.” This representation elevates nature from an aesthetic or ecological backdrop to a sacred entity requiring ritual and reverence. Additionally, naming of the forest as the “Cathedral” and its visitors as “Pilgrims” transforms landscape into a sacred place transcending religion. This suggests that nature, in the face of ecological collapse, transforms from a resource into a deity—a central theme in contemporary ecofiction.

At this point, ecofiction breaks away from secular environmental narratives and produces a quasi-religious discourse. This is further evidenced in the following passage:

Following her introduction, she coaxes the Pilgrims a few miles west, into a grove of proper old-growth giants, whose trunks bulge wider than mid-sized cars. These are trees of such immensity and grandeur they seem unreal, like film props or monuments. In the presence of such giants, the Pilgrims assume hushed, reverent tones. Official Holtcorp policy is to refer to the forest as the *Cathedral* and its guests as *Pilgrims*; Knut, Greenwood Island's most senior Forest Guide and Jake's closest friend, claims that this is because the forest was the first (and now, perhaps, the last) church (2019, p. 5).

This sacralising discourse in *Greenwood* elevates ecofiction from a demarcated genre that mostly generates environmental awareness to a narrative form that offers ethical guidance, hinting at how the reader should behave, and resembling sacred texts. Indeed, Jamieson and Stromer-Galley (2001) state that hybrid genres can be new combinations arising from unprecedented discursive conditions (p. 361). In a similar vein, Roger Luckhurst's notion of aiming to evaluate literary texts not only through their internal dynamics but also within a non-hierarchical and open-ended structure ("matrix") that interacts with various discourses helps to support the concept of cross-genres or hybrid genres (2010, p. 10).

Another example of nature being represented as a sacred space can be seen in the following scene where the narrator relays Jake's thoughts on biomimicry, "The leafy dome of the mosque; the upward-soaring spires of the abbey; the ribbed vault of the cathedral—which faith's sacred structures weren't designed with trees as inspiration?" (Christie, 2019, p. 5). This striking statement reveals, through an analogy drawn between nature and sacred architecture, that trees and forests are represented both as natural entities and sources that inspire sacred spaces. The parallel drawn between structure of trees and domes of mosques, towers of monasteries, and vaults of cathedrals elevates nature to an almost sacred level, positioning it within a religious and symbolic realm of meaning. In this context, the novel presents nature not only as an ecological system but also as a sacred space that inspires respect and admiration.

The novel's narrative strategy, positioning nature not only as an ecological environment but also within a sacred and spiritual realm, is revealed through various descriptions in different parts of the text. An example of this can be seen in the following passage, where Jake Greenwood's grandmother, Willow, is depicted as an environmental activist who had previously fought for environmental causes:

But mostly the shape Willow assumes is that of a wandering monk, fueled by weed and chickpeas and the soymilk that she presses herself. Her true religion is Nature, trees especially. Her belief in green beings is as pure and fervent as any self-immolating Buddhist's. This is why Liam fears her environmentalism above all else—he knows that it's the thing that could someday steal her from him completely (Christie, 2019, p. 48).

Willow's environmentalism is represented less as an ecological sensitivity and more as an almost religious belief. Willow's resemblance to a "wandering monk" and definition of nature as her "true religion" position trees and natural world within a sacred realm. Thus, the novel presents nature as a sacred realm requiring spiritual commitment and devotion. This representation can be considered one of the narrative strategies of ecofiction that reinterprets nature within an ethical and almost religious value system. Shortly, from this perspective *Greenwood* exemplifies ecofiction not as a closed and static genre but as a dynamic narrative practice situated within a non-hierarchical network of genres that evolves in interaction with scientific, ethical, and sacred discourses.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that, through *Greenwood's* analysis, ecofiction is not a static genre but rather

a constantly reshaping practice interacting with diverse discourses. The novel's non-linear narrative structure stretches the genre's traditional time-space expectations by framing time not as a unidirectional flow but as a layered and reflective plane. Furthermore, the text's integration of scientific discourse into the narrative fabric transforms ecofiction from a genre solely descriptive of nature into a narrative form that generates and questions knowledge. Finally, representation of nature as a sacred realm of meaning moves the genre away from a secular and thematic environmental narrative, towards an ethical and guiding narrative framework. Considering these three levels together, it becomes clear that *Greenwood* transforms ecofiction from a thematic category into a multi-discourse, hybrid narrative practice.

The significance of these findings is not limited to the interpretation of a single novel. Instead of merely reiterating theoretical argument that genres are not closed categories but permeable structures evolving through interaction with multiple discourses, the study establishes a link between theory and textual analysis by testing this argument through a concrete text. Thus, it reveals that ecofiction can be read not only through what it tells, namely theme of the environment, but also through *how* it tells it and with which discourses it hybridizes. This reframing makes visible a flexibility overlooked by approaches that treat genre as a closed label. As ecofiction integrates environmental concerns with ethical, scientific, and sacred discourses, it transforms into a narrative space that both reflects and shapes ecological consciousness of its time. In this respect, *Greenwood* offers a fruitful example for rethinking narratives of the Anthropocene era within the context of genre boundaries. The novel's structure, which integrates ethical, scientific, and sacred discourses, leaves an open space for examining similar hybrid narratives in contemporary literature within the framework of genre theory. Ultimately, this study argues that reading ecofiction not as a static genre label but as a vibrant narrative practice with constantly negotiated boundaries, is more fruitful both theoretically and critically.

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