

Perspectives Of Deep Ecological Principles In Annie Proulx's Barkskins

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Abstract

Deforestation remains one of the crucial environmental issues that the world faces today. Rapid deforestation substantially contributes to a broad range of environmental consequences, like biodiversity loss and global surface temperature rise. Forests are among the pivotal components that regulate and determine an area's climate and weather conditions, and they also challenge the viability of creatures such as humans, flora, and fauna, as well as combat illegal logging. This paper will analyze the deep ecological principles that align with the novel. It illustrates the value of primitive species of plants and animals. It explores whether humans have realized the natural world's value, richness, and diversity. It discloses whether humans use nature and nonhumans for their vital needs or has overridden the usage. It delineates the flourishing of human life and culture and examines the compatibility of the human population through the tremendous consumption and waste production rate. It investigates the repercussions of human interference with the nonhuman world. The policies that have changed to ensure the sustenance of living beings. It enquires about the ideological change appreciating the quality of life rather than adhering to a high standard of living.

Keywords: Annie Proulx; Barkskins; Beavers; Deep Ecology; Deforestation;

1. INTRODUCTION

The ecological revolution of the 1960s catalyzed the rise of the Deep Ecological Movement, which fundamentally shifted environmental thought from anthropocentrism, which believes in human superiority and dominion over nature, to an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the intrinsic value of all life forms. Lynn White Jr. (1967) famously argued that Western religious traditions, especially Christianity, played a pivotal role in fostering an exploitative attitude toward the environment. He traces this information back to medieval European views, which have been exemplified in the Frankish calendars, which depict human mastery over nature through activities such as cultivating land and cutting trees. White contends that Judeo-Christian teleology, which entrenches the belief that humans were divinely granted dominion over nature, contrasts sharply with pagan animistic traditions that honour the spirits that dwell within natural elements and that require humans to seek harmony with the environment before exploiting it. By dismantling such animism, Christianity facilitated a worldview that justifies the unrestrained exploitation of nature. White also proposed an alternative Christian ethic that is inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, who emphasizes humility and reciprocity among all living beings, which challenges the anthropocentric norm of unbounded human dominion.

Following World War II, environmental concerns expanded with leaders like Stephen Fox, Barry Commoner, and Ralph Nader, who identified industrial pollution as one of the major threats to ecological health. Rachel Carson's landmark 1962 work, *Silent Spring*, further raises public consciousness about chemical pesticide poisoning and also fuels a philosophical divide within environmentalism. This Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess, articulated in his essay "The Shallow and the Deep Long-Range Ecology Movements" (1973), where he distinguishes between the shallow movement, which focuses mainly on resource depletion and pollution within a human-centered framework, and the deep movement, which calls for a radical reassessment of humanity's relationship with nature. Naess developed his ecological philosophy, Ecosophy T, inspired by thinkers like Spinoza and Gandhi, founded on the ideal of "Self-Realization" which created an awareness of the interdependence of all life. In 1984, he formulated this philosophy into an eight-point platform which aims to foster wide-ranging environmental sustainability and to preserve the rich diversity of life on Earth.

Annie Proulx's *Barkskins* is a multigenerational narrative that explores the catastrophic environmental consequences of deforestation and the mass destruction of animal life that results from centuries of

relentless resource exploitation. The novel traces the history from the arrival of European settlers in North America, namely Duquet and René Sel, through the rise of industrial capitalism. The novel reveals how the unstoppable quest for profit precipitates the tireless cutting of ancient forests, which collapses the ecosystems and irreversible loss of biodiversity. This ecological devastation is undoubtedly linked with the displacement of Indigenous peoples, whose sustainable and reciprocal land stewardship sharply contrasts with the extractive and exploitative practices of colonial settlers. By intertwining the fates of forests, animals, and humans, *Barkskins* foregrounds the immediate environmental price of unchecked exploitation alongside deeper ethical questions about the intrinsic value of all life, human responsibility, and the alarming call for long-term ecological survival.

The novel intricately resonates with the foundational principles of deep ecology, a philosophy that challenges human-centric worldviews and that advocates for a radical reimagining of human relationships with the biosphere. This paper investigates how the novel embodies, complicates, or contests the eight core tenets articulated by the deep ecology movement. By aligning narrative events, character development, and ecological outcomes in *Barkskins* with these deep ecological principles, the analysis situates Proulx's environmental vision within the broader discourse of ecological ethics and thought. The study highlights the novel's importance both as a powerful work of environmental critique and that acts as a catalyst for ecological consciousness that urges humanity's moral obligations for reconsideration towards the betterment of the natural world.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lippert (2022) elucidates the act of deforestation and the enactment of skilled labour of woodcutting. He compares the rudimentary act of settler colonial labor precisely to a dance, a fulfilled performance, an energetic moment of focused and practiced bodily movement. He asserts that the skilled activities of the lumberjacks are also dexterously arranged as labor that adds profit and value according to the managerial replica of performance. Gersdorf (2022) in his essay, considers *Barkskins* as a novel that represents the forest as a pivotal part of the human race, which covers 320 years of human interconnections with the arboreal world of North America, revisiting modern history, and is identified for its ecological cynicism. He argues that the contemporary trial of deforestation not only destroys an ecosystem but also indigenous knowledge and increases ecological cynicism. He propounds that the novel encourages the reader to explore the evidence of reversible, ecologically sustainable advantages of the forest. He declares that the eventual expression of ecological cynicism is to unveil the reality of the destructive nature of modernity and to carry on with the task of environmental restoration.

De Bruyn (2016) argues that humans cause deforestation, global warming, and species extinction, and impact other species. He suggests that humans learn to consider themselves as a species. He argues that the three elements of the novel, namely the context, the character, and time, which revise our notion of the novel and human and instruct us not to perish as a civilization but to be a species. He says that a species ideology about the species plays an integral role in the novel's narrative, and by interrogating demarcations between and among humans and nonhumans. Spencer (2022) seeks to illustrate in the novels *Barkskins* and *The Woodlanders* the forest, which are places drenched with history and competing beliefs. He uses Andreas Malm's crucial work on 'fossil capital' and his observations on 'wilderness literature' to depict how in two works of fiction, the forest gives a picture of a future beyond capital. He argues that both language and form in the text declare the worth of the valuable forest.

Olsen (2021) argues that only specific animals remain in the spotlight, whereas conservation, scientific research, and media coverage on biodiversity loss are all characterized by a taxonomic bias and that there is less focus on less charismatic species, even by the ecologically involved literature. He emphasizes how the whole of biodiversity should be embraced. He points out the perspective of taxonomic bias due to the remote habitats and technical barrier in collecting data and the prioritized species which play a vital role in the ecosystem. (Bommas 2023) explore a tension in *Barkskins*' involvement with history and human agency in the Anthropocene. Firstly, he questions the idea of the Anthropocene, and offers the capitalocene as a potential alternative, collective to the historical novel. Secondly, he exposes the basic inequalities of the larger capitalist-colonial system as it decenters the primacy of human subjects. Thirdly, focuses on the combination of settler colonialism and capitalism and their associated logic.

The literature review indicates that while there has been substantial ecocritical and bioregional analysis of Annie Proulx's *Barkskins*, particularly focusing on themes such as the history of North American deforestation, capitalist-colonial exploitation, and ecological devastation, there is a significant gap in scholarship that explicitly examines the novel through the lens of deep ecology principles. Existing research mainly addresses broad environmental critiques, historical perspectives on European colonialism, and ecological resilience, but does not systematically analyze how *Barkskins* aligns with or promotes deep ecological philosophy, such as intrinsic valuation of all living beings, ecological interconnectedness, and radical shifts in human-nature relationships. This gap reveals a lack of focused inquiry into how Proulx's depiction of forests, human impact, and Indigenous perspectives resonates with the key tenets of deep ecology, leaving an underexplored area for critical engagement and interpretation.

3. Theoretical Framework

Arne Naess coined the term deep ecology in his 1973 article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements". He believed in a deeper approach to nature and being more sensitive to oneself and the nonhuman life in the ecosystem. Deep Ecology transcends the factual-science level to the self and ecological consciousness level. He generated two norms, namely self-realization and biocentric equality. The word self, denotes the organic wholeness, which emphasizes that all the creatures in the ecosystem must be saved to save oneself. Biocentric equality is interrelated to self-realization, and it becomes obvious that when we are damaging the rest of nature, we are harming ourselves.

This paper will analyze the deep ecological principles that align with the novel, *Barkskins*. The paper focuses on the deep ecological principles formulated by Arne Naess and George Sessions and scrutinizes how the characters value the richness of the ecosystem. The research examines whether humans have violated deep ecological principles by using natural resources that are beyond their vital needs. The paper analyzes whether there is a substantial decrease in the human population, whether there is excessive human interference in the nonhuman world. The paper examines whether the policies are executed for an ideological change.

4. Perspectives Of Deep Ecological Principle

Annie Proulx's historical novel *Barkskins* can be effectively analyzed through the lens of Arne Naess's deep ecological principles, which critique humanity's anthropocentric attitude toward the natural world. The novel vividly addresses urgent environmental issues such as deforestation, species extinction, global warming, and natural resource depletion. It explores the complex relationship between humans and nonhuman life, expressing profound concern for the Earth's ecological balance and highlighting the consequences of human actions on nature.

4.1 The First Perspective of the Deep Ecological Principle

The first principle of deep ecology asserts that "the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves," a value that is intrinsic and independent of any utility humans may derive from the nonhuman world (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). This principle challenges the conventional notion of nature as merely a resource for human economic growth.

In *Barkskins*, this principle is illustrated through the contrasting attitudes of Monsieur Tregpany and René Sel towards the forest. When ordered by Tregpany to cut trees, Sel questions the necessity of felling forests that have not yet been cleared, asking, "Why do we cut the forest when there are so many fine clearings? Why wouldn't a man build his house in a clearing, one of those meadows that we passed when we walked here? Would it not be easier?" (Proulx, 2016, p. 17). Sel's doubts reveal his respect for the forest's intrinsic value, whereas Tregpany views trees solely as commodities for personal wealth, ignoring their inherent worth.

Moreover, the novel presents the indigenous Mi'kmaq perspective, embodied in the elderly grandmother Loze, who recalls the medicinal and spiritual significance of plants like the rattling plant (*mededekooi*). She shares how this "magic plant could cure many illnesses and even grant wishes" (Proulx, 2016, p. 175), reflecting a worldview that sees humans as interconnected with and dependent upon the natural environment. This contrasts sharply with exploitative attitudes and underscores the need for ethical consideration towards all forms of life.

4.2 The Second Perspective of Deep Ecological Principle

The second principle of deep ecology maintains that “richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves” (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). This principle emphasizes that biodiversity holds intrinsic importance beyond its usefulness to humans. In *Barkskins*, Duquet reveals a utilitarian attitude toward trees, focusing exclusively on their economic value. He regards oak as the most desirable tree and questions why it is not as widespread as pine or spruce, pondering the suitability of other wood types, such as pine, hemlock, or beech, for English shipbuilders. He is particularly concerned with how mast trees might be transported from the forest (Proulx, 2016, p. 73). His preoccupation with profit ignores the intrinsic worth of the trees and the ecological significance of forest diversity.

In contrast, the Mi'kmaq worldview, as conveyed in Pere Crème's letter, expresses deep respect for all living beings. He observes that the tribe lives in harmony with nature's rhythms, saying: “They do not have orderly lives as we do. Their time is fitted to the abundance crests of Animals, Fruits, and Fish that is to say, to the Seasons of the Hunt and ripening Berries. One of the most curious of their attributes is their manner of regarding Trees, Plants, all manner of Fish, the Moose and the Bear, and others as their Equals” (Proulx, 2016, p. 152). This perspective embraces interconnectedness, viewing animals and plants as kin, a relationship that nurtures biodiversity.

The novel also highlights the devastating impact of the fur trade, which fuelled the excessive killing of animals for luxury goods. Wuqua, a fur trader, reacts with fascination as Duquet presents various rare furs like arctic fox, mink, marten, ermine, and sea otter pelts, which represent the height of elite fashion (Proulx, 2016, p. 95). Despite Wuqua's appreciation, the traders' exploitation far exceeds subsistence needs, promoting demand for rare species and pushing them toward extinction. Scholars like Dolin (2010) note that Europeans' arrival drastically altered Indigenous peoples' attitudes and relations toward beavers and other fur-bearing animals, accelerating their depletion.

Furthermore, Rene Sel contrasts the lack of forest regulation in New France with the organized forestry laws of France. The Gatineau Forest is described as chaotic, with widespread unregulated logging; many harvested pine trees deemed unsuitable for squaring were simply abandoned, showing blatant disregard for forest conservation (Proulx, 2016, p. 315). Discussions even question whether to cut trees in Maine or Montreal, reflecting shortsighted commercial interests that ignore the forest's richness.

Industrialists like James Duke and Breitsprecher become captivated by expansive stands of white pine, expressing eager ambitions to exploit these riches without concern for sustainability. Breitsprecher describes the forest as “the greatest stand of white pine in the world,” highlighting their intent to harvest extensively (Proulx, 2016, p. 465).

In stark contrast, Dieter exemplifies a harmonious relationship with nature. Concerned for the well-being of birds displaced by logging, he tells Lavinia, “I wonder if you know how badly the robins are hurt when we cut down trees... We take their trees away and they are forced to build nests over whirling saws” (Proulx, 2016, p. 554). This poignant observation underscores the principle that all living creatures have an inherent right to existence, illustrating the destructive consequences of human disregard for ecosystems.

4.3 The Third Perspective of Deep Ecological Principle

The third principle of deep ecology asserts that “humans have no rights to reduce richness except to satisfy vital needs” (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). This principle warns against the excessive exploitation of natural resources beyond essential requirements.

In *Barkskins*, Wuqua discusses with Duquet how the forests are being cut not only for timber but for other uses like the production of ink soot obtained by burning vast amounts of pine trees. Wuqua notes, “Very many pine trees must burn to supply China's scholars” (Proulx, 2016, p. 98). This example illustrates how resource use extends far beyond vital needs, reflecting rampant overexploitation without recognizing the value of conserving nature.

Similarly, the wigmaker's casual use of lichen powder, which is also employed to poison wolves, reveals a lack of awareness about the ethics of killing animals. He reassures Duquet that this powder protects wigs from wild animals but ignores the moral implications, exemplifying human disregard for the rights of other species: “I have lately changed to a powder made from curious lichens that grow on rocks... I have

heard they use it to poison wolves” (Proulx, 2016, p. 107). Wuqua’s observations confirm that humans often exceed vital needs, killing animals unnecessarily, primarily to adorn the upper classes. Morrison (2007) similarly notes that beaver pelts, prized for their soft undercoats used in hat-making, became fashionable commodities, driving overhunting.

Duquet’s return to Wobik shocks him as he witnesses the corrupted landscape: “the muddy trail west that he remembered was now a fair road” (Proulx, 2016, p. 118). The forest, once vast and seemingly inexhaustible, is diminished because humans have exploited it beyond sustainable levels, unable to fathom its depletion. This ongoing destruction is further evident when Duquet discusses the timber trade, mentioning plans to build ships from local timber and export large pine masts to London (Proulx, 2016, p. 130), a development that masks greed under the guise of trade progress. Duquet’s ambitions are boundless; Proulx notes, “It took fifty acres of oak to build one seventy-four-gun warship, and in the hardwood stands along the rivers of New France the forest began to fall to Duquet’s ambitions” (Proulx, 2016, p. 131), revealing the scale of overharvesting driven by avarice.

Moreover, indigenous perspectives conveyed through the elderly Mi’kmaw grandmother Loze lament the loss caused by overhunting: “Because our fathers killed so many beaver to trade with the Europeans the beaver are angry and have left the country, and now strike us with illness. After eel, beaver meat is the best meat for the Mi’kmaq. We destroyed our best food to trade their furs to the white men” (Proulx, 2016, p. 175). This testimony reflects the painful consequences of prioritizing trade profits over sustainable resource use.

Proulx also recounts how greed led to the complete disappearance of white auks on their nesting islands, as hunters like Achille and Rouge Emil took more than could be replenished. “But the next year when they went to the same island there were no birds, only a litter of feathers and bones, for English and Boston whalers had come before them” (Proulx, 2016, p. 176). Similarly, extensive hunting for moose and deer for clothing further reveals people’s overdependence on nature’s bounty, as Kuntaw’s men crafted traditional jackets and footwear from animal hides (Proulx, 2016, p. 295).

The growing commercialization of forests is also evident in conversations about timber cutting. Amboise, a logger, focuses on earning money, indifferent to the forest’s intrinsic value: “Workin this cut I seen the swamp full of hackmatack. They want ship timber, knees—knees for ships. They say ‘ships get built in the woods’” (Proulx, 2016, p. 310). This viewpoint reflects the commodification and short-term exploitation of natural resources.

Wohlleben (2016) reminds us that trees must not be valued solely for material welfare but also revered for their mysterious qualities and wonders. Yet James Duke’s insatiable hunger for forest land shows a contrasting materialistic mindset. His conversation with Lennart reveals a dangerous attitude toward resource hoarding: “We need to find these forests and get our wood crews on them as soon as we may. Else all of Europe will come in and burn and cut everything... They are like tigers who have tasted the blood” (Proulx, 2016, p. 456). Duke epitomizes the greed driving environmental destruction.

This greed culminates in the plans of Breitsprecher, Lennart, and James to buy and exploit hardwood forests aggressively, prideful that “A thousand men could not cut all this in a thousand years. We’ll get them. We’ll get a thousand men” (Proulx, 2016, p. 466). Such determination to exploit forests for centuries disregards the slow pace of natural regeneration and the intrinsic value of trees, sealing ecosystems’ fate under relentless human consumption.

4.4 The Fourth Perspective of Deep Ecological Principle

Devall and Sessions (1985) emphasize in the fourth principle that “the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease” (p. 75). This idea is vividly illustrated in *Barkskins* through the drastic decline of the beaver population in areas heavily trapped by both Indigenous peoples and European traders. Duquet, involved in the fur trade, pursues profit relentlessly, as reflected in Proulx’s words: “Duquet set out now to get as much as he could from his lowly position in the fur trade and swore to watch for better opportunities” (Proulx, 2016, p. 65). There was little concern for preserving beavers, whose decline was spurred by unchecked human demands, lack of sustainable practices, and inadequate knowledge about conservation.

The depopulation of the Indigenous Mi'kmaq tribe further compounds these pressures. A French missionary who visited New France reported to the governor that the tribe, once "as many as the hairs on men's heads," had dwindled to "a few hundred warriors," leading to a loss of traditional knowledge and cultural sensibilities as members died (Proulx, 2016, p. 150). This demographic decline, while tragic, ironically lessened the hunting pressure on beavers, allowing some ecological restoration through reduced human impact.

Discussions between characters like Elphege and Theotiste reflect on this shrinking population and its implications. They acknowledge that both Indigenous numbers and beaver populations had receded significantly: "And that is good because there are so few of us left. Now that the beaver are so few we must marry someone, ha ha! I fear we will soon find the English putting their houses on our trapping grounds" (Proulx, 2016, p. 170). Meanwhile, Sosep highlights how Indigenous efforts aimed to conserve woodlands sustainably, contrasting them with French Acadians who drained salt marshes for hay and traded beavers extensively. He notes that larger game such as moose, caribou, and bear had also retreated, while beavers once symbols of Indigenous culture had become a kind of currency: "The beaver were greatly reduced in number so severely had they been taken, for their skins could be turned into guns and metal pots... the custom of placing a beaver skin on a grave had fallen away" (Proulx, 2016, p. 171).

In a moment of hope, Dieter admires the forest preservation efforts of Lavinia who cherishes the beauty of thriving woodland. Quoting poet Ludwig Uhland, she joyfully states, "The sweetest joys on earth are found / In forests green and deep" (Proulx, 2016, p. 554), embracing a lifestyle untainted by greed. However, the erosion of Indigenous culture continues, as Edouard-Outger laments to Peter: "The most skillful canoe makers have already died, and many carvers and artists, too. In only a few years they have lost too many of their people to count. They say their world has ceased to exist in a single generation" (Proulx, 2016, p. 609). This sorrowful reflection underscores the intertwined loss of population, cultural knowledge, and ecological richness.

4.5 The Fifth Perspective of the Deep Ecological Principle

The fifth principle of deep ecology states that "present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening" (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). This warning is vividly illustrated through the correspondence between Armenius Breitsprecher and his cousin, Dieter Breitsprecher, a forester deeply engaged in studying forest ecology. Dieter kept detailed records on the effects of insects on tree species, temperature fluctuations, rainfall patterns, boundary plantings, and conducted a coppice experiment. Armenius expressed amazement at the complexity of New World forests and questioned how anyone could possibly control them. He lamented the Americans' lack of forest management practices such as thinning, pruning, shelter belts and their ignorance regarding soil health (Proulx, 2016).

The environmentalist Dr. Alfred Onehube further highlighted the dangers of human interference in forest ecosystems. He spoke on the 'Bud worm' infestations of the 1940s boreal forests and criticized the Forest Service's response—spraying DDT over the forests and waterways. This pesticide devastated aquatic life in the Miramichi River, once home to the world's greatest Atlantic salmon, effectively turning it into a "death river." Onehube cautioned, "We know better about DDT now. But what makes us think we are any smarter about the effects of vast clear-cutting of a very fragile ecosystem? Hah? There are countless unknowns here. And we don't even know how much we don't know" (Proulx, 2016, p. 690). His words emphasize that human greed and ignorance ultimately threaten the Earth's stability, warning that nature cannot be conquered without severe consequences.

4.6 The Sixth Perspective of the Deep Ecological Principle

The sixth principle asserts that "policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present" (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). In *Barkskins*, Dieter Breitsprecher exemplifies this vision through his commitment to forest restoration and sustainable management. After purchasing a substantial tract of cutover land, Dieter plans to replant the area to recover its lost ecological value. He expresses to Lavinia his hopes of eventually settling down with a small greenhouse and laboratory, remarking, "But consider if you would not like to see the results of untrammelled forest removal in the lands around the Mediterranean? It is what urged other countries to become mindful of forest care and

management” (Proulx, 2016, p. 563). This reflection illustrates how historical ecological collapse can inspire present-day stewardship.

Dieter actively corresponded with individuals concerned about forest depletion. He mentions a Unitarian minister from western Massachusetts whose sermons on trees were published in *Trees of Life*. The most compelling sermon, focusing on the cedars of Lebanon, sacred trees cut down by King Solomon’s vast labour force, moved even Queen Victoria to financially support protective measures for those forests (Proulx, 2016, p. 569). This highlights literature’s power to influence environmental awareness and policy. In another letter, Dieter communicates with Vermonter Marsh, a farmer who keenly observed environmental changes such as soil degradation after tree removal and the disappearance of birds following pond drainage. Marsh felt overlooked, much like a neglected seed grain, emphasizing the societal disregard for ecological concerns. Dieter urged his company not to sell cutover pine lands to speculators, instead creating a “Maintenance Timberland” division dedicated to replanting and sustainable oversight.

Lavinia shares with Ahorangi that although her mission was to cut trees, Dieter intends to replace them through careful reforestation. She wonders, “We wonder if it is possible to plant infant kauri trees, perhaps one for each large one that is cut, to care for the young trees as they grow and age?” (Proulx, 2016, pp. 582–583). Dieter reinforces this hope, stating, “We plant them for the health of the world rather than for people not yet born” (Proulx, 2016, p. 583), affirming a commitment to future generations.

Despite these efforts, legislative measures such as the Timber Culture Act, Timber Cutting Act, and the Timber and Stone Act were enacted with many loopholes, rendering them largely ineffective. These laws, often written in elaborate Spenserian calligraphy, were more symbolic than practical, serving to decorate legal pages rather than enforcing real conservation. This underscores the gap between policy intentions and ecological realities.

4.7 The Seventh Perspective of the Deep Ecological Principle

According to Devall and Sessions (1985), the seventh principle emphasizes an ideological shift “mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great” (p. 75). This perspective stresses valuing the richness and depth of life over material accumulation or expansion.

In *Barkskins*, Conrad, the great-grandson of Dieter Breitsprecher, embodies this change through his dedication to forest regeneration. Together with his employee McErlane, Conrad inspects five glasshouses intended for seedling propagation. He notices that the greenhouses are not well-maintained, and recognizes that successful seedling cultivation requires extensive knowledge in areas like cloning and forest genetics. Emphasizing this, he asserts, “Seedlings are the best way to keep the forest alive” (Proulx, 2016, p. 662). Their nursery focuses on pine and spruce bare-root seedlings, designed to thrive in diverse conditions.

Conrad also reflects on nature’s methods of renewal such as the role of fire in forest replenishment, and applies lessons learned from forestry school, where he studied innovative tools like kraft paper cylinders filled with soil to nurture seedlings. In 1939, he established a seedling experiment involving eleven tree species within newly constructed greenhouses. This scientific approach represents a broader ideological transformation toward environmental awareness and sustainable living.

Moreover, the story highlights Felix Sel, who receives a fellowship awarding five thousand dollars from the Breitsprecher Tree Project. This scholarship signifies support for new generations dedicated to ecological restoration and sustainability, symbolizing hope and progress along the pathway of responsible environmental stewardship.

4.8 The Eighth Perspective of the Deep Ecological Principle

The eighth principle emphasizes that “those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes” (Devall and Sessions, 1985, p. 75). In *Barkskins*, this commitment to action begins with the Breitsprecher Tree Project, an initiative focused on forest replanting and the restoration of damaged rivers. The project invited participants such as Jeanne and Felix, both recipients of scholarships, to actively contribute to ecological recovery. The team,

composed of Sapatisia, Jeanne, Felix, Tom Paulin, and Charlene, shared knowledge on soil health, planting techniques, and forest conservation.

Their efforts included meticulous documentation of test plots and studies on the effects of mycorrhizal fungi on seedling growth. The team also examined mixed-wood forests and maintained a comprehensive online library, reflecting a deep dedication to preserving biodiversity. These team members demonstrated courage, facing threats to their lives while working to protect the environment.

Sapatisia recalls activists like Mayara, who bravely exposed environmental destruction in a protected sanctuary but was tragically murdered for her efforts. This danger underscores the high stakes involved in ecological advocacy. Moreover, Sapatisia's foresight highlights the alarming challenges humanity faces, including global warming, rising temperatures, Earth's sensitivity to solar flares, climate shifts due to volcanic eruptions, electromagnetic storms, subterranean magma movements, and accelerating glacier melt. Scientists warn ominously, "A great crisis is just ahead" (Proulx, 2016, p. 712), signalling the threat of human extinction if urgent action is not taken.

Through Sapatisia's reflection, the narrative conveys a profound message: humans have the power to alter forests and ecosystems drastically, yet this power carries the risk of self-destruction as humanity exhausts natural resources. Echoing this warning, Berry (1998) argues that the extensive human interference in the biosphere has now returned as a direct threat to human survival, emphasizing the urgent need for ecological responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

The first principle articulated by Devall and Sessions emphasizes the intrinsic value of all life, which is independent of its utility to humans. This establishes a powerful moral foundation for a just and sustainable society. When society can identify this inherent worth, decision-making will shift towards respect, restraint, and interconnectedness rather than exploiting resources for consumption and profit.

Adding to this, the second principle states that the consequences of disrespecting the intrinsic value. Within Proulx's narrative, characters like Duquet focus greedily on the economic benefits of certain trees and the fur trade and ruthlessly kill rare animals. These actions collapse the ecological balance and pose a threat to long-term societal welfare. By differentiating the Mi'kmaq worldview, which foresees all living beings as kinsfolk and heroes interconnected, they practiced a sustainable relationship with nature. This grateful attitude protects the ecosystem's integrity and considers other species' equal right to exist, and cultivates humility and caution in human behaviour. Failure to follow such a view will result in real-world destruction like depleted forests, extinction of various species, and the deterioration of rich ecosystems. Lack of effective forest conservation and disrespect towards nonhuman needs, as reflected in Proulx's work, demonstrate the perils of short-term, utilitarian thinking.

The third principle asserts that a crucial moral boundary states that humans have no right to diminish life's richness except to satisfy vital needs. Proulx's narratives expose how avarice and ignorance drive overconsumption of resources, environmental destruction, and the irreversible extinction of species. Societies that hold to this principle utilise the resources only to meet crucial needs, promote sustainability, and conserve the foundations of life.

The fourth principle highlights the interconnected flourishing of humans and nonhumans and stresses that this requires a considerable reduction in human population alongside a shift toward sustainable living. Proulx's text depicts how unchecked expansion and resource consumption result in the decline of animal populations and indigenous cultures, which causes profound ecological and cultural loss. The Mi'kmaq and beaver populations epitomize how overexploitation perishing of natural and cultural richness alike. For modern society, this principle is a saddening call to recognize our limits, ease unsustainable pressures, and adopt practices that permit both ecosystems and cultures to thrive in balance and which ensures resilience for future generations.

The fifth principle extends this urgency and warns about excessive human interference and the rapid worsening of environmental conditions. The work of characters like Dieter and eco-conservationists such as Dr. Onehube underscores the disconnects between destructive human activities like greedy logging or the use of pesticides. Their warning observations stress that careless exploitation results in soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, contamination of water, and ecological damage for the long term. From the

perspective of society, this principle requires humility, a deeper understanding of ecology, and responsible stewardship. Respecting natural limits leads to sustainable development and safeguards fragile ecosystems for present and future generation.

The sixth principle calls for transformation and policy reforms that affects economic, technological, and ideological structures. Dieter's dedicated efforts in restoration of the forest illustrates how responsible individuals can bring about changes by raising awareness, educating others, and practicing responsible resource management. Society must move beyond short-sighted exploitation toward lasting sustainability through meaningful reforms, participation of the community, and shifts in the culture that emphasize preservation and restoration for the long term.

The seventh principle targets on an ideological shift from valuing material wealth toward appreciating life quality and harmonious coexistence with ecosystems. Conrad, Dieter's great-grandson, exemplifies this through his commitment to sustainable forestry techniques such as seedling propagation and reforestation experiments. Society's embrace of this principle redefines progress, emphasizes sustainability, stewardship, and well-being, and thus ensures the thriving of humans and nature for generations to come.

Finally, the eighth principle stresses that those who accept these perspectives hold a moral obligation to enact necessary changes. The Breitsprecher Tree Project embodies this ethic through its collaborative work in forest and river restoration, knowledge sharing, and ecological activism. Despite profound threats like global warming, species loss, and ecosystem collapse that are highlighted through Sapatisia's forewarnings, human agency offers hope for healing and resilience. This principle insists that collective, informed, and courageous stewardship is crucial while confronting environmental crises, preserving biodiversity, and securing a sustainable future for all life on Earth.

Overall, the research reveals diverse attitudes toward nature. Indigenous peoples maintain a worldview of deep connection and reverence, while many lumberjacks and colonial traders prioritize economic gain over conservation. Most characters in *Barkskins* fail to acknowledge nature's intrinsic value, instead focusing on material wealth accumulation. Colonization and resulting poverty compelled some Indigenous peoples to trade fur intensively, accelerating ecological depletion. Consequently, the abundant wilderness was ravaged by both natives and colonists, whose merciless exploitation led to massive forest loss and the extinction of many species. This unchecked human interference in the nonhuman world has accelerated extinction rates and imperils the delicate balance of life, and gives us a sobering reminder that sustainability demands respect, restraint, and reverence for all beings.

Disclosure Of Interest

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