



## The House as an Ecological Entity: Individual's Critiques on Anthropocentrism in Susanna Clarke's Piranesi

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <p><b>Received:</b> 2026-04-07<br/> <b>Revised:</b> 2026-05-19<br/> <b>Accepted:</b> 2026-10-06</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/> <i>Anthropocentrism;<br/> Piranesi; Ecocentrism;<br/> Human and Other-than-human relationships; The House</i></p> <p><b>DOI:</b><br/> 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11334</p> <p><b>Corresponding Author:</b><br/> Asih Marlina<br/> marlinaa0328@gmail.com<br/> English Literature Study Program, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Jawa Tengah</p> | <p><i>This study examines human-other-than-human relationships in Susanna Clarke's Piranesi through an ecocritical perspective. Although previous studies have explored the novel through themes of memory, identity, trauma, space, and environmental concerns, relatively limited attention has been given to the House as an active ecological entity and to the tension between anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives embodied by the novel's characters. This study therefore focuses on how Piranesi critiques anthropocentrism and constructs ecocentric relationships through the representation of the House and the contrasting perspectives of Piranesi and the Other. Using Lawrence Buell's ecocritical framework, this study analyzes the environment as an active presence, the critique of human-centered ideology, and the interdependence between human and other-than-human systems. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method with close reading as the primary data collection technique. The findings reveal that the House functions as a dynamic ecological system that actively shapes human perception, identity, knowledge, and survival. The Other embodies an anthropocentric worldview characterized by domination, exploitation, utility, and the pursuit of power, whereas Piranesi represents an ecocentric consciousness grounded in coexistence, adaptation, attentiveness, and environmental respect. The Prophet occupies a more ambiguous position through his pursuit of knowledge beyond ordinary human experience. Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the interconnectedness between humans and the other-than-human world, challenging hierarchical</i></p> |

*distinctions between humanity and nature. Ultimately, Piranesi reimagines human and other-than-human relationships through an ecological perspective that values coexistence, intrinsic value, and interdependence rather than control and utility.*

## 1. Introduction

Environmental crises such as climate change, ecological destruction, and the exploitation of natural resources have increasingly become global concerns in recent decades (Ahmed, Islam Khan, & Augustine, 2018). These concerns have encouraged scholars across disciplines, including literary studies, to reconsider the relationships between humans and the environment. As environmental issues have become increasingly urgent, ecocriticism has attracted growing scholarly attention

because of its examination of how literature represents nature and human interactions with the other-than-human world. Literary texts can therefore become important spaces for questioning assumptions about humanity's relationship with the environment and for reconsidering the values through which the nonhuman world is understood (Tajane, Shree, Pathak, Saluja, & Srikanth, 2024).

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field of literary and cultural analysis concerned with the representation of nature and human interactions with the other-than-human world. Mishra explains that the concept of ecocriticism was introduced through William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." The term is connected to the Greek root *oikos*, meaning "household" or "earth," and provides a conceptual connection between literary studies and ecological awareness (Mishra, 2016).

More broadly, ecocriticism examines how literary works depict environmental relationships and ecological concerns (Shamim, Sahu, & Dwivedi, 2025). According to Lawrence Buell, environmentally oriented literature positions the environment not merely as a passive setting but as an active presence that influences human experience and narrative development (Wajid, 2025). Such an approach makes it possible to examine literary representations that challenge anthropocentric assumptions and instead recognize the agency, value, and significance of the other-than-human world.

Anthropocentrism is particularly important within ecocritical studies because it establishes hierarchical distinctions between humans and the environment. Anthropocentrism positions humans as the primary reference point for understanding and evaluating the world, placing human interests, values, and experiences above those of other-than-human beings (Gruen, 2018). Consequently, nature may be constructed as subordinate to human needs and treated primarily as a resource for human use. Anthropocentrism therefore tends to legitimize the

exploitation and domination of the other-than-human world by reducing environmental entities to instruments for human interests (Kopnina, Washington, Taylor, & J Piccolo, 2018). In contrast, ecocentrism recognizes ecosystems and the other-than-human world as possessing intrinsic value beyond their usefulness to humans (Gray & Whyte, 2018). The distinction between these two perspectives provides a useful framework for examining the different ways characters understand and interact with the House in *Piranesi*.

Published in 2020, *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke is a contemporary fantasy novel that follows a protagonist known as Piranesi, who inhabits a vast labyrinthine structure called the House. The narrative begins with the narrator's account of enormous waves surging through one of the House's halls and placing his life in danger. The narrator, whose real name is Matthew Rose Sorensen, is one of the inhabitants of the House. He was brought into this alternative spatial realm by Ketterley, known as the Other, who views him as a rival. Trapped within the House, Piranesi is compelled to assist the Other in his pursuit of the Great Knowledge (Clarke, 2020; Saikia & Bairagi, 2024).

The House consists of enormous halls, statues, tides, birds, clouds, weather patterns, and other environmental elements that together constitute Piranesi's world. Rather than functioning simply as the location in which the story takes place, the House profoundly influences Piranesi's understanding of reality, his daily

practices, and his survival. The House operates according to ecological rhythms that Piranesi must observe and understand. Its tides determine movement and danger, its animals provide companionship and ecological signs, and its changing conditions require continuous adaptation. In this sense, the House can be understood as an ecological system rather than simply a mystical architectural structure. Its significance also extends beyond the physical, as it becomes inseparable from Piranesi's identity, knowledge, and relationship with the world. Pike (2023) further notes that the world represented in the novel is influenced by Rudolf Steiner's early twentieth-century concept of anthroposophy, a spiritual realm in which truth can be experienced beyond conventional distinctions between the physical and spiritual.

Previous scholarship has approached *Piranesi* from several perspectives. Studies have examined the novel in relation to trauma, memory, identity, and the labyrinthine structure of space, while other studies have considered environmental concerns, animism, enchantment, perception, and philosophical questions surrounding knowledge and feeling (Clarkson, 2024; Locatelli, 2025; Mysliwiec, 2024; Sandoval, 2026; Ursa, 2024). Locatelli (2025), for instance, examines the relationship between trauma, memory, identity, and the labyrinth, emphasizing the connection between spatial structure and the protagonist's fragmented psychological state. Mysliwiec (2024), meanwhile, argues that the novel can be understood ecocritically through its environmental concerns and its challenge to modern human relationships with nature. These studies demonstrate the richness

of the House as a space of psychological, philosophical, and ecological significance.

However, despite these contributions, the ecological dimension of Piranesi remains open to further examination, particularly regarding the relationship between anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives. Existing studies often emphasize the symbolic, psychological, philosophical, or environmental dimensions of the House without fully examining how the House operates as an active ecological system in relation to the contrasting attitudes of the characters. The House is not only a space interpreted by human beings; it continuously acts upon them by shaping their survival, perception, routines, knowledge, and identity. This provides an opportunity to examine the novel through Buell's emphasis on the environment as an active presence and through the ecocritical distinction between domination and coexistence.

The contrast between Piranesi and the Other is particularly significant in this context. The Other approaches the House through power, utility, and control, while Piranesi develops a relationship based on observation, adaptation, respect, and belonging. Their different relationships with the House therefore provide a narrative representation of competing environmental worldviews. The Prophet adds another dimension to this contrast because his pursuit of hidden knowledge demonstrates how intellectual curiosity can also be connected to humanity's desire to access and understand realities beyond ordinary experience. Examining these characters together makes it possible to identify different degrees and forms of human-centered engagement with the House.

Based on this research gap, this study investigates how anthropocentrism is represented and critiqued in Susanna Clarke's Piranesi and how the novel constructs human-other-than-human relationships through the representation of

the House. The study aims to analyze how the House functions as an active ecological system and how the novel critiques anthropocentrism through the contrasting environmental perspectives of Piranesi, the Other, and, to a lesser extent, the Prophet. Using Buell's ecocritical framework, the study addresses two research questions: (1) how is the House represented as an active ecological entity in the novel, and (2) how does the novel critique anthropocentric ideology through its representation of human-other-than-human relationships?

The novelty of this study lies in bringing these elements together by foregrounding the House as an active ecological presence while examining the contrasting environmental ethics represented by the characters. Rather than treating the House primarily as a metaphorical or psychological structure, this study approaches it as a dynamic ecological entity whose rhythms and conditions actively shape human existence. By connecting environmental agency with anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, and human-other-than-human interdependence, the study contributes to ecocritical discussions of contemporary fantasy literature and offers a more integrated understanding of the ecological relationships represented in Piranesi.

## 2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of ecocriticism to analyze the representation of human-other-than-human relationships in *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meanings, representations, relationships, and environmental perspectives within a literary text. Qualitative data analysis involves the systematic classification and interpretation of textual materials to identify patterns, meanings, and representations embedded within the data (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2017; Mezmir, 2020). The primary data source of this study is Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* (2020). The data consist of narrative descriptions, dialogues, character perspectives, and passages that represent environmental agency, anthropocentric attitudes, ecocentric consciousness, and human-other-than-human relationships. Particular attention is given to passages in which the House directly influences human experience or in which the characters express particular attitudes toward the House and its ecological elements.

The data were collected through close reading. The novel was read repeatedly to identify passages relevant to the research questions. During the reading process, textual evidence was selected when it demonstrated one or more of the following aspects: (1) the House functioning as an active environmental presence; (2) the influence of tides, weather, animals, statues, and spatial conditions on human survival and perception; (3) attitudes of domination, utility, exploitation, or control toward the House; (4) attitudes of adaptation, respect, coexistence, and belonging; and (5) relationships demonstrating human-other-than-human interdependence.

After the relevant passages were identified, the data were organized according to thematic categories derived from the research objectives and Buell's ecocritical concepts. Passages concerning the House's influence on human actions, perception, survival, and identity were categorized under the theme of the environment as an active presence. Passages showing the Other's pursuit of power, utility, and control were categorized under anthropocentric perspective. Passages demonstrating *Piranesi*'s respect, adaptation, belonging, and recognition of intrinsic environmental value were categorized under ecocentric consciousness. Evidence showing the dependence of human experience on environmental rhythms and other-than-human entities was categorized under human and other-than-human interdependence. The Prophet was examined in relation to his pursuit of knowledge and his position within the broader spectrum of human approaches to the House.

The analysis was conducted interpretatively. Each selected passage was examined in relation to its narrative context and then connected to the relevant ecocritical concept. Rather than treating quotations as isolated examples, the analysis considered how repeated representations of the House, its ecological rhythms, and the characters' responses to them construct the novel's broader

environmental argument. The analysis also compared the contrasting perspectives of Piranesi and the Other to determine how the narrative associates particular forms of human behavior with either ecological coexistence or anthropocentric domination.

To strengthen the credibility of the interpretation, the analysis was conducted through repeated close reading and comparison of textual evidence across different sections of the novel. Evidence was not selected solely because it supported one predetermined interpretation. Instead, passages were examined in relation to the recurring patterns of environmental agency, utility, domination, adaptation, and interdependence. The findings were subsequently organized according to the thematic categories so that the interpretations remained connected to both the textual evidence and the theoretical framework.

### 3. Result

#### ***The House as an Active Ecological Entity***

The analysis shows that the House in Piranesi functions as more than a physical setting. It operates as a dynamic ecological system that directly influences Piranesi's survival, perception, identity, and daily activities. The House contains tides, weather patterns, animals, statues, clouds, and interconnected halls that continuously interact with one another. These elements produce environmental conditions that cannot simply be controlled by the human inhabitants. Instead, the inhabitants must respond to the House and adapt to its rhythms. Piranesi expresses his relationship with the House through admiration and recognition of its agency:

"The beauty of the House is immeasurable; its kindness infinite." (p.5)

The use of the words "beauty" and "kindness" is significant because Piranesi does not describe the House as an object or resource. His language gives the House a presence that exceeds its architectural function. The House becomes something capable of being appreciated and related to rather than something that exists merely to serve human needs. This representation supports Buell's understanding of the environment as an active presence because the House is integrated into the protagonist's experience rather than functioning as a passive background.

The House also actively determines the conditions of survival. Piranesi must observe the tides, understand flooding patterns, locate food, and recognize changes in weather. His knowledge therefore develops from environmental observation. He cannot survive by imposing his will upon the House; he survives by understanding its rhythms and adjusting his actions accordingly. The environmental system consequently shapes not only his physical movements but also his daily routines and knowledge.

This relationship becomes particularly significant because Piranesi's perception of time is also structured by environmental events. Instead of relying exclusively on conventional human systems of measurement, he identifies years

through occurrences within the House. His understanding of time therefore reflects his integration into the environment. The House does not merely contain his experience of time; its ecological events provide the framework through which he interprets existence. The House also influences Piranesi's consciousness. He states:

"This is how the House places new ideas gently and naturally in the minds of Men,"  
(p.121)

This statement suggests that the House participates in the production of human thought. The House is therefore represented as capable of shaping consciousness rather than merely surrounding it. The significance of this representation is that knowledge does not move in only one direction from human beings toward the environment. Instead, the environment also acts upon human beings. Piranesi learns from the House, and the House becomes an active participant in the formation of his worldview. The House consequently possesses significance beyond human utility. Piranesi's appreciation of it does not depend on what it can provide for him. His relationship is based on recognition and belonging. The House becomes part of his identity because his routines, knowledge, and understanding of existence are inseparable from its ecological conditions. This supports the interpretation of the House as an active ecological entity rather than a conventional fantasy setting.

### ***Anthropocentric Perspective Embodied by the Other***

In contrast to Piranesi, the Other, also known as Ketterley, embodies an anthropocentric worldview characterized by domination, utility, and exploitation. His relationship with the House is determined by what it can provide for human purposes. He approaches the House as a source of knowledge and power rather than as an entity possessing value in itself. His motivation is explicitly connected to power:

"It is power that I seek and therefore I should be speaking these words to something that is already powerful." (p.47)

The statement reveals the instrumental nature of his relationship with the House. Although he recognizes that the House possesses power, he does not respond to that power through respect or coexistence. Instead, he seeks to access and appropriate it. The House becomes valuable primarily because of what its power might enable him to achieve. The Prophet reinforces this interpretation when describing Ketterley:

"But Ketterley is an egoist. He always thinks in terms of utility. He cannot imagine why anything should exist if he cannot make use of it." (p.90)

This statement provides a direct representation of the anthropocentric logic criticized by ecocriticism. The Other evaluates existence according to usefulness. If

something cannot contribute to human purposes, he struggles to recognize its value. The House is consequently transformed from an ecological entity into an instrument.

The Other's failure to establish a reciprocal relationship with the House further demonstrates the limitations of this worldview. His attention is directed toward what he can extract from the environment rather than toward understanding the environmental relationships that make survival possible. Piranesi, by contrast, studies the House's rhythms and adapts to them. The difference between the two characters therefore extends beyond personality. It represents two contrasting environmental ethics. The Other's anthropocentrism also produces alienation. Because he views the House primarily through utility and power, he fails to become integrated into its ecological rhythms. His relationship with the environment remains external and instrumental. The House is something he wants to penetrate, understand, and control rather than something within which he must participate.

The novel therefore critiques anthropocentrism not simply by presenting the Other as morally flawed but by showing the practical consequences of his worldview. His desire for mastery prevents him from developing the ecological awareness necessary to live harmoniously within the House. The narrative thus connects domination with disconnection and contrasts it with Piranesi's adaptive relationship with the environment.

### ***Ecocentric Consciousness in Piranesi***

Piranesi represents an alternative ecological consciousness grounded in coexistence, attentiveness, gratitude, and belonging. He does not consider himself superior to the House. Instead, he understands himself as one component within a larger ecological system. His relationship with the House is expressed through the statement:

"a Beloved Child of the House." (p.212)

The phrase "Beloved Child" establishes a relationship based on belonging rather than ownership. Piranesi does not position himself as the master of the House. He recognizes himself as dependent upon and connected to it. The metaphor also suggests reciprocity: if he is a child of the House, then the House functions as something more than an inanimate structure. It becomes a presence with which he shares a relationship. This sense of integration is reinforced by his statement:

"The World feels Complete and Whole, and I, its Child, fit into it seamlessly," (p.71)

The emphasis on "Complete and Whole" suggests an ecological understanding in which individual existence cannot be separated from the wider system. Piranesi's identity is meaningful because of his position within the House. His sense of self is therefore relational rather than autonomous. Piranesi's

ecocentric perspective is most clearly demonstrated when he recognizes the intrinsic value of the House:

“The House is valuable because it is the House. It is enough in and of itself. It is not the means to an end.” (p.61)

This statement directly opposes the Other’s utilitarian worldview. Piranesi does not ask what the House can do for him. He recognizes its value as independent of human purposes. The House does not need to provide knowledge, power, shelter, or any other benefit in order to deserve respect.

This distinction is central to the novel’s critique of anthropocentrism. The Other sees value through utility, whereas Piranesi recognizes value through existence. The House is not reduced to a means toward a human end. Such an attitude reflects the ecocentric recognition that the other-than-human world possesses intrinsic value beyond its usefulness to humanity (Gray & Whyte, 2018).

Piranesi’s ecological consciousness is also practical. His respect for the House enables him to understand its rhythms and respond appropriately to environmental changes. He observes the tides, follows the movement of birds, gathers food, and records environmental events. His survival is therefore connected to attentiveness rather than domination. The novel consequently presents ecological awareness not as an abstract moral principle but as a way of living.

### ***Human and Other-Than-Human Interdependence***

The novel further emphasizes that human survival, identity, and knowledge are inseparable from the other-than-human environment. Piranesi’s existence within the House depends upon relationships with tides, animals, weather, food sources, architectural spaces, and the changing conditions of his surroundings. His way of measuring time provides a clear example:

“The Year the Albatross came to the South-Western Halls.” (p.33)

The naming of time after the arrival of an albatross demonstrates how environmental events become part of human consciousness. The bird is not merely an object observed by Piranesi. Its presence becomes significant enough to structure his understanding of history and time. This practice challenges the assumption that human systems should automatically provide the primary framework for understanding existence. Piranesi instead allows the other-than-human world to determine his temporal experience. His identity is shaped through interaction with the ecological system in which he lives. His relationship with the dead also demonstrates an ethic of care that extends beyond conventional human social structures:

*“I speak to them, telling them what I have been doing and I describe any Wonders that I have seen in the House.” (p.12)*

The passage demonstrates Piranesi's tendency to maintain relationships through care, memory, and communication even in circumstances where conventional social structures have disappeared. His attitude toward the inhabitants and remains within the House reflects a broader refusal to reduce other beings to objects.

The contrast between Piranesi and the Other consequently demonstrates the importance of ecological adaptation. Piranesi survives because he pays attention to the House and recognizes his dependence upon it. The Other, however, attempts to establish a relationship based on control. The narrative therefore presents interdependence as a condition of survival and domination as a source of failure.

### ***The Prophet and the Ambiguity of Human Knowledge***

The Prophet provides an additional perspective on human relationships with the House. While the Other is primarily associated with power and utility, the Prophet is connected to the pursuit of hidden knowledge and the desire to reach realities beyond ordinary human experience. His presence therefore introduces a more complex relationship between human curiosity and the environment. The Prophet's perspective differs from the Other's because his interest is associated more directly with knowledge than personal domination. Nevertheless, the desire to uncover hidden realities still places the House within a framework of human investigation. The House becomes something to be understood and accessed through human intellectual aspirations.

This makes the Prophet important to the novel's broader critique because the text does not simply distinguish between "good" and "bad" human approaches to knowledge. Instead, it reveals different ways in which human beings position themselves in relation to realities beyond themselves. The Other seeks to turn the House into a source of power, while the Prophet represents the intellectual desire to penetrate its mysteries.

Piranesi's relationship is different because he does not need to possess or completely explain the House in order to value it. His knowledge develops through observation, participation, and adaptation. The House remains something that exceeds complete human mastery. In this sense, Piranesi's ecocentric consciousness involves accepting that not everything needs to be converted into human knowledge or utility.

The Prophet therefore helps broaden the novel's environmental argument. The problem is not knowledge itself but a mode of knowledge that places the human subject at the center and assumes that the world exists primarily to be understood, possessed, or used. Through the contrast among the characters, Piranesi suggests that knowledge can become ecologically meaningful when it is accompanied by humility and recognition of human dependence.

#### 4. Discussion

##### *The Environment as an Active Presence*

The representation of the House corresponds closely with Buell's understanding of the environment as an active presence. Rather than functioning merely as a framing device, the environment in environmentally oriented literature should have an influential role in the narrative. In Piranesi, this role is particularly pronounced because almost every aspect of the protagonist's existence is mediated through the House. The tides determine when particular spaces become dangerous. Weather affects movement and survival. Birds become indicators of ecological change and sources of companionship. Food depends upon environmental conditions. The spatial structure of the House determines how Piranesi moves through and understands his world. These elements demonstrate that the environment is not simply where the story occurs; it is one of the forces through which the story develops.

This representation also complicates the conventional distinction between human subject and environmental object. Piranesi does not simply observe the House. He is formed through his interaction with it. His identity, language, routines, and understanding of time emerge from his participation in the House's ecological system.

The House can therefore be understood as an ecological entity because it possesses a dynamic organization of interconnected elements that influence human existence. Its agency does not necessarily need to be interpreted as human-like consciousness. Its agency can instead be understood through its capacity to impose conditions, generate consequences, shape perception, and determine the possibilities of survival. This interpretation expands the significance of the House beyond its symbolic function and emphasizes its material and ecological presence.

##### *Critique of Anthropocentrism*

The contrast between Piranesi and the Other provides the clearest expression of the novel's critique of anthropocentrism. The Other's worldview corresponds to an understanding of the environment based on utility and human-centered value. His desire for power transforms the House into a means toward an end. This attitude is summarized by the Prophet's description of Ketterley as someone who

"cannot imagine why anything should exist if he cannot make use of it" (p.90).

The statement captures the central problem of anthropocentrism: existence is evaluated according to its usefulness to human beings. What cannot be used is considered difficult to value. Piranesi challenges this logic when he declares that the House is valuable simply because it is the House. His perspective demonstrates an alternative form of environmental value that does not depend upon human benefit. This is consistent with ecocentrism, which recognizes the intrinsic value of

ecosystems and the other-than-human world (Gray & Whyte, 2018).

The novel's critique is particularly effective because the consequences of these two perspectives are represented through the characters' relationships with the House. Piranesi's willingness to adapt allows him to survive and understand his surroundings. The Other's desire for control creates distance between himself and the ecological system on which he depends. The narrative therefore suggests that domination is not only ethically problematic but also epistemologically limiting: by attempting to control the House, the Other becomes less capable of understanding it.

### ***Decentering the Human Subject***

Piranesi's worldview also contributes to a decentering of the human subject. He does not position human existence as the highest or only form of significance. Instead, he recognizes himself as one part of a larger world. His description of himself as a "Beloved Child of the House" expresses this decentered identity. He is not the owner or ruler of his environment. He belongs to it. Similarly, his statement that the world feels "Complete and Whole" suggests that the value of existence comes from relationships among different elements rather than from human authority.

This is particularly important in relation to knowledge. The Other assumes that the House contains knowledge that can be obtained and transformed into power. Piranesi, however, develops knowledge through long-term observation and participation. He does not need to dominate the House to learn from it. The distinction demonstrates that the novel does not reject knowledge or human intelligence. Instead, it questions the assumption that knowledge requires mastery. Piranesi's ecological knowledge emerges from humility and attentiveness. He recognizes patterns without assuming that those patterns exist solely for his benefit.

### ***Reimagining Human and Other-than-human Relationships***

Through the contrast between domination and coexistence, Piranesi reimagines human and other-than-human relationships as fundamentally interconnected. The novel suggests that humans cannot exist independently from the environments that sustain them. The House represents a system that resists simple human mastery. Its tides, weather, animals, spatial structures, and other elements operate according to relationships that require human beings to adapt. This creates an ecological model in which survival depends upon participation rather than control.

Piranesi's relationship with the House demonstrates the possibilities of such participation. He observes before acting, adapts rather than dominates, and recognizes value beyond utility. His ecological consciousness allows him to develop a meaningful relationship with the environment. The Other represents the opposite model. He approaches the House as a resource from which power can be

extracted. His failure demonstrates the limitations of a worldview based on mastery. The narrative therefore associates anthropocentric domination with alienation, while connecting ecological coexistence with belonging and survival.

The Prophet adds complexity to this binary by demonstrating that human curiosity and the desire for knowledge can also shape relationships with the other-than-human world. His position suggests that the problem is not simply human inquiry but the assumption that the world must ultimately be accessible to human purposes. Piranesi's approach provides an alternative in which knowledge remains connected to respect and coexistence.

The ecological significance of Piranesi therefore lies in its challenge to the hierarchy between humanity and the environment. The novel does not simply portray humans as inhabitants of an environment; it portrays them as participants within ecological systems that actively shape their existence. This perspective remains relevant to contemporary environmental thought because it questions the assumption that human needs should automatically determine the value and treatment of the other-than-human world.

### ***Implications for Ecocriticism and Contemporary Fantasy***

This study has examined the representation of human-other-than-human relationships in Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* through Lawrence Buell's ecocritical perspective. The analysis demonstrates that the House functions as more than a physical setting or symbolic structure. It operates as an active ecological entity whose tides, weather, animals, spatial conditions, and other elements shape human survival, perception, identity, and knowledge.

The study also identifies contrasting environmental perspectives among the novel's characters. The Other embodies an anthropocentric worldview characterized by power, utility, domination, and exploitation. His desire to use the House for personal purposes prevents him from developing a reciprocal relationship with the environment. Piranesi, in contrast, represents an ecocentric consciousness based on attentiveness, adaptation, respect, belonging, and recognition of intrinsic environmental value. The Prophet provides an additional and more ambiguous perspective through his pursuit of hidden knowledge, illustrating the complexity of human attempts to understand realities beyond ordinary experience.

The contrast among these perspectives demonstrates that *Piranesi* critiques anthropocentrism by questioning the assumption that the other-than-human world exists primarily for human purposes. The House is valuable not because of what it can provide but because of its existence as an ecological entity. Piranesi's statement that "The House is valuable because it is the House" captures this principle particularly clearly. His relationship with the House demonstrates an alternative to human-centered domination: coexistence based on attentiveness, humility, and interdependence.

Furthermore, the novel emphasizes that human existence is inseparable from ecological systems. Piranesi's understanding of time, identity, knowledge, and survival emerges through his interactions with the House and its other-than-human elements. The narrative therefore challenges the hierarchical distinction between human subject and environmental object. Instead, it presents human beings as participants within larger ecological systems.

The study's contribution lies in foregrounding the House as an active ecological presence while connecting its environmental agency to the contrasting anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives represented by the characters. Through this approach, Piranesi can be understood not only as a story about memory, identity, knowledge, and mysterious space but also as a literary exploration of humanity's relationship with the other-than-human world. The novel ultimately suggests that ecological coexistence requires a shift away from control and utility toward recognition, respect, and interdependence.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to the analysis of a single literary work and employs only Lawrence Buell's ecocritical framework. As a result, the findings reflect one particular interpretation of the novel and cannot be generalized to all contemporary fantasy literature. Future studies may explore Piranesi through other theoretical perspectives, such as posthumanism, material ecocriticism, or Timothy Morton's ecological thought, to provide alternative insights into the novel's representation of human-other-than-human relationships. Comparative studies involving Piranesi and other contemporary literary works may also contribute to a broader understanding of environmental representation in modern literature and further enrich ecocritical scholarship.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the representation of human-other-than-human relationships in Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* through Lawrence Buell's ecocritical perspective. The findings reveal that the House functions as more than a physical setting; it is portrayed as an active presence that shapes the protagonist's survival, perception, and understanding of the world. The analysis also identifies a contrast between two different approaches to the environment. Through the character of the Other, the novel presents a human-centered perspective characterized by power, utility, and control, whereas *Piranesi* develops a relationship with the House based on respect, coexistence, and interconnectedness.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that human experiences within the novel are closely intertwined with environmental conditions, emphasizing the significance of human-other-than-human interdependence. Based on these findings, the study concludes that *Piranesi* challenges anthropocentric assumptions by presenting the environment as a meaningful and influential presence rather than a passive background for human activities. Through the depiction of the House and Piranesi's relationships with it, the novel promotes an

ecocentric understanding of the world that recognizes the value of the other-than-human environment and the interconnectedness of all forms of existence.

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