

Review

Critical Perspectives in The Call of the Wild: A Systematic Literature Review

Liyuan Cai ¹ and Revathi a/p Gopal ^{1,*}¹ Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

* Correspondence: Revathi a/p Gopal, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Abstract: Studying English literature can be inherently challenging, especially when canonical texts involve complex thematic structures, multifaceted character developments, and profound symbolic meanings. Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* stands as a representative literary work that intricately explores the tenets of naturalism, the primal drive for survival, and the enduring tension between modern civilisation and innate animalistic instinct. This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is meticulously conducted to identify and synthesize important critical perspectives on the novel, while simultaneously uncovering existing research gaps within contemporary literary scholarship. The entire methodological process of conducting this SLR strictly adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. PRISMA provides a rigorous graphical representation of the complete process involved in executing a systematic review and meta-analysis, encompassing the comprehensive search for relevant peer-reviewed articles, the systematic filtering of these publications based on stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the critical assessment of their methodological quality. The synthesized results demonstrate that the existing body of research can be broadly categorised into three primary domains: naturalistic interpretations focusing on survival and environmental determinism, psychological analyses of character transformation and primal instinct, and comprehensive studies contextualizing the socio-historical background of the narrative. Ultimately, this paper reports the key gaps, methodological limitations, and theoretical oversights in current studies that focus on critical interpretations of *The Call of the Wild*, thereby providing a robust foundation for future academic inquiry.

Keywords: american literature; systematic review; naturalism; eco-criticism; literary criticism

1. Introduction

The Call of the Wild holds a prominent place in American literary history and is widely regarded as a key example of literary naturalism. Set during the challenging period of the Klondike Gold Rush, the novel delves into themes of survival, instinct, and the complex interplay between civilisation and the wilderness. Through the transformative journey of its central character, Buck, the narrative explores profound questions about the connections between environment, instinct, and identity. This makes the novel a compelling subject for literary analysis. Scholars of American naturalism have often highlighted the tensions between determinism and individual agency, suggesting that such works do not merely present mechanistic views of behaviour but instead engage with more nuanced interpretations of human and animal actions [1].

In recent decades, the novel has continued to attract significant scholarly interest, particularly within the framework of naturalist criticism, which focuses on the influence of environmental and biological factors on behaviour [2]. Beyond this traditional lens, literary studies have increasingly embraced ecological and posthuman perspectives, which challenge conventional boundaries between human and non-human existence. These approaches underscore the importance of viewing nature not simply as a passive backdrop but as an active and dynamic force that shapes the narrative's meaning and

Received: 23 April 2026

Revised: 28 May 2026

Accepted: 12 June 2026

Published: 18 June 2026



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direction. Such perspectives offer fresh insights into the novel, encouraging readers to reconsider the interconnectedness of all forms of life and the broader implications of environmental forces on identity and survival.

Contemporary literary theory has also shifted attention toward interpretation and reception, emphasizing the role of the reader in constructing literary meaning. Reader-oriented approaches highlight the variability and fluidity of meaning across different interpretative communities, suggesting that texts are not fixed entities but are instead shaped by the interactions between readers and the narrative. Despite the potential richness of this perspective, it remains relatively underexplored in studies of *The Call of the Wild*, where critical discourse has predominantly focused on thematic and deterministic analyses. This gap presents an opportunity for further exploration into how diverse audiences might engage with and reinterpret the novel's themes and messages.

Although a wide range of approaches has been applied to the study of *The Call of the Wild*, current scholarship often lacks integration between traditional naturalist interpretations and newer interdisciplinary frameworks. This theoretical fragmentation limits the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's literary and philosophical significance. A systematic review of existing literature is therefore essential to identify prevailing research trends, methodological gaps, and underexplored areas of inquiry. By synthesizing these diverse perspectives, this study aims to contribute to a more cohesive understanding of the novel's place within literary studies, offering a richer and more nuanced appreciation of its enduring relevance.

1.1. Problem Statement

The exploration of critical perspectives on *The Call of the Wild* over the past decades has provided valuable insights into its literary and philosophical significance, yet existing research has yet to fully account for the complexity of the novel within literary criticism. Much of the scholarship has been shaped by the tradition of American literary naturalism, which emphasizes determinism, environmental pressures, and the struggle for survival. While this framework has provided a foundational understanding of the text, critics have argued that naturalist works often resist purely deterministic interpretations and instead reveal tensions between environmental constraint and individual agency. This duality highlights the intricate interplay between external forces and personal autonomy, suggesting that the novel's thematic richness extends beyond simplistic categorizations [1]. By examining these tensions, scholars can uncover deeper layers of meaning embedded within the narrative structure and character development.

In addition to naturalist readings, subsequent scholarship has introduced a range of alternative perspectives, including ecological, posthuman, and symbolic analyses. However, these approaches are often developed independently, leading to fragmented interpretations of the novel. As literary criticism has evolved, newer theoretical frameworks such as eco-criticism and animal studies have further expanded the scope of analysis by reconsidering the relationship between humans, animals, and the natural world [3]. These perspectives offer valuable insights into the interconnectedness of life and the ethical implications of human interactions with nature. Despite their relevance to *The Call of the Wild*, they are rarely integrated with earlier naturalist interpretations in a systematic manner, which limits the potential for a holistic understanding of the text. Bridging these analytical gaps could provide a more unified perspective, enriching the discourse surrounding the novel's thematic and philosophical dimensions.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable imbalance in critical attention. While themes of survival, instinct, and environmental determinism have been extensively examined, comparatively less emphasis has been placed on reader-oriented approaches and reception studies. Reader-response theory suggests that literary meaning is not fixed but is actively constructed through the interaction between text and reader. This dynamic process underscores the importance of considering how diverse audiences interpret and engage with the novel across different historical and cultural contexts. The limited application of such perspectives to *The Call of the Wild* restricts a fuller understanding of

how the text generates meaning. Expanding the scope of analysis to include reader-oriented methodologies could illuminate the evolving significance of the novel, offering insights into its enduring appeal and adaptability [4].

These issues reflect a broader limitation within the field: the lack of systematic synthesis across diverse critical traditions [5]. Without an integrative framework, existing scholarship remains fragmented, constraining a comprehensive understanding of the novel's literary and philosophical significance. Therefore, a systematic literature review, guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses framework, is necessary to critically evaluate and synthesize existing studies. By identifying dominant interpretative trends, theoretical limitations, and underexplored perspectives, this study aims to contribute to a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of *The Call of the Wild* within literary studies. Such an approach would not only consolidate existing knowledge but also pave the way for innovative analyses that address overlooked aspects of the text, fostering a deeper appreciation of its multifaceted nature.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This systematic literature review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of empirical evidence and critical perspectives derived from various studies conducted over the years on *The Call of the Wild*. The primary focus is on identifying and analyzing dominant interpretative frameworks while highlighting existing research gaps that warrant further exploration [6]. By consolidating these insights, the findings of this review are expected to serve as a valuable resource for literary scholars and researchers. This could facilitate the expansion of analytical approaches to the novel and encourage the development of more integrated and nuanced theoretical frameworks for its study.

2. Materials and Methods

A systematic literature review is a structured method of synthesizing existing research on a specific question or topic. It involves identifying, critically evaluating, and integrating relevant studies using a systematic and replicable approach. The purpose of this systematic literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research, highlighting critical perspectives and identifying gaps in the analysis of *The Call of the Wild* [3]. This method ensures that the review is thorough and unbiased, offering valuable insights into the current state of knowledge on the subject. The systematic approach also facilitates the identification of patterns, trends, and areas requiring further exploration, thereby contributing to the advancement of academic understanding in this field.

1. The initial step in conducting a systematic literature review involves formulating a precise research question or topic. This step is crucial as it defines the scope and focus of the review, ensuring that the subsequent analysis remains targeted and relevant. A well-defined question serves as the foundation for the entire review process, guiding the selection of studies and the synthesis of findings.
2. Developing a comprehensive search strategy is essential for locating relevant research. This involves identifying appropriate databases, keywords, and search parameters to ensure the inclusion of all pertinent studies. A robust search strategy minimizes the risk of overlooking significant research and enhances the reliability of the review's conclusions.
3. Assessing the quality of the studies included in the review is a critical step. This process involves evaluating the methodological rigor, relevance, and reliability of each study to ensure that the review is based on high-quality evidence. By systematically appraising the studies, researchers can identify potential biases and limitations, thereby strengthening the validity of the review's findings.
4. Extracting data from the selected studies is a meticulous process that involves gathering relevant information to address the research question. This step requires careful attention to detail to ensure that all critical data points are accurately captured.

and organized for analysis. The extracted data forms the basis for synthesizing findings and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Each of the steps outlined above is discussed in greater detail in the following sections, providing a comprehensive guide to conducting a systematic literature review [7]. This detailed examination ensures clarity and consistency in the methodology, enabling researchers to replicate the process and contribute to the academic discourse on *The Call of the Wild*.

2.1. Developing Research Question

In this initial step, a single primary criterion is emphasized in formulating the research question for the current systematic literature review (SLR): the investigation of critical perspectives and identification of research gaps. This criterion serves as the foundation for synthesizing existing interpretations of *The Call of the Wild* while pinpointing areas that remain underexplored or insufficiently addressed. By analyzing prior studies on the critical interpretations of this literary work, the paper aims to establish a focused and detailed research question [1]. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the dominant themes and perspectives while highlighting opportunities for further scholarly inquiry. The process of developing this research question is integral to ensuring that the study contributes meaningfully to the academic discourse surrounding *The Call of the Wild* and addresses gaps that have yet to be thoroughly examined.

RQ1: What are the prevailing critical perspectives on *The Call of the Wild*, and what significant research gaps exist within the current body of scholarship? This question is designed to guide the systematic exploration of the literature, ensuring that the study not only synthesizes dominant interpretations but also identifies areas where further research is needed. By addressing this question, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the existing academic landscape while offering insights into potential directions for future investigations [8]. This targeted approach ensures that the research remains both relevant and impactful within the broader field of literary studies.

2.2. Search Strategy

In conducting the search process to identify relevant articles that address the main research question, this study adheres to a structured and systematic approach. The methodology ensures that the search is comprehensive and focused, allowing for the identification of high-quality academic resources that contribute to the research objectives [9]. By following clearly defined steps, the study aims to maintain rigor and reliability in the selection of literature.

Search for articles online involves utilizing major academic databases to locate relevant journal articles and systematic literature reviews. These databases are chosen for their extensive coverage of scholarly works and their ability to provide access to peer-reviewed publications [10]. The search process is guided by the use of specific keywords that are directly related to the research topic, ensuring that the results are both relevant and comprehensive.

Major academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and Project MUSE are employed to identify journal articles and systematic literature reviews pertinent to the study. Keywords including "The Call of the Wild," "naturalism," "eco-criticism," "animal studies," and "reader-response theory" are utilized to refine the search process [11]. These keywords are selected to capture diverse perspectives and critical analyses of the novel, ensuring a broad yet focused exploration of the topic.

Filter the articles by applying systematic inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only the most relevant studies are considered. This filtering process is essential for narrowing down the vast array of available literature to those works that directly contribute to the research objectives. The criteria are designed to maintain the integrity and focus of the study while excluding irrelevant or low-quality sources [12].

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are fundamental to a systematic literature review, as they define the scope and quality of the studies to be included [8]. The inclusion criteria

specify the characteristics of studies that align with the research focus, such as those centered on "The Call of the Wild," published in peer-reviewed journals or academic books, and written in English. These criteria ensure that the selected studies provide critical interpretations or analyses of the novel, contributing valuable insights to the research.

The inclusion criteria are applied in advanced search settings to refine the selection of articles. Studies focusing on "The Call of the Wild," published in reputable academic sources, and containing critical analyses are prioritized [13]. This ensures that the literature review is both comprehensive and relevant to the research objectives. By narrowing the scope to English-language publications, the study maintains consistency and accessibility in its analysis.

Exclusion criteria are equally important in ensuring the quality and relevance of the literature review [14]. Studies that are not published in English or focus on topics unrelated to "The Call of the Wild" are excluded. Additionally, works that solely examine Jack London's other writings or lack critical analysis of the novel are omitted. This rigorous filtering process ensures that the shortlisted articles meet the study's standards and contribute meaningful insights to the research. The articles that satisfy these criteria undergo further quality assessment to confirm their suitability for inclusion (As shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Studies related to critical interpretations of The Call of the Wild.	Studies not related to The Call of the Wild.
Studies written in English only.	Studies not written in English.
Studies published in peer-reviewed journals or academic books.	Studies unrelated to critical analysis of the novel.

2.3. Assessment of Quality

After completing the search process, the selected articles undergo a meticulous evaluation to determine their relevance in addressing the research question. Articles that fail to meet the established criteria are excluded from further consideration. The quality assessment process is guided by specific requirements that the selected articles must satisfy. These requirements ensure that the articles contribute meaningfully to the research objectives and maintain a high standard of academic rigor. By adhering to these criteria, the assessment process guarantees the inclusion of only the most pertinent and reliable studies, thereby enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the research findings [15] (As shown in Table 2).

Table 2. Question Used in the Quality Assessment Process

Question Asked During Quality Assessment Process	Answer
Do the articles clearly report important critical perspectives or research findings related to The Call of the Wild?	Yes/ No/ Partially

The entire procedure of searching, filtering, and evaluating the articles is systematically represented using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart [16]. This flowchart provides a clear and concise graphical depiction of the process, enabling readers to understand the methodology employed in the study. By visualizing the steps involved, the PRISMA flowchart ensures transparency and facilitates the replication of the research process in future studies. Figure

1 illustrates this flowchart, highlighting the sequential stages of article selection, filtering, and quality assessment.

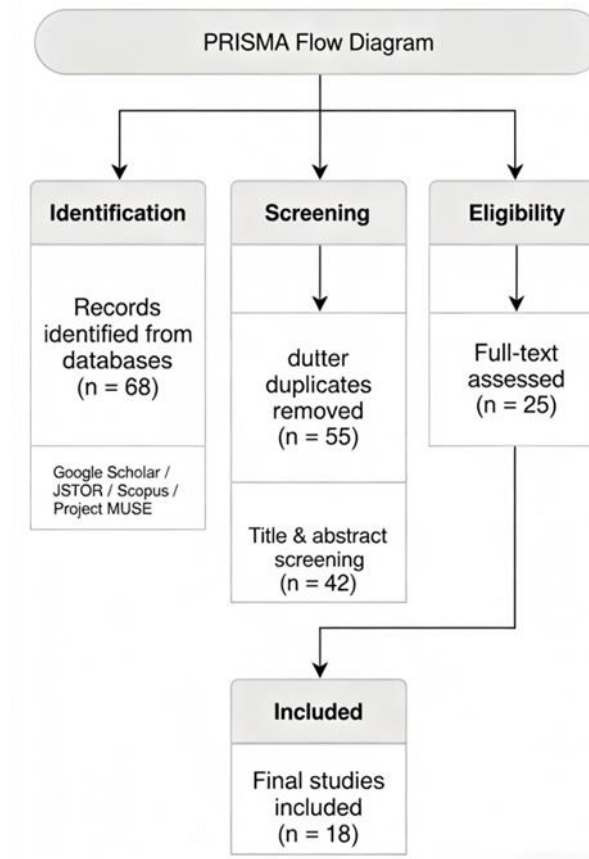


Figure 1. The Prisma Flowchart of Articles Selection, Filtering, and Quality Assessing

Following the quality assessment, a total of 18 articles were identified as meeting the established criteria and were deemed suitable for inclusion in the study [17]. These articles were categorized based on their type, which includes journal articles and systematic literature reviews (SLRs). This categorization is presented in Table 4, providing a detailed breakdown of the selected articles according to their respective types. Such classification aids in understanding the distribution of research sources and ensures a comprehensive analysis of the data derived from these studies (As shown in Table 3).

Table 3. The Category and Number of Selected Articles (SLR)

TYPES OF ARTICLES	TOTAL NUMBER
Journal Article	13
SLR (Systematic Literature Review)	5
Total	18

2.4. Data Extraction

After article selection and finalization were completed, the final corpus of 5 SLRs and 13 journal articles was reviewed in detail and subjected to structured data extraction. Key information was extracted systematically through a predefined procedure designed to improve consistency, transparency, and analytical rigor. Two independent reviewers extracted the same categories of information and then compared results to ensure reliability, reduce subjective bias, and strengthen the overall credibility of the review process. The extracted items included author and year, document type, theoretical framework, core viewpoint, research focus, strengths, and limitations of each study. In addition, the reviewers examined the scope, methodological orientation, and analytical

contribution of each source so that similarities and differences across studies could be identified more clearly. All extracted information was organized, classified, and summarized to support the thematic synthesis and critical analysis presented in this review. This process also enabled clearer comparison across studies with different research designs and conceptual emphases. The key details, main arguments, strengths, and limitations of all included literature are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Systematic Literature Reviews

ID	Core View / Argument	Strengths & Limitations
1	Naturalism involves tension between environment and human agency.	Strong theoretical foundation; limited interdisciplinary view.
2	Naturalist texts allow multiple, non-rigid interpretations.	Expands critical framework; ignores reader-response.
3	Naturalist criticism integrates ecology and interdisciplinary approaches.	Tracks theoretical development; lacks concrete novel analysis.
4	Nature acts as an active force shaping narrative meaning.	Broadens ecological analysis; weakly linked to naturalism.
5	Literature should be interpreted within ecological ethics.	Systematic ecocritical theory; rarely applied to this novel.
6	Human-animal boundaries should be deconstructed.	Innovative posthuman view; mostly theoretical.
7	Readers construct meaning by filling gaps in texts.	Foundational reader-response theory; underused in this novel.
8	Meaning is shaped by interpretive communities.	Explains contextual interpretation; not applied to naturalism.
9	Literary meaning comes from affective reader engagement.	Renews reader-oriented theory; rarely applied to the novel.
10	The novel emphasizes naturalist determinism and survival logic.	Clear naturalist analysis; limited integration with ecocriticism.
11	Wilderness actively shapes Buck's ecological identity.	Strong ecocritical reading; disconnected from naturalism.
12	Buck symbolizes primal instinct and evolutionary regression.	Clear symbolic interpretation; ignores reader reception.
13	Narrative structure centers on survival and conflict.	Clear narrative analysis; lacks reader-response dimension.
14	Literary teaching overuses exam-oriented interpretation.	Useful pedagogical insight; minimal theoretical integration.
15	Poetic language creates reading comprehension barriers.	Identifies linguistic difficulty; purely descriptive.
16	Scholarship on the novel is broad but theoretically fragmented.	Comprehensive review; no integrated analytical framework.
17	Studies remain siloed in separate theoretical approaches.	Standard SLR procedure; lacks cross-theory synthesis.
18	Naturalism, ecocriticism, and reader-response need integration.	Identifies key research gap; only theoretical proposal.

PRISMA flow diagram for the SLR version: identification stage, showing the sequential process used to locate, screen, assess, and include relevant studies in a transparent and methodologically consistent manner.

Records identified from databases, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and Project MUSE, totaled $n = 68$ at the initial identification stage, providing the preliminary pool of potentially relevant studies for further screening and assessment.

Screening stage, in which the initially identified records were reviewed in a stepwise manner to remove duplicates, assess relevance, and narrow the dataset according to the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria [4].

After duplicates were removed, the remaining dataset consisted of $n = 55$ records, which formed the basis for the next stage of screening and allowed a more accurate evaluation of unique studies [4].

Title and abstract screening was conducted for $n = 42$ records, enabling the reviewers to assess topical relevance, methodological suitability, and alignment with the scope and objectives of the present review [4].

Eligibility stage, in which studies that passed the initial screening were examined in greater depth through full-text review to determine whether they met the required academic and methodological standards.

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility totaled $n = 25$, and each study was examined comprehensively to evaluate relevance, quality, conceptual fit, and contribution to the overall analytical framework of the review.

Excluded after full-text assessment: $n = 7$. The main reasons for exclusion included limited relevance to the SLR focus, insufficient methodological quality, and lack of direct alignment with the central topic under investigation [4].

Included stage, representing the final set of studies retained after the completion of identification, screening, and eligibility assessment under the established review protocol.

Final studies included in the SLR totaled $n = 18$, comprising 13 journal articles and 5 SLRs. This final sample provided the evidential basis for thematic synthesis, comparative evaluation, and critical discussion in the present review [5].

3. Results and Discussion

The results from the analyzed articles have been synthesized to address the research question: "What are the dominant critical perspectives on *The Call of the Wild*, and what are the key research gaps in current scholarship?" The dominant critical perspectives on the novel can be categorized into three primary areas: naturalism interpretation, eco-criticism and animal studies perspectives, and reader-response and reception perspectives. Naturalism interpretation explores the novel's depiction of survival, instinct, and the influence of environment on behavior. Eco-criticism and animal studies perspectives examine the portrayal of non-human agency and the relationship between humans and nature. Reader-response and reception perspectives focus on how audiences from different cultural and temporal contexts have interpreted the novel. These categories highlight the multifaceted nature of the scholarship while also revealing gaps, such as limited exploration of intersectional themes or comparative analyses with other works of the same period. Further research could address these gaps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's impact and relevance.

3.1. *Naturalism Interpretation of the Call of the Wild*

A substantial body of scholarship on *The Call of the Wild* has been grounded in the tradition of American literary naturalism. This critical framework emphasizes determinism, environmental pressure, and the struggle for survival as central forces shaping both human and non-human behavior. Within this perspective, the novel is often interpreted as a representation of evolutionary regression and adaptation, where instinct overrides civilization under extreme environmental conditions. The narrative vividly portrays the tension between the primal instincts of survival and the veneer of societal norms, illustrating how environmental extremes can catalyze profound transformations in behavior and identity [10].

Pioneering studies of American naturalism argue that naturalist texts do not merely depict environmental determinism in a mechanical sense, but instead reveal a complex tension between agency and constraint. In this sense, Buck's transformation is frequently read as a symbolic return to primal instinct, reflecting broader ideological concerns of naturalism during the late nineteenth century. The novel's exploration of Buck's journey

underscores the intricate interplay between inherited instincts and learned behaviors, suggesting that survival in hostile environments requires both adaptation and the selective application of agency. This duality enriches the narrative, offering a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of evolution and survival.

However, more recent interpretations suggest that strictly deterministic readings may oversimplify the narrative complexity of the text. Scholars have argued that *The Call of the Wild* simultaneously constructs and questions the logic of naturalism, particularly through its emphasis on adaptation, learning, and selective agency within hostile environments. This indicates that the novel resists being reduced to a purely deterministic framework, thereby opening space for more flexible interpretative approaches. The text's layered depiction of survival and transformation invites readers to consider the multifaceted nature of environmental influence, where instinct and agency coexist in shaping outcomes.

Despite its dominance in early criticism, the naturalist approach has been increasingly critiqued for its limited explanatory scope, particularly in relation to non-human subjectivity and symbolic meaning. This limitation has prompted the expansion of alternative theoretical frameworks in contemporary scholarship. The novel's portrayal of Buck's experiences challenges traditional naturalist interpretations by introducing elements of emotional depth and symbolic resonance, which extend beyond deterministic paradigms [14]. These evolving perspectives highlight the importance of integrating broader analytical lenses to fully appreciate the complexity of the narrative and its thematic richness.

3.2. Eco-Criticism and Animal Studies Perspectives

In recent decades, eco-critical and animal studies approaches have significantly broadened the interpretative scope of *The Call of the Wild*. These frameworks redirect focus from human-centered narratives to the intricate ecological and interspecies dynamics depicted in the text. By examining the novel through these lenses, readers gain a deeper understanding of the interconnected relationships between humans, animals, and their environments, revealing layers of meaning that transcend traditional interpretations.

Eco-criticism, as a literary methodology, underscores the portrayal of nature not merely as a passive setting but as an active and transformative force that shapes narrative significance. Within this framework, the wilderness in London's novel evolves from being perceived as a hostile and unforgiving environment to a dynamic space that fosters profound transformations in identity, instinct, and survival. This perspective invites readers to reconsider the role of nature as a central character in the narrative, influencing the trajectory of both human and animal experiences.

Animal studies, on the other hand, challenges anthropocentric interpretations of behavior and redefines Buck's transformation as more than a symbolic representation of regression or adaptation. From this viewpoint, Buck becomes a focal point for exploring the fluid boundaries between human and animal agency. This approach destabilizes traditional hierarchies between human and non-human life, encouraging a nuanced understanding of animal consciousness and its implications for broader ecological and ethical considerations. Such perspectives enrich the narrative by highlighting the complexity of interspecies interactions and the shared agency within the natural world.

Eco-critical readings further enable literary texts to be analyzed within expansive environmental and ethical contexts, emphasizing the interconnectedness between narrative structure and ecological awareness. This approach broadens the scope of literary analysis, allowing readers to appreciate the intricate relationships between storytelling and environmental themes. By situating the novel within these broader contexts, eco-criticism fosters a deeper engagement with the ethical dimensions of human interactions with nature and animals.

Despite the valuable insights offered by eco-critical and animal studies approaches, their application often remains isolated from traditional naturalist criticism. This

disciplinary separation restricts the development of a cohesive interpretative framework for the novel. Bridging these methodologies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the text, integrating ecological, ethical, and naturalist perspectives to uncover the multifaceted layers of meaning embedded within London's narrative.

3.3. Reader-Response and Reception Perspectives

Another significant but comparatively underdeveloped strand of criticism focuses on reader-response theory and reception studies. This theoretical approach emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the text and the reader, shifting the understanding of textual meaning from being fixed or solely author-centered to being co-constructed through the reader's engagement. By exploring how readers actively interpret and fill in the "gaps" within a text, this perspective highlights the fluid and participatory nature of meaning-making in literature [5, 6].

Literary texts are often seen as incomplete without the interpretative input of readers, who bring their own perspectives, experiences, and cultural contexts to the process of understanding. The concept of "gaps" within texts underscores the idea that meaning is not inherent but emerges through the reader's active role in interpretation. Furthermore, interpretative communities play a crucial role in shaping and stabilizing these meanings, as shared cultural and ideological frameworks influence how texts are collectively understood and valued.

From this perspective, *The Call of the Wild* can be analyzed as a text that invites diverse interpretations based on varying cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. For example, Buck's transformation throughout the narrative may be interpreted in multiple ways, such as a journey of liberation, a descent into primal instincts, an adaptation to environmental challenges, or even an act of resistance against imposed structures. These differing interpretations underscore the text's capacity to resonate with readers across different interpretative frameworks, enriching its literary significance [11].

More contemporary approaches to reader-response theory emphasize the importance of emotional and experiential engagement in the construction of literary meaning. By focusing on attachment and affect, these approaches argue that readers' personal and emotional responses to a text are integral to its interpretation. This perspective broadens the scope of literary analysis, suggesting that meaning is not only shaped by intellectual or theoretical frameworks but also by the reader's lived experiences and emotional connections to the narrative [15].

Despite the theoretical advancements in reader-response perspectives, they remain relatively underexplored in the study of *The Call of the Wild*. Current scholarship tends to prioritize thematic and deterministic interpretations, often overlooking the dynamic and participatory role of readers in constructing meaning. This gap in research highlights an opportunity for further exploration, particularly in examining how diverse audiences engage with the text and how their interpretations evolve across different cultural and historical contexts [2].

4. Conclusion and Implication for Future Research

Based on the analysis of the findings extracted, it can be concluded that the primary critical perspectives on *The Call of the Wild* encompass naturalism interpretation, eco-criticism and animal studies perspectives, as well as reader-response and reception perspectives. Among these, naturalism interpretation emerges as the most prevalent, being prominently featured in the majority of the analyzed articles. In contrast, reader-response perspectives remain significantly underexplored, indicating a gap in the current body of research. This disparity highlights the need for a more balanced scholarly focus, as the underrepresentation of certain perspectives may limit the depth and diversity of interpretations available for this literary work. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the novel's thematic and symbolic complexities.

Studying *The Call of the Wild* presents considerable challenges due to its intricate themes and symbolic layers, which demand a nuanced and multifaceted analytical approach. The difficulty is further compounded by the novel's rich theoretical implications, which span across various interpretative frameworks. This complexity underscores the necessity for literary scholars to adopt innovative methodologies and expand the scope of their analyses. By integrating diverse theoretical frameworks, such as combining naturalism with eco-criticism or juxtaposing animal studies with reader-response theory, researchers can uncover new dimensions of meaning within the text. Additionally, exploring underrepresented perspectives could lead to fresh insights, fostering a more dynamic and inclusive academic discourse surrounding this seminal work.

This systematic review is subject to certain limitations, primarily due to its reliance on a relatively small dataset comprising 13 journal articles and 5 systematic literature reviews sourced from various online academic databases. These constraints may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could address these limitations by adopting interdisciplinary approaches that synthesize naturalism, eco-criticism, and reader-response theories, thereby offering a more holistic analytical framework. Moreover, reception studies could be expanded to examine how *The Call of the Wild* is perceived across diverse cultural and historical contexts, potentially revealing variations in interpretation and significance. Despite these limitations, the outcomes of this study are anticipated to provide valuable insights for literary scholars and researchers. By encouraging further exploration of underexamined perspectives and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, this research aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic study of *The Call of the Wild* and other works within the naturalist literary tradition.

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