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Human Voice Becomes the Voice of Non-Human: Oliverian Green Project

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Abstract

There have always been many controversies with regards to the existing gaps between human beings and Nature, most of which have come into notice in particular at the current age of fragmentation and uncertainty. While we postmodern individuals take pride in our access to better means of living through technological advances, there have been times we have not been able to live a concordant life on this vast planet. However, postmodernism's backing up the issue of decentralization has come in handy in literary studies on the one hand and has been influential in Nature-oriented studies on the other. That said, the present paper aims to examine the selected poems chosen out of Mary Oliver's *Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays* in order to show the significant role of the poetic language in bringing about some sort of ecological symbiosis, made possible through enriching the internal bond between the speaking human agents and non-speaking, non-human individuals.

Keywords: ecopoetry, green dialog, harmony, Mary Oliver, non-human, poetic language

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Introduction

With the emergence of postmodernism, the once-believed-in notions about the foundations of human life were shaken to the core. One such transformation occurred with regards to the role of Nature in man's life on Earth, accordingly, giving birth to further extension of the existing rifts between the alienated individuals and Nature. However, change for the better is not always considered futile in as much as it can lead to a much more productive life. This being said, postmodernism's challenging any kind of dogmatism has not been ineffective considering that it has paved the way for a much more critical and at the same time coherent way of thinking about our sense of belonging to the planet Earth and its non-human members. Similarly, its rejection of the notions of man's integrated self and coherent identity (Hutcheon, 1988, p. xii) is the main factor that runs parallel to ecocriticism, for ecological studies promote a non-hierarchical relationship between human beings and Nature. As Heise (2008) has stated, Nature-oriented studies, i. e. ecocriticism, "differed sharply from other forms of 'postmodern' thought in that they sought to redefine the human subject not so much in relation to the human others that subjecthood had traditionally excluded as in relation to the nonhuman world" (p. 507). Adding a new side to the discussion of human-Nature issues with regards to the erosion of the centrality of the age-old foundations of beliefs goes in line with Nature-oriented approaches to literature, which stand against any one-sided mode of thinking with regards to human beings and Nature. However, relying on postmodernism per se does not meet the requirements of Nature-informed examinations owing to the fact that postmodernism relies on "visual representation"; thus, it falls short of "a full appreciation of just how *different* a world the real world has become" (Philips, 1996, p. 206).

Since the aim of this research is to offer a practical solution to the fractures underlying human and Nature relationship, the researchers believe that examining the chosen ecopoems of Mary Oliver (1935-2019) in the light of an ecocentric-ecopoetic based approach can fulfill the aim of this short study and grant us a more unified insight in the end, for egocentrism helps us live in harmony with the non-human agents and ecopoetry provides us with a cohesive insight on human-Nature union. To reach that end, this paper intends to examine some selected poems of Mary Oliver (1935-2019) to indicate that Oliver's ecopoems demonstrate the call to an ecocentric mode of life in which all the constitutive individuals, ranging from the smallest insects to the largest animals and human beings inhabiting this huge planet, co-exist in an anti-dogmatic status, functioning as a cure to the postmodern ailment of estrangement and crisis of unified self. The reason for relying on ecopoetry is, thus, due to the fact that it renegotiates "meaningful forms of dwelling within environments" (Müller & Pusse, 2017, p. 7) and invites the readers "to action in new ways" (Bryson, 2005, p. 1). Likewise, the choice of Oliver's selected ecopoems is an effort to offer a fresh mode of reading on the basis of an ecocentric-ecopoetic based analysis which results in witnessing the intermingling of the speaker-poet's voice with that of the non-human and the ecological revival of the ecopoet and her readers in the end. Thus, the research questions underlying this study include:

1. How does Oliver's green language work in communion with Nature?

2. How can Oliver's green project offer a curative to the rift between human beings and Nature?

Method

This research is qualitative and based on library research and authentic Internet sources such as books, e-books, articles, etc. Likewise, it will be descriptive since after all the aim of the research is to cast light on the significant role of an ecocentric-ecopoetic-informed approach in developing a harmonious bond between man and Nature in Oliver's selected poems, originating from the combination of Oliverian green language with the unheard voice of the non-human.

Review of the Related Literature

Eagleton (1996) has aptly defined postmodernism as, "a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation" (p. vii). Postmodernism's parting with dogmatism and centralization has also given rise to the formation of fractured identities in the present epoch. Among the issues put forward in postmodern studies, the way it treats the notion of self is of great importance in this research in that it has "sounded the death knell" for the "modernist notion of the self as unitary, stable, and transparent" (Powell, 1997, p. 1483). Similarly, its distortion of the binary mode of thinking, inherited from the bourgeois hegemony, has come in handy on the one hand and gone to extremes on the other hand. While postmodernists advocate the notion of fluid self, they fail to find a viable solution to the dualistic view of their modernist predecessors; as a result, the man / Nature conflict has remained untouched. The lack of a firm ground observed in postmodernism, thus, justifies the fact that it is "a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 3), in which Nature is replaced by "commodified representation" (Glotfelty, as cited in Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xxx). It can, therefore, be inferred that in order to find a logical answer to the man / Nature opposition attention must be turned to ecocriticism as it diverts the emphasis on ruptures to "the relational nature of individuality, the link that incites a dissolving of hierarchical oppositions between self and the natural/human other as well as instigates an ecologically inspired responsibility" (Ragaišienė, 2007, p. 111). Moreover, ecocriticism's emphasis on the interconnections between Nature and culture and its offering the most workable solution to the man / Nature dualism paves the way for the inauguration of an ecocentric awareness that is traceable in a thorough investigation of the significance of ecopoetry and its anti-totalitarian nature.

The concepts of ecopoetry and ecocentrism and their emphasis on a concordant bond between human beings and Nature have gained much importance since the advent of ecocriticism in the 1980s. Alternatively called "The environmental approach to literature" (Slovic, Rangarajan, & Sarveswaran, 2019, p.

3), ecocriticism develops "as an explicit critical response" to the unheard dialog between "the text and the environmental surroundings" in order to "raise it to a higher level of human consciousness" (Love, 2003, p. 16). One effective strategy to reach that end is relying on the inherent power of ecopoetry and its emphasis on "maintaining an ecocentric perspective" (Bryson, 2002, p. 6). As Clark (2019) has stated, "The most forceful ecopoetry would surely be one that managed to retain great accessibility and clarity while at the same time being formally and technically inventive" (p. 77). Oliver's ecopoetry stands out in this regard, which is the main reason for conducting the following research. Similar to other contemporary ecopoets whose works have been examined through the lens of ecocriticism, Oliver's ecopoetry has been the target of several researchers, among whom Bonds (1992), Christensen (2002), Davis (2009), and Zona (2011) have been discussed here. Christensen (2002) has stressed the common ground between ecology and postmodern theory to bridge the gap between the two and has argued that we can view them as complimentary movements whose main aim is to grant us the insight to benefit from the works of such "ecologically informed authors" as Oliver and replace the age-old notion about human independence with "an ecological tale of inclusion in a community of interrelated presences" (p. 135). Davis (2009) has also argued that Oliver's "vocation consists of attending to the world". Following the concept of "incarnation," he has mentioned that Oliver's poetry is "a quest toward different ways of knowing, seeking…a journey or progression toward ways of understanding or accepting the unknowable" (pp. 505-7). Bonds (1992) has, on the other hand, shed light on Oliver's difference from other male Romantic poets, believing that she employs "an interruptive, interrogatory style that disrupts poetic convention and notions of propriety" (p. 13). Last but not least, Zona's describing Oliver's style of composition as "writing-as-mindfulness," (2011, p. 123) casts light on the way she uses her ecopoems to enclose the gaps between self and the other, achieved through her devotion to and love of Nature. With that in mind, the researchers believe that by tracing the intermingling of the voice of the speaker-poet with that of the non-human in the light of the chosen approach, the present research can serve as a complement to the above-mentioned studies and give us a new insight into comprehending the ecocentric interlinkage between the speaking-human subject and the non-speaking, non-human agents, which puts an end to the otherness attributed to Nature ultimately.

Discussion

Among all the characteristics of Oliver's ecopoems, the speaker-poet's calling the readers into action is the foremost issue that can offer a key to the othering of Nature and clarify our main intention in the present research for having chosen Mary Oliver and the ecopoems taken out of her collection, namely *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays* (Oliver, 2008), as the object of further analysis. In an effort to justify such choice we agree that:

> Ecopoets do not valorize the completed poem as modernist product, ready for a green museum of art; instead they want the poem to challenge and reconfigure the reader's perceptions so to put the book down and live life more fully in all possible dimensions of the moment of firsthand experience

> within nature's supportive second skin and to become more responsible about that necessary second skin. (Scigaj, 1999, p. 41)

Scigaj's stressing the reader's engagement with Nature to benefit from the sense of first hand experiences with it is echoed in "The Chance to Love Everything," which opens *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays* collection as such:

> All summer I made friends
> with the creatures nearby—
> they flowed through the fields
> and under the tent walls,
> or padded through the door,
> grinning through their many teeth,
> looking for seeds (Oliver, 2008, p. 1)

The images employed masterfully in the above-mentioned ecopoem invite the reader to take part in the moment of the speaker-poet's union with the natural environment. During this sensual experience, Oliver sets out to see whether she is dreaming or not, saying:

> in the night I heard a sound
> outside the door, the canvas
> bulged slightly—something
> was pressing inward at eye level.
> I watched, trembling, sure I had heard
> the click of claws, the smack of lips
> outside my gauzy house— (Oliver, 2008, p. 1)

Though apparently frightening, she does not easily set back. Rather she keeps going, albeit in doubt, and finishes this incident as follows:

> Did I actually reach out my arms
> toward it, toward paradise falling, like
> the fading of the dearest, wildest hope—
> the dark heart of the story that is all
> the reason for its telling? (Oliver, 2008, p. 2)

The uncertainty observed here serves as a good justification for the belief that "The ecopoem is a momentary pause for a reconfiguration of perception, for the altering of the Eye" (Scigaj, 1999, p. 41). The alteration of our way of seeing the natural surroundings requires us to create a one-to-one relationship with Nature through which we can see the complication of the "distinction between self and other" with the help of ecology (Christensen, 2002, p. 136). In her poem "Toad," Oliver participates in a harmonious bond with a toad, which seems quite comfortable with the presence of a human being very close to him. There she writes:

> I was walking by. He was sitting there.
> It was full morning, so the heat was heavy on his sand-colored
> head and his webbed feet. I squatted beside him, at the edge

of the path. He didn't move.
……...
He might have been Buddha—did not move, blink, or frown,
not a tear fell from those gold-rimmed eyes as the refined
anguish of language passed over him. (Oliver, 2008, p. 5)

Though the toad is not provided with the gift of language, it seems that it and Oliver succeed in communicating through a meaningful silence. The silence here serves as the communicable utterance between Oliver and the toad, as a "way of singing oneself into contact with others and with the cosmos—a way of bridging the silence between oneself and another person" (Abram, 2011, n. p.). Such method of communication is Oliver's phenomenal act of writing which Zona (2011) has described as, "a means of experiencing most fully her interbeing with the observable world *and* of rehearsing the provisional distance between self and the other upon which this sensation of merging depends" (p. 123). Besides Oliver's inviting the reader into action and experiencing direct sensual encounters with Nature, the second noticeable characteristic that can offer an ecological solution to the man / Nature dichotomy is the speaker-poet's immersing into the body of Nature that is in the foreground of most of her ecopoems.

The ability to absorb into the body of another enables Oliver's speaker-poet to blur the borderline between self and the non-human, which is transparent in "One Hundred White-sided Dolphins on a Summer Day". The aftermath of such encounter is so influential in that it leads Oliver (2008) to say:

I don't know—either
unbearable tons
or the pale, bearable hand
of salvation
on my neck,
lifting me
from the boat's plain plank seat
into the world's
unspeakable kindness.
It is my sixty-third summer on earth
and, for a moment, I have almost vanished
into the body of the dolphin,
into the moon-eye of God,
into the white fan that lies at the bottom of the sea
with everything
that ever was, or ever will be. (pp. 7-8)

Whatever this experience is called, it drives Oliver to recount it as a "cheerful day" (p. 6) in the end, bearing witness to the fact that the loss of the human self and dissolving into the body of the dolphin provides the speaker-poet with the chance to go beyond the boundaries of human self and undergo the paradoxical "selfless practice of full presence" (Zona, 2011, p. 123). The selfless presence of the speaker-

poet in communion with Nature acts as the transformative factor that grants the speaker-poet and the reader the ecological insight and creates an influential context for resolving the dichotomous categorization of postmodernism (Ragaišienė, 2007, p. 109).

To some of us, the vivid simplicity inherent in Oliver's language might seem unusual; however, it is another notable characteristic of Oliver's ecopoetry that paves the way for the speaker-poet to form an ecological dialog with the non-human, an aim which is mostly achieved through "acute attention and its spawn, awareness" in Oliver's ecopoetry (Zona, 2011, p. 123). What Oliver strives to do is to counter the belief that "Nature is silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative" (Manes, 1996, p. 15). In contrast, what we witness in Oliver's ecopoems is, in fact, her wonderful ability in transgressing the boundaries of self and Nature, the result of which is the incident in "The Kitten," where Oliver (2008) writes:

> More amazed than anything
> I took the perfectly black
> stillborn kitten
> with the one large eye
> in the center of its small forehead
> from the house cat's bed
> and buried it in a field
> behind the house. (p. 9)

Wondering whether or not she has made the right decision, she finishes the same poem as such, "I think I did right to go out alone / and give it back peacefully, and cover the place / with the reckless blossoms of weeds" (Oliver, 2008, p. 9). Though no real verbal communication occurs between the poet and the kitten, she is successful in her endeavor, proving the point her "environmental poetry can be personal and emotive" (Pickford, 2009, p. 12). Likewise, Oliver's (2008) investigations into the depth of the elements of Nature is an attempt to address and redress the imbalance inherent in human-Nature interactions. As such in the fifth part of her ecopoem "Ghosts" Oliver beautifully mentions, "Said the old-timers: / the tongue / is the sweetest meat" (p.11). Such is the tongue as far as it empowers Oliver to start a green dialog with Nature and the non-human. In other words, it should be mentioned that in Oliver's ecopoems, the need for the integrity between the human and non-human agents derives from the proposition that "the Earth's inhabitants, regardless of their national and cultural differences, are bound together by a global ecosystem whose functioning transcends humanmade borders" (Heise, 2008, p. 25). For Oliver, doing away with the limitations of self is a chance to withdraw into the arms of Nature as her source of inspiration. Her reliance on language as a means to help her give voice to her feelings, as seen above, is not separable from the power Nature and its elements grant them. As Scigaj (1999) has aptly explained, "creative writers and literary critics" cannot "ignore the environment by ensconcing themselves in claustral searches for the authentic human

voice where they focus primarily on the logic of linguistic systems" (p. 6).When it comes to such ecopoets as Oliver, this issue gains more importance in that her ecopoetry "cries out for an appreciation of the authentic nature that grounds language and supports every human instant of aesthetic as well as ordinary consciousness" (Scigaj, 1999, p. 6). Accordingly, Oliver's (2008) speaker-poet absorbs our attention to the "brief physical lives" of the moles, commonly going unnoticed in contrast to beetles, hares, and bats, with each the moles have something in common as such:

> Under the leaves, under
> the first loose
> levels of earth
> they're there—quick
> as beetles, blind
> as bats, shy
> as hares but seen
> less than these— (p. 34)

Yet, they welcome their lives the way it is and hunt for food, "spring flowers", "among the pale girders / of appleroot, / rockshelf, nests / of insects" (Oliver, 2008, p. 34). Though their traces get blurred with the single drops of rain, "even this frail / hint of them", they are "so willing to continue / generation after generation" to accomplish "their brief physical lives" (Oliver, 2008, pp. 34-5). To these little creatures, "pushing and shoving / with their stubborn muzzles against / the whole earth," is "delicious" (Oliver, 2008, p. 35). Despite the simplicity seen in the lives of the moles, Oliver's poetic language is the mediator that expresses "imagination, to embody — give body to — thought" about such incidents (Bonds, 1992, p. 3). Her thought-provoking ecopoems and her striking environment-oriented images, as Bonds (1992) has argued in detail, stand against "Western male-dominant thinking about language and nature" denying such power to women (p. 3). In her ecopoem, "The Snow Cricket", Oliver (2008) draws our attention to the singing of this creature as such:

> and by singing I mean, in this instance,
> not just the work of the little mouth-cave,
> but of every enfoldment of the body—
> a singing that has no words (p. 36)

The cricket's singing is devoid of any human words; however, the speaker-poet is capable of noticing what the cricket is trying to say. Its song is "built of loneliness;" yet, its "consequences" are "longing" and "hope" (Oliver, 2008, p. 36). Apparently, what Oliver is trying to say here goes in line with Abram's (1997) saying, which reads as "We still *need* that which is other than ourselves and our own creations" that leads to the renewal of "our acquaintance with the sensuous world" (p. 9). For such an ecological-minded poet as Oliver revitalizing the ruptured tie between the world of the human and the non-human takes place in close company of Nature and its non-human, non-speaking members, whose inability to communicate in human

language has turned into a profit and promoted the inauguration of the green conversation among all the inhabitants of the planet Earth, moving beyond postmodernism's belief in indeterminacy of human language accordingly.

To the human eyes, the lilies' standing "on their calm, cob feet, / each in the ease / of a single, waxy body" may sound pitiful; however, they are "breathing contentedly in the chill night air," leading the "I" speaker of the poem to look into "the theater of their perfect faces / that frozen, bottomless glare" (Oliver, 2008, p. 37) in awe and encouraging the reader to ponder the possibility of this strange-looking harmony. In order to be able to share in the joy of such harmony, the human observer needs to let go of the boundaries of the human self to reach the recognition that "No one is saved until we are all saved," where the word one includes both human and non-human (Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 77). Such is when Oliver writes about whelks, driving her "every morning" to:

> … look for the whelks, whose edges
> have rubbed so long against the world
> they have snapped and crumbled—
> they have almost vanished,
> with the last relinquishing
> of their unrepeatable energy,
> back into everything else. (Oliver, 2008, p. 38)

In keeping with this transition, the speaker-poet is willing to undergo the process of self-realization as soon as she finds one whelk and holds it in her hand. The moment she touches the whelk, she proclaims, "yes, I am willing to be / that wild darkness, / that long, blue body of light" (Oliver, 2008, p. 39). This intuition casts light on the notion of equality that shows the interrelation between all the organisms whose intrinsic value is all the same (Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 67). Being a human or a non-human does not matter here. What is at issue is that experiencing psychic and social transformations does not rely on human forces per se, rather we need the help of all the other planes and non-human forces (Berry, 2015, p. 42). Probably Oliver's reference to the power of "fire" in this ecopoem pertains to "a radical change in our mode of consciousness" (p. 42), the outcome of which is creating a new language and sense of being a human (Berry, 2015, p. 42) that avoids the mere representation of the world of the non-human and summons us into a deep and attentive presence with the world around us (Abram, 2011, n. p.).

Oliver (2008) is affected so much by such incidents that in "A Meeting" she longs for being given the chance, as she says, "to live my life all over again, to begin again, / to be utterly / wild" (p. 41); wild in the sense that she can free herself from human boundaries and unite with Nature. Thus, this ecopoem is a call for putting an end to the "*dualistic* view of human and nature as separate and different" to show "that humans are intimately *a part* of the natural environment: they and nature are *one*" (Pepper, 1996, p. 17).

Closely related to this argument is Oliver's attempt in a "quest toward different ways of knowing" (Davis, 2009, p. 605), made possible through her

reliance on the power of perception of the non-human agents and the green poetic language, leading to the ecological awakening of the speaker-poet and her readers in the end. Her ecopoetry is "a confession of faith" (Oliver, 1994, p. 122); faith not only in the power of human subject, but also in the power of the natural elements. In other words, Oliver "chooses not to elevate humans as the sole possessor of the soul;" a belief that "continually carries out her out the door and into the sacrament of the world's wild beauty" (Davis, 2009, p. 606). Oliver's regarding a poem as "an attitude, and a prayer," singing "on the page" and singing "itself off the page," shows that her ecopoetry "lives through genius *and* technique" (Oliver, 1994, p. 114). The combination of the poet's genius and technique results in the creation of ecopoems which she herself likens to "songs" running through her mind. To explain it more, the poet writes, "I say a song because it passes musically, but it is really just words, a thought that is neither strange nor complex" (Oliver, 1994, p. 114). Thereby, she concludes in "Flow", "how strange it would be *not* to think it—not to have such music inside one's head and body, on such an afternoon" (Oliver, 2004, p. 9). To create her ecopoems she journeys "deep into the forest in order to open her arms to both the known and unknowable" (Davis, 2009, p. 607). In the wake of "the green / and purple weeds," she proclaims:

I waded, I reached
my hands
in that most human
of gestures—to find,
to see,
to hold whatever it is
that's there— (Oliver, 2008, p. 50)

This adventure into the heart of the unknown "requires a drastic change in human conceptions of nature," whereby the speaker-poet carries out her mission of establishing a green conversation with Nature (Nolan, 2010, p. 6). The part the speaker of the poem is talking about opening her hand to set the pipefish free, she calls it "a promise" and mentions, "I would keep my whole life / and have— / and let it go" (Oliver, 2008, p. 51). This short union between the speaker-poet and the pipefish is, in fact, a search for the "ecocentric existence" in which the poet and the reader "can view nature accurately" (Nolan, 2010, p. 6). The poet, hence, says:

I tell you this
in case you have yet to wade
into the green
and purple shallows
where the diminutive
pipefish
wants to go on living.
I tell you this
against everything you are—
your human heart,
your hands passing over the world,

gathering and closing,
so dry and slow. (Oliver, 2008, pp. 51-2)

The reference to the word human in this excerpt sheds light on Oliver's concern with ecocentrism "as a call to fellow humans to recognize the intractable, like-it-or-not interdependence that subsists between the human and the nonhuman" (Buell, 2005, p. 102), the result of which is thinking "against anthropocentrism" (Buell, 2005, p. 105) and all modes of oppositional thinking. Rising against anthropocentrism in favor of symbiosis is not only limited to human subjects; rather, it has to do with both sides of this equation, i. e. human beings and non-human individuals. No matter how this goal is achieved, the result remains the same, cultivating the seeds of consciousness within one's mind and heart.

In "This Too" the poet brings the disheartening scene of a dead fawn before our eyes to shed light on another form of harmony observed in Nature. The fawn's "succulent mouth" and its "pink, extruded tongue" show "the smell of change", "which is stink" (Oliver, 2008, p. 53). Though the scene in this ecopoem is at odds with the ones in Oliver's previous ecopoems, its message is profound and thought-provoking. Among all the creatures present there, it is only the speaker's dog that is capable of "reading the silence, / like a book" (Oliver, 2008, p. 53). The poet's skillful juxtaposition of "the terrible excitement / of the flies" (Oliver, 2008, p. 53), indicates that in spite of the young deer's death, the harmony between natural elements runs throughout Nature nonstop. To the ordinary human observer, the nasty-looking scene of death may sound unpleasant. However, flies, as Meeker (1996) argues, "are heroic individuals who make their homes where no one else wants to live, and their lives lead the way toward challenging and dangerous horizons" (p. 161). Accordingly, such creatures as the fawn are "the loners of the natural world, the tragic heroes who sacrifice themselves in satisfaction of mysterious inner commands which they alone can hear" (Meeker, 1996, p. 161). Although the fawn dies, the flies still share in the enjoyment of feeding themselves on the corpse of the young deer. This "physical death is actually a reunion with the earth" (Bazregarzadeh, 2018, p. 38). Likewise, "through the process of decomposition," the fawn's body "changes into mould which shows her union with the natural rhythms of life" (Bazregarzadeh, 2018, p. 38).

Probably, for the speaker-poet this event serves as some sort of redemption as the speaker is astonished to see "No one spoke, not the Creator, not the Preserver, / not the Destroyer" (Oliver, 2008, p. 53). Yet, the merry gathering of the flies, accompanied by the prevailing silence, is the harbinger of the harmony between the human-observer and the non-human creatures. Such sense of closeness to Nature is also evident in "How Turtles Come to Spend the Winter in the Aquarium," in which the poet's rushing to save it ignites the flames of self-satisfaction in the poet's heart in the end. The sickly-looking sea turtle with "its motionless flippers" and "slowly beating heart" is a hard nut to crack for the speaker-poet. Yet, the "stillness" of the sea turtle drives the speaker forth to continue proceeding to the sea bed, walking "ankle-deep in the sand" (Oliver, 2008, pp. 61-2) to finish her mission of saving the sea turtle by releasing it in warm sea water. Touched by this event, upon noticing the turtle raising "its head" and "looking around," the speaker-poet states, "Today, who

could deny it, I am an important person" (Oliver, 2008, p. 62). Being important not in the sense that the speaker feels superior to the sea turtle, rather this insightful experience paves the way for some sort of ecological awareness that comes by close attention and keen awareness that is the result of a face-to-face encounter with Nature as in "The Poet Goes to Indiana," which reads as follows:

> and she put her face against my face,
> put her muzzle, her nostrils, soft as violets,
> against my mouth and my nose, and breathed me,
> to see who I was,
> a long quiet minute—minutes—
> then she stamped feet and whisked tail
> and danced deliciously into the grass away, and came back. (Oliver, 2008, p. 64)

The horse's melodious dance in Nature and its coming back hilariously intensify the fact that the speaker-poet is able to bridge the gap between the self and the other (Zona, 2011, pp. 126-7). To invite the reader to take part in such union, she starts her ecopoem "The Summer Day" by asking, "Who made the world? / Who made the swan, and the black bear? / Who made the grasshopper?" (Oliver, 2008, p. 65). Then she continues with a more detailed reference:

> This grasshopper, I mean—
> the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
> the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
> who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
> who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes. (Oliver, 2008, p. 65)

Spending some time with the grasshopper inspires Oliver to come to terms with her inability in not knowing "how to pay attention, how to fall down / into the grass, how to kneel in the grass, / how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields" (Oliver, 2008, p. 65). The grasshopper is there to open her eyes to the temporality of daily life and small things to which human beings are indifferent. Thus, pleased with her action, she asks:

> Tell me, what else should I have done?
> Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
> Tell me, what is it you plan to do
> with your one wild and precious life? (Oliver, 2008, p. 65)

By tracking "the cycles of life through the land as well as her memory," Oliver "wants to subordinate her own projects to the reality around her, to enter into a world that baffles or even repels her, so that she can in turn bear witness to a reality beyond her own concentric orders" (Elder, 1996, p. 222). Such absorption into the heart of a baffling world and the concordant reality it creates is crucial as it shows we humans "are no longer merely favored by a divine power" (Christensen, 2002, p. 137). More accurately, it is Nature that speaks within Oliver and leads her to recall

seeing a little mink "the gift of the winter". However, this goes beyond mere pantheism, which is "an attractive theory" (Christensen, 2002, p. 139) in her ecopoems; it can "induce an actual transformation in how readers engage the world" (Christensen, 2002, p. 139). Her choice of the phrase "the terrible, gleaming / loneliness" after the mink's leaving that area leads her to end the ecopoem as such:

> … It took me, I suppose,
> something like six more weeks to reach
> finally a patch of green, I paused so often
> to be glad, and grateful, and even then carefully across
> the vast, deep woods I kept looking back. (Oliver, 2008, p. 67)

Conclusion

In short, as mentioned at the beginning of this short study, postmodernism's dismantling the hierarchical mode of analysis and ecocriticism's stressing the symbiotic bond between man and Nature have proved that the ruptures inflicted upon human self and the otherness ascribed to Nature have not only extended the gap between the two, but have also brought about further alienation. As a result, postmodernism's advocacy of the motif of the intersectional self on the one hand and its declining the notions of individual wholeness and centralization on the other hand have diverted the attention from the autonomous human self to the ecocentric synthesis and integration in ecological studies. That said, the need to look back on Nature and form a green dialog with the non-human was the focal point traced in almost all the ecopoems discussed above. Likewise, it was shown that Oliver's close interaction with some present animals, insects, or plants was the door to the ultimate closure of the gaps between the speaking subject and the silent non-human agent. Through Oliver's poetic language, the speaker-poet formed a green dialog with the non-human and experienced an ecological rebirth, showing that the speaking human beings are not the measure of all insights and meanings. To be more precise, in the above-examined ecopoems, what came to notice more is the fact that Oliver's reunion with Nature has denied man's dominating Nature or the other way round. The substantial consequence of employing a green conversation with the non-human is, thus, the education it brings home to the human soul and readers, shedding light on Oliver's skillful application of this green conversation throughout her ecopoems. Last but not least, the three important poetic techniques highlighted throughout the research, namely, the speaker-poet's encouraging the reader to encounter the sensual moments in communion with Nature, her dissolving into the body of the non-human agents, and the plain poetic language were the key factors that cast more light on Oliver's outstanding achievement as an ecopoet. The main findings of the study, therefore, show that the application of the ecocentric-ecopoetic approach to Oliver's ecopoetry has given rise to an ecocentric attitude that can reform the present inconsistencies and dualisms witnessed in postmodern studies, reform man's ruptured identity, and put an end to the otherness of Nature, all of which result in strengthening the green bond between human beings and the non-humans.

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