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Özlem Karadağ

Ecofeminist Ecopoetics and Carol Ann Duffy

Carol Ann Duffy, who brought together "poems about our vanishing insect world" for *The Guardian* (2019), has claimed that "When we demean language, we demean our lives, our society and ultimately our planet. Poetry stands against this, timelessly, in Sappho, Shakespeare, John Donne, Emily Dickinson" ("Into thin air"). During a time when Brexit heavily overshadowed Britain, Duffy considers environmental poems are more crucial than the political ones, because the ecological crisis is more urgent and affected directly by human actions. Duffy, who served as the first female poet laureate of the United Kingdom between 2009 and 2019, is a poet who thinks that everything on this Earth is connected, and she believes that poets are primarily responsible towards this planet. Although Duffy does not refer to herself as an ecofeminist poet or to her poetry as environmental, her approach to nature and generally subjugated human and nonhuman other(s) positions her poetry as ecofeminist ecopoetics, two approaches that are united in this context to read Carol Ann Duffy's poetry.

Duffy's poems reveal a desire to pay homage to those who are oppressed and silenced by the patriarchal order, which is a white-Western-male-oriented system that is biased against mostly people of color, women, nonhuman animals,[1] and nature with a misplaced concept of humanism. Furthermore, the main characteristic of her poetry is the way she uses language. She reloads words with new meanings and aims at uniting each life form on the planet, from humans to nonhuman animals through the use of this language. She also brings a critical approach to the way we use language to label, discriminate and even distance ourselves from the

1 In *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry*, Aaron M. Moe suggests that "Phrases such as 'nonhuman animals' […] still marks animals by something they are not. They are not human" (x). Although I find his argument understandable I prefer using human and nonhuman animals without the intention of underlining the idea that animals are not human.

harm we inflict on nature. As Duffy refrains from putting labels or creating new oppositions in her approach to marginalized entities, her poems give hope for the future of understanding and redefining our relationship with language and our planet.

Ecofeminism advocates an understanding of human and nonhuman animals as equal beings in nature and also tries to create a planet in which nature and all species live equally in all their complexities, avoiding definitions, labels and discrimination of any kind.[2] Ecopoetics, tries to achieve this by changing the position of nature and nonhuman animals in poetry with a particular concern for environmental problems created by the anthropocentric world view. Jonathan Skinner, the editor of *ecopoetics*, introduces the term in the first issue of the journal as follows:

> ***ecopoetics*** nevertheless takes on the "eco" frame, in recognition that human impact on the Earth and its other species, is without a doubt the historical watershed of our generation, a generation born in the second half of the twentieth century. [...]
>
> "Eco" here signals—no more, no less—the house we share with several million other species, our planet Earth. "Poetics" is used as poesis or making, not necessarily to emphasize the critical over the creative act (nor vice versa). Thus: ecopoetics, a house making. (7)

Accordingly, ecopoetics, deriving from the Greek word *-oikos* (as in ecology) meaning home, is not just an attempt of house-making with the use of an untraditional device as poetics, it is also very much connected to the idea of nature as our home with an endeavor to understand and redefine human position in it through poetry.

Green poetry, as Terry Gifford puts it (*Green Voices* 3), can be considered as a general term that refers to all types of nature poetry; however, it is crucial to see how ecopoetics stands apart from the others. Traditional nature

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2 Except for the non-environmentalist "cornucopian position" that reveres nature "only [...] in terms of its usefulness" (Garrard 18) to humanity, each significant position in environmentalism recognises the source of the crisis as anthropocentrism. However, they fall short in recognizing it as androcentrism, therefore ecofeminism, as an embodiment of diversity and pluralism, suggests that the solutions presented by the others fail to cover the environmental crisis to the fullest (See Birkeland).

poetry, classical or Romantic pastoral,[3] and ecopoetry, all these subgenres of green poetry focus on a different way of human interaction with nature, yet, ecopoetics differs from these in its approach. Environmental concerns or concerns about human use and abuse of nature and nonhuman animals, and the question of putting these issues on the page are at the core of ecopoetics. Sarah Nolan puts forward what underlies ecopoetry and ecopoetics in her book *Unnatural Ecopoetics: Unlikely Spaces in Contemporary Poetry*:

> Pointing to popular environmental literary and social trends, many scholars and poets view ecopoetics and ecopoetry as involved in politicized movements to make poetry relevant to current real-world concerns, often without much or any recognition of the theory behind the term "ecopoetics." […] "ecopoetry" has come to refer to poetry that engages with environments for the sake of political and social action, while "ecopoetics" is a methodology or theoretical lens that considers the nuances of how environmental experiences are expressed on the page. […] Regardless of the variations in its definition, ecopoetics generally tends to involve analyzing how poems move beyond idealized interactions with the physical world and begin to represent nature for its own inherent value and autonomous self. (Introduction)

Moving from this definition of ecopoetics, which differentiates the term from other types of poetry that focus on nature, it can be suggested that since the last decades of the 20th century and of course with the threatening effects of ecological crisis, this ecological turn in theory and poetry finds its full voice, it differs not only in its approach to nature, human, and nonhuman animals but also in its use of language, it aims to deconstruct the mainstream ideology with an attempt to show the possibility of change

3 The word pastoral derives from "pastorem (pastor), Latin for shepherd" (Hoad 339) and as a genre came into being in the Hellenistic period, it is dominantly nostalgic as human beings are already cut off from nature. According to this viewpoint, in classical pastoral, it is possible to see how nature is crushed by civilisation and left out of the city's boundaries. It can also be suggested that pastoral romanticizes the cultivated version of nature as the word itself derives from an agricultural human society. Therefore, Romantic pastoral (and the desire to return to nature as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution) is also based upon the desire to go back to a tamed version of nature. Thus, with nature poetry, in the traditional sense, comes the androcentric outlook on nature, as these literary traditions are mostly male-dominated.

through the construction of a completely new discourse and approach.[4] This new approach can be seen as the birth of ecofeminist ecopoetics, a term that brings together the environmental considerations of both ideas and Carol Ann Duffy can be read as one of the most important representatives of this approach.

As a prolific poet actively writing since the late 20th century, Duffy is often seen as a descendant of the male poets of the recent past such as Philip Larkin. In reply to this comparison with Larkin, Duffy states that: "Poetry has changed since the days of Larkin – he's a good poet, but poetry has changed for the better. It's not a bunch of similarly educated men – it's many voices, many styles. The edge has become the centre" (Winterson, "Can you move diagonally"). This quotation can be a proof of not only the change in poetry, but it also marks the changes in Duffy's poetry, which becomes, as Peter Forbes coins it, "Duffyesque" ("Winning lines"). Jeanette Winterson in her article "Rereading Carol Ann Duffy" explores Duffy's *The World's Wife* and claims that the collection is "of course […] political" and she adds that "Duffy's 1999 collection […] gives the women behind the scenes […] a glorious and powerful voice". As Winterson comments upon the women in her poetry, Duffyesque does not appear just for the sake of supporting an ideology, it stands as the poet's way of understanding the world and the change she wants to create with this powerful literary tool. As Dowson suggests "when Duffy sings the earth, she takes account of the 'complex web of nature and environment' (Bate 2000: 23)" (170). Her topics, speakers, choice of places vary from cities to wild nature, nonhuman animals to spirits of literary or mythological characters and her poems centralize the marginalized others, explore human beings in relation to other human beings, animals, and their habitat, which mostly reveal the hypocrisy of the dominant patriarchal humanism.

4 Even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, so many critical texts on ecology and nature poetry are written mostly by men, and they mostly focus on the poems written by male poets which still fall short in terms of ecofeminist criticism. These attempts can be considered as a part of "manstream green theories" and as Birkeland suggests "Manstream green theories are gender-blind, they do not adequately challenge the underlying bases of the ethic and ideology that they seek to change" (26).

In "Model Village" (*Selling Manhattan),* maybe also as a result of technological and scientific "advancements" in agriculture that drastically affected nature, Duffy creates a mock-pastoral. It can also be read as anti-pastoral or post-pastoral as Terry Gifford coins the terms (*Green Voices*), because she brings a critical approach to the idea of pastoral bliss of a rural town. She describes the town through a child's words, a place where "Cows say *Moo*" and "Sheep say *Baa*. Grass is green" (79), on the surface what looks like a picture-perfect village with its farm animals and child-like innocence, with the words and stanzas in italics that reveal the inner thoughts of the villagers and the anthropocentric language turn into a dark image of the Anthropocene. It starts as "a picture-book depiction of a rural English community and, as it were, draws back the net curtains to reveal a sick state of affairs" (Dowson 118). The speaker's words reveal the androcentric mindset that the child will grow into, a world that normalizes the utilitarian approach: "Hens say *Cluck* and give us eggs. Pigs/are pink and give us sausages. *Grunt*, they say" (79). The sounds animals make are in italics all through the poem, and it underlines the idea that these are human intonations of animal sounds which remove them from their original selves and make them farm animals. The same lines also show the normalization of farm animals' duties toward humans such as giving eggs and in pigs' case giving sausages, and they are not recognized for any other form of existence other than their human-made responsibilities. Karen J. Warren explains the importance of language as follows:

> Many philosophers (e.g., Ludwig Wittgenstein) have argued that the language one uses mirrors and reflects one's concept of oneself and one's world. As such, language plays a crucial role in concept formation. Ecofeminists argue that it also plays a crucial role in keeping intact mutually reinforcing sexist, racist, and naturist views of women, people of color, and nonhuman nature. (27)

Parallel to the ecofeminist view of language, Duffy achieves to show how the seemingly innocent language of the child is not innocent at all, as it reflects the androcentric view of nonhuman animals and nature, and completely controls the formation of the child's mind. Moreover, the lines "The Grocer has a parrot. Parrots say *Pretty Polly*/and *Who's a pretty boy then*" (81) not only come as a reminder of colonization of distant lands and imperialism but also as a symbol that shows how others, nonhuman animals and indigenous people, were torn apart from their natural

environments and forced to become completely different beings in a British background. That is why the speaker, the child, is not able to learn the real sounds a parrot makes but thinks that these human sentences are the sounds all parrots make. As the villagers also dream of other possibilities, Miss Maiden poisons her mother, the farmer is "*Digging, desperately*" (80), the vicar "*can feel the naughtiness under* [his] *smock*" (80), and for the librarian "Outside is chaos,/lives with no sense of plot" (81), and they are all afraid of one another, "The Vicar is nervous/of parrots, isn't he? Miss Maiden is nervous of Vicar and the Farmer is nervous of everything" (81). This seemingly blissful and perfect image of the village, therefore pastoral in general, are not representing the truth about the anthropocentric domination of nature as this model village does.

What is also criticized here is the fact that nature, and its organic ties with all the species and inanimate things in it, is reduced to Anthropocene. The same criticism can be seen in Duffy's exploration of anthropocentrism's effects on nature in the city, as well. In "The English Elms" (*The Bees*) she offers a critical view of how the city devours nature,[5] as the poem talks about the historical roots of "Seven Sisters in Tottenham" in north London. Seven Sisters were English elms that used to be in Tottenham which are "long gone, except for their names" (467). The speaker of the poem continues with the following lines:

> Others stood at the edge of farms,
> twinned with the shapes of clouds
> like green rhymes;
> or cupped the beads of rain
> in their leaf palms;
> or glowered, grim giants, warning storms. (467)

5 The earliest example of man and civilization taking over nature can be found in the first lines of *the Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the earliest examples of epic poetry. In the poem, the poet-persona introduces Gilgamesh as a great king mostly for building the "rampart of Uruk-the-Sheepfold" (1.11) as a means of urbanisation and cutting bonds with nature. Gilgamesh, stops bullying his people and directs his attention to Humbaba, the guardian of the sacred Cedar Forest, so nature becomes his main enemy: After killing and cutting the head of Humbaba, the first thing they do is to find the tallest tree in the forest and cut it down to build a door in the city for Enlil (46–47).

These lines reveal a fact about the past days of London as a city that not only had farms and trees that conveyed the language of nature, but also a city that did not have the present cityscape until the recent past. As the poem also mentions, it is possible to see them "In the hedgerows in old films", and it is an elegy for the loss of these trees which can only be found "in the lines of poems […] for ours is a world without them" (467). Although the poem's main subjects are the English elms, the general tone is one that mourns for the loss of the trees and the life form that is associated with them. Maria Mies in "White Man's Dilemma: His Search for, What He Has Destroyed" indicates that this kind of destruction brings with it a desire to escape to not-yet-urbanised places to enjoy nature:

> In the urban centres of the industrialised North may be observed a curious mass behaviour from time to time. Those who apparently consider urban culture and lifestyle as the pinnacle of progress and modernity for whom the cities are centres of 'Life', of freedom, of culture, rush away from these very cities whenever they can. A flight into 'Nature', the 'wilderness', 'underdeveloped' countries of the South, to areas where White Man, they hope, has not yet 'penetrated'. (132)

Unfortunately, this destructive pattern spreads to these places that are considered to be natural yet underdeveloped, which leads to the urbanization of relatively "untouched" parts of nature. Henri Lefebvre, in *Writings on Cities*, suggests that "[A] theme which has been used and over-used, hyperinflated and extrapolated, namely, 'nature and culture', originates from the relation between town and country and deflects it" (118) and he underlines the "sacred-damned character of the ground" (118) which is used by cities to change and abuse its position as desired. However, he also suggests that in our age "urban life penetrates peasant life, dispossessing it of its traditional features" (119) which will eventually lead to "the urban […] to disappear" (120) as urbanity is taking over nature, it also erases the opposition that creates or defines what is urban. For all the lands inhabited by human beings that represent the dominant culture turn into a big city out of concrete, and as Duffy puts in her poem these long-gone trees appear in literature and art, therefore, in our age, language and literature become essential tools to keep nature alive. Dowson scrutinises that "Duffy is neither a 'city' nor a 'post-industrial' poet for her engagement with urban life is not at odds with her self-fashioned task of championing aspects of culture threatened by human insouciance and these include nature" (166).

Duffyesque ecofeminist ecopoetics can critically contemplate on the relationship between nature and its inhabitants by revealing different forms of endangered lives by the Anthropocene.

Nonhuman animals are recurrent subjects of her poetry, and in each of her poems, she is able to recreate this subject divergently. The recurrent image of nonhuman animals in her poems can also be considered as zoopoetics, Derrida coins the term in his work *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, and zoopoetics "generally refer[s] to the presence of animals within any genre" (Moe 11). In "The Dolphins" (*Standing Female Nude*) Duffy explores animal cruelty through choosing her poet persona as a dolphin trapped in an aqua park. The dolphin who talks to the audience saying "We see our silver skin flash by like memory/of somewhere else" (59) goes beyond the Aristotelian or Cartesian characteristics of animals, as the former suggests only human beings have the capability of recalling memories at will (Aristotle 6) and the latter claims that the human beings are different from animals due to free will, reason, and soul (Descartes 14-16). These abilities can also be read as anthropomorphism as an animal is given capabilities associated with humans such as guilt, translating, and loving; however, Duffy is not following the androcentric pattern, she gives these capacities to the dolphin under a very natural tone even by paying careful attention not to name or attribute gender to the dolphins through the mouth of the speaker. The speaker refers to the other dolphin sharing the pool only as "the other" with whom it shows an inevitable close connection yet the general atmosphere is a depressive one as the dolphins are stuck in a pool and forced by a man to jump the hoops and play with a plastic ball until he disappears. The only thing defined by its sex in the poem is the man, who represents humanity in general but of course dominantly the domineering power of masculinity which can be defined as androcentrism through an ecofeminist point of view.

As a matter of fact, in the poem, Duffy carefully avoids using gender pronouns or possessives, and the dolphin, the speaker of the poem, refers to the other dolphin as "the other" but without its traditional discriminating meaning, without the speaker's superiority over the other. It also enables the dolphin to speak about the other dolphin without any prejudiced or judgmental adjectives. The only one in the poem whose gender we know is the man, so the perpetrator is clearly defined as a male and as

Dowson suggests it can be anyone who is oppressed and victimized by this man, who symbolises an ideological standing.

In every poem she talks about nonhuman animals and nature, although her speakers use familiar words and sentence structures in English, Duffy pays special attention to the way they define or describe the way they each understand other languages and their environment through different parts and characteristics of their bodies. The two dolphins try to translate the language of the water of the pool through their flesh yet they fail: "We have found no truth in these waters,/no explanations tremble on our flesh" (59). Because the still waters of the pool, which is their human-made prison, is dead to them, it is a language they cannot fully comprehend. As Dowson suggests "the water signifies learned language in which the dolphins are captive – 'we have found no truth in these waters' – and in which they lose their being – 'our mind knows we will die here'" (33) whereas the very first line of the poem is ambivalent in meaning: "World is what you swim in, or dance, it is simple." This line can be read as the definition of the world for the dolphins yet as it is followed by "We are in our element but we are not free./Outside this world you cannot breathe for long" which suddenly turn this world upside down and squeeze it into the limits of the pool, the water in it is their "element", but they are not "free".

They are captivated by the man, the only thing they recognize besides the hoop and the plastic ball. The connection created between the three and what they degrade the dolphins to are presented to the reader through the language used by a dolphin which symbolises all captivated animals and all mammals, as Dowson indicates "it is through language that Duffy expresses the mammals' captivity, also a metaphor for any group or individual that feels confined: 'There is a man/and there are hoops.' In this simple sentence, Duffy makes familiar objects, 'man' and 'hoops', seem strange, almost sinister. Yet, it is with this sense of something 'unreal' that we identify" (33). Duffy achieves to make this ordinary, androcentric language sound completely different through her speaker which turns into zoopoetics, as Moe suggests "zoopoetics focuses on the process by which animals are makers. They make texts. They gesture. They vocalise. The sounds and vocalisations emerge from a rhetorical body, a poetic body, or rather a body that is able *to make*" (11). The Dolphin, as the speaker, lets the reader imagine the creation of this text disregarding the fact that

it is a poem written in English. What becomes more important is the way the dolphin constructs this language which becomes a form of zoopoetics.

John Berger in "Why Look at Animals?" discusses that a zoo is another "public institution" founded in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century, and "public zoos were an endorsement of the modern colonial power. The capturing of the animals was a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands" (21). It can be suggested that in our postcolonial world animals are still commodities to be colonized and consumed, for not only zoos but also entertainment business such as circuses or aqua parks still exist to put nonhuman animals on display to be viewed by human beings. Moreover, Berger also suggests that these animals are "collected in order that they can be seen, observed, studied. […] Yet in the zoo the view is always wrong" (23), the popular image inscribed in our minds concerning dolphins is the one where dolphins are thought to smile and be a true friend to human beings,[6] also having fun entertaining people, yet this is the way human beings see it through a distorted spectacle, forgetting the truth behind animal abuse. Therefore, Duffy turns the marginalised dolphins into central figures who voice their truth and also reveal that they are not only seen, but they also see and are very much aware that they are seen, but this fact is also completely disregarded by human beings. Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* talks about the gaze of the animal as follows: "[A]s with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers […] the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man" (12). Moving from this idea, one can suggest that human beings who are blinded by the androcentric outlook, also to feel better about their actions, choose to consider nonhuman animals as beings without the capacity of seeing, understanding, and judging.

The subject of nonhuman animals can also be traced in "A Healthy Meal" (*Standing Female Nude*) in which Duffy introduces the reader to

6 With the twentieth-century, movies and TV-series such as *Flipper* (1963, 1964, 1964–67, 1995–2000), *Lassie* (1954–74), *Skipper* (1968–77), *Jaws* (1975, 1978, 1987) and many others not only attribute certain anthropomorphic characteristics to animals but also instil these prejudiced and mostly wrong ideas concerning animals in our collective memory.

the hypocrisy of meat-eating humans. As a poem that supports vegetarianism, it shows the anthropocentric hypocritical attitude towards nonhuman animals as well as a fake feeling of guilt that is easily disregarded with the use of language. Mentioning of "oxtail" on an "earthen dish", "wishbones and pinkies", "a kidney or the breast of something which once flew", "tongues […] Leg, saddle and breast" (61) and the like being served as dishes on a table or a menu deliberately put together to show human beings' use and abuse of every part of nonhuman animals. As Duffy puts it "The menu lists the recent dead" (61), for the murdered animals are displayed on the menu under different names that detach them from their past as living beings and turn them into dishes. "Fingerbowls", traditionally served at the end of dinner, and "napkins" are ironically mentioned because they show how easy it is for people to wash away their fake guilt. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams suggests that "Animals are made absent through language that renames dead bodies before consumers participate in eating them. Our culture further mystifies the term 'meat' with gastronomic language, so we do not conjure dead, butchered animals, but cuisine. Language thus contributes even further to animals' absences" (2010, 66). Duffy criticizes the use of language to diminish the effect of meat-eating, which is more about killing an animal and washing away the guilt, as she says in the poem "Alter *calf* to *veal* in four attempts. This is/the power of words; knife, tripe, lights, charcuterie" (61). The four attempts not only stand for the process from knife to charcuterie but also for the four letters that come together and change a calf into a veal, that is why she chooses to write these words in italics.

In the poem, Duffy specifies two human beings describing one as "a fat man" who "orders his *rare* and a fine sweat/bastes his face" and the other as "the woman chewing suckling pig" (61) which prove that it is not specific to a gender. However, it is more about taking part in androcentric ideology regardless of one's gender. Janis Birkeland in her attempt to define ecofeminist theory distinguishes two contrasting "orientations" as "masculinist" and "feminist," clarifying that she uses the terms "as metaphorical icons for systems of value to which people of either sex can subscribe" (15) with a desire to show that the problem is about the mindset rather than sex. Hence, as Birkeland suggests, the poem is not trying to falsely single out and accuse a group of people depending on their

gender but blames the hypocritical attitude of any man or woman who shares this androcentric attitude that victimizes nonhuman animals. It can be said that human beings still use old ideas concerning nonhuman animals believing in the duality of body and soul. Along with Descartes, who sees animals as machines created by nature which "absolves [men] from the suspicion of crime when they eat or kill animals" (19), humanity still embraces Immanuel Kant's approach to animals as "man's instruments", who abstains cruelty to animals only because "our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties towards humanity" (240). However, ecofeminists "reject the nature/culture dualism of patriarchal thought, and locate animals and humans within nature" (Gaard, "Living Interconnections" 6) and Duffy attempts to show how the language is a patriarchal construction and how it moves us away from the reality of animal cruelty and the guilt that should surround it.

Her approach makes it possible to read her poetry through vegetarian ecofeminist outlook for "Vegetarian ecofeminists argue that only by forestalling our sympathies for other animals are humans able to overlook the enormity of animal suffering" (Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism" 119). As can be seen in "Model Village", Duffy underlines the fact that our ties with nature and nonhuman animals are cut very early, in Lacanian terms, with our entrance into the Symbolic Order, hence it gets more difficult for human beings to sympathise or empathise with the pain of the others. Warren suggests that "the view of humans, like their nonhuman animal kin, as both eater and eaten is an *ecological* view that puts humans where they belong ecologically – as part of nature and part of the food chain. This is the ecological piece sorely missing from animal welfarist accounts of humans" (136) nevertheless this view imagines human beings harmoniously living in nature and not seeing animals, or the others in general, as meat. Whereas the situation for the Western, or Westernized, industrial societies is entirely the opposite, therefore, in Warren's words again "Ecofeminist animal rights welfarists […] argue that factory farming, animal experimentation, hunting, and meat-eating are tied to patriarchal concepts and practices" (Warren 25).

The word "rare" in the above quotation from the poem is also written in italics by the poet to stress the idea of eating (raw) meat and the thin line between cannibalism and meat-eating. Cannibalism, which is seen

as barbaric and uncultivated by the civilized Western point of view, was and still is an established fear of "regression into barbarism" (Huggan & Tiffin 63), is overlooked when meat-eating is a part of a gourmet experience. Berger indicates that "[A] peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* not by a *but*" (7). However, what is easy for the urban dweller in our modern age is not having any kind of bonds with the animal when they are eating meat. As Duffy criticizes, the problem is more about disregarding the ugly truth behind meat-eating in our civilized, industrialized societies, as we disregard animal cruelty by hiding behind Cartesian or Kantian pragmatism in our approach to nonhuman animals. That is why the poem ends with the line "Death moves in the bowels. You are what you eat" (61), and Duffy, of course, connects civilized societies with murder and cannibalism; and not only in terms of meat-eating practices but more on a general note, as it entails feeding upon and harming nonhuman animals and natural resources through different ways of colonization.

Warren suggests that for ecofeminists "trees, water, food production, animals, toxins, and, more generally, naturism (i.e. the unjustified domination of nonhuman nature) are feminist issues" and comprehending naturism is vital because it "helps one understand the interconnections among the dominations of women and other subordinated groups of humans […] and the domination of nonhuman nature" (Warren 1–2). Duffy's poetry attempts to come to an understanding of these "interconnections", in "Selling Manhattan" (*Selling Manhattan*) she tries to show not only the opposition created by colonial forces but also the close connections between people of color, women, nonhuman others and nature in Native America. For her poems in *Selling Manhattan*, Duffy suggests that "*Selling Manhattan* is mainly about loss. The poems explore the loss of contact with true values, and there's an ecological theme that ties in with that […] I suppose I'm trying to shape through language things which are outside of it; to give a voice to those whom we've denied a voice, attempts at pre-language" (quoted in Dowson 9). In "Selling Manhattan", with the innovative use of language and styling, she represents not only how the white Western patriarchal domination colonizes and penetrates, pollutes,

and abuses everything that is considered as the other, but also gives voice to the mind and the mindset of the colonized, dominated marginals, and their loss.

Dowson recounts that the poem is woven around historical facts concerning exploitation as it "re-enacts the historical myth that Dutch explorers exploited Native Americans by purchasing the island for $24 worth of beads and trinkets. There is evidence of this in the Dutch archives although contemporary commentators argue that the 60 gilders paid for New York's Manhattan Island were worth more like one thousand dollars in 1626" (Dowson 95). Contemporary commentators' argument is another point open to discussion as it may easily be criticized in terms of ethics; however, the main criticism in the poem surrounds not only economic exploitation but the exploitation of a nature-dominant culture. The poem starts with the colonizer's lines written in italics and reveals the mindset of the white Western-patriarchal ideology of the discriminative and utilitarian colonizer:

> *All yours, Injun, twenty-four bucks' worth of glass beads,*
> *gaudy cloth. I got myself a bargain. I brandish*
> *fire-arms and fire-water. Praise the Lord.*
> *Now get your red ass out of here.* (94)

Starting with the offensive word Injun, Duffy places the Western colonizer into a position that he claims superiority and dominance over the marginalised other.

There is not only a great divide between the colonizer and the colonized in terms of the language they use, but also in the way they use it. Their approach to humanity and nature in general also differs drastically. The colonizer represents violence and militarism as he brandishes his "fire-arms", his language is dominated by verbal violence, and he takes all this power from the Lord he praises, the Christian God that, gave the white-Western-Christian men the power over all others. As Lynn White Jr suggests, the beginning of our ecological crisis can be traced back to the birth of Christianity, because "Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism […], not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" and "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects"

(10). Only in four lines in italics, and through her general use of italics in her poetry, Duffy lets the ugly truth about the white-Western-Christian androcentric ideologies reveal itself. In this poem, italics also become a set of language that signifies the discourse of the exploiters.

In contrast, the discourse she creates for the colonized-other completely contrasts the colonizer's, so using the same language but by changing not only the style but also the word choices she is able to show the power of language and how it can be constructed and used in a completely different way: "The brutally superior yet vulgar voice of the Christian coloniser who praises the Lord but plays god (…) contrasts to the pantheistic spirituality of the gentle man he boots out […] Thus, Duffy gives the high poetic lines to this unmaterialistic native" (Dowson 96). Although Dowson, recognizes the speaker of the poem as a male, Duffy refrains from assigning a specific gender to her speaker. She also tries to refrain from using any gendered pronouns when referring to humans, nonhuman animals and nature, except for the line when the "native" speaker of the poem calls out to the colonizer saying: "Man who fears death, how many acres do you need/to lengthen your shadow under the endless sky" (94). It can be suggested that this colonizer is no different than the man the dolphin mentions in "The Dolphins", as they both exploit and harm nature. Nevertheless, this use of language without gender-specific nouns and pronouns, and any negative anthropomorphic or theriomorphic representations are dominant to Duffy's poetry. It is parallel to ecofeminist ideas concerning language, according to Warren "Euro-American language is riddled with examples of 'sexist-naturist language,' that is, language that depicts women, animals, and nonhuman nature as inferior to (having less status, value, or prestige than) men and male-identified culture" (27). Duffy, although she uses one of the Euro-American languages, achieves to use it in so many different forms that she proves the possibility of shaping a language that can be divorced from all its discriminative and dominative characteristics.

The same line also points out to a difference in the colonizer's and the colonized one's approach to life and death. While the colonizer is materialistic, utilitarian and self-confident about his reason and power over the world, he is still afraid of death and disrespectful to nature. In contrast, the speaker of the poem is not afraid of death and believes in the continuation of life through reincarnation or merging of different life forms. The

speaker says "I will live in the ghost of grasshopper and buffalo" (95), and rather than seeing it as degrading as Western civilization does, respects and loves the course nature takes "I sing with true love for the land;/dawn chant, the song sunset, starlight psalm" and also reveals that each element of nature is a lesson: "I have learned/the solemn laws of joy and sorrow, in the distance/between morning's frost and firefly's flash at night" (94). On the contrary, the colonizer continues harming nature; the speaker says "Wherever/you have touched the earth, the earth is sore" (94) which is most probably a reference to the penetrating and harmful behavior of the capitalist-colonizer cultures through eco-unfriendly agriculture, mining, deforestation and domination.

The speaker, who is amazed to see that the colonizer aims to own "the rivers and the grass", shows how the outlook of the colonized one is different from the domineering and destructive aims of the white-Western-patriarchal culture. A culture that always ends in harming nature, as the poem also suggests, *he* will "poison it", "freedom" will "vanish" and there will be "silence" (94) following this loss which is a reference to the sounds of nature and other languages. What Duffy tries to do in this poem is to go back in history, to a time before the coming of silence (silencing through colonization/civilization), and record the song and the words of a not-yet-colonized America.

The speaker in "Selling Manhattan" can be a female or a male, but most importantly exists beyond the gendered structure of the Western World. If we are to consider the speaker as a female, and take into consideration the bond ecofeminists see between nature and woman, "Wherever/you have touched the earth, the earth is sore" (94) can also be read as the rape of the body and the land because "Some ecofeminists connect violence against women through rape […] to violence against nature" (Warren 25) and vice versa. However, Duffy refrains from such a clear connection and creates an all-inclusive, all-embracing connectedness in nature. Thus, Duffy's careful attempt to create a poetic language that does not use gender and possessive nouns or pronouns, except for a number of men who are the perpetrators of nature's destruction, is in accordance with ecofeminism. For Warren "language that feminises nature *in a patriarchal culture*, where women are viewed as subordinate and inferior, reinforces and authorises the domination of nature. The Mother Nature (not Father Nature) is raped, mastered,

controlled, conquered, mined" (Warren 27). Even when her speakers are women as in "Thetis" (*The World's Wife*), in which she rewrites the story of a Greek goddess that is associated with nature but known only because of her son Achilles, Duffy is concerned about making women's unheard stories more prominent. She aims to reveal not only the way they are one with all beings but also how they are taken for granted, abused, and even destroyed by the androcentric outlook.

Although *the Iliad* is full of examples of men harming women, animals, and nature, the connection between Thetis and Achilles is always significant, he turns to his mother for help, all the time, yet he does not choose to respect nature she represents, the fact that Thetis is only seen as a part of Achilles' story and as the most woeful of mothers/immortals (Homer) reveal the biased attitude towards nature, and the marginalised other(s) in general, as criticized by ecofeminists. Duffy in "Thetis" builds upon this ecofeminist criticism and talks about how Thetis, as a representative of the Mother Goddess cult, takes different shapes through the ages only to be victimized, abused, and destroyed by the Anthropocene or androcentric practices. As a sea goddess and a mother goddess she stands for nature, women, nonhuman animals, and our planet in this poem. Several ecofeminists carefully reject the idea of Mother Earth, or the Mother Goddess cult because they suggest that some of these attempts pick a certain idea and detach it from its original context such as by abusing "the Native American conception of Mother Earth" (Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures" 301). Using the term "Mother Earth" out of its context, unfortunately, helps the domination of the marginalised others by the privileged culture which imposes patriarchal notions unto the bonds between women and nature. Duffy tries to reveal this problematic connection in "Thetis" as she shows her reader how Thetis falls victim to the destructive forces of the patriarchal culture in each shape she takes, from a small bird to a snake, from a fish to a flame ("Thetis" 231–2). The poem starts with the following lines from the mouth of the speaker:

> I shrank myself
> to the size of a bird in the hand
> of a man.
> Sweet, sweet, was the small song

that I sang,
till I felt the squeeze of his fist. (231)

This first stanza not only points out shapeshifting and the ability to find a new dwelling place in another being of nature, but it also underlines the different forms of androcentric destruction, *he* silences the bird's song and kills it in his fist. Then, Thetis takes the form of an albatross, which is a direct reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's albatross in "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere". Coleridge stands as a unique poet within the Romantic tradition, because he can be seen as one of the few poets who come closer to talking about animal ethics in that period. In "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere", the "friendship" of the albatross, and the curse that befalls on the mariner and his crew after he kills the bird (53) can be read as a criticism of animal cruelty. However, his poem's speaker is still the mariner, whereas Duffy chooses to look at the story from the albatross' eyes. Thetis, as the albatross, follows a ship only to feel *its* "wings/clipped by the squint of a crossbow's eye" (231), a crossbow that takes away first the freedom, and then the life out of the bird. This bird's-eye-view retelling of the story, in a few lines, not only pays homage to Derrida's idea of being seen by an animal, but also deconstructs the man's central position as the bird only mentions the ship, and the crossbow's eye but not the man behind it.

Each attempt of her, each shape she takes faces a similar, tragic end. Even when she takes the shape of a racoon, mink or a rat, she falls victim to a "taxidermist" (232), thus Duffy, in a way criticizes how achievements in science also mean further abuse of nature and nonhuman animals, as it is also used to experiment on them, or to turn them into collector's items. When she is the wind "a fighter plane" roars against her storm, and when her "tongue was flame" she is fought back with "asbestos" (232), so although she takes the form of natural beings, androcentric attitude fights back with human-related or human-made violent acts or weapons to destroy her existence.

The change comes when the speaker of the poem, the goddess, gives birth to a baby, she says "I changed, I learned" (232); as Dowson suggests "It is difficult not to find a feminist lens on her story of how she would dance to the tune of a man but then 'learn' that it brings abuse, domination, disappointment, and rejection. Moreover, it is in having the prophesied child

and becoming a mother that Thetis is fulfilled" (139). However, it is essential to see that, more than the idea of a fulfillment, there is the connection between motherhood as another shape or a role a woman (or nature in this context) takes, and shrinking oneself to fit that shape only to be abused. There is also the dominant idea that a woman's body is also a dwelling place not only for herself but also for "housing" the baby, and it can be read as a symbol for the Western patriarchal outlook that chooses to see woman and nature as mother figures which they can use and abuse. For "In white Western culture, mothers are expected to be selfless, generous, and nurturing", so this bond, when taken up by the Western civilization what follows is the creation of a "connection between all-giving human mothers and the idea of nature as an all-giving mother" through which "the metaphor of Mother Earth will only serve to perpetuate the very notion ecofeminism seeks to eradicate" (Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Native American Cultures" 302).

Throughout "Thetis", Duffy shows the way anthropocentric or androcentric outlook fights with nature and all the marginalised others, and exhibits how the tools of destruction change drastically and get more violent. As Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen suggest, ecofeminism "addresses the various ways that sexism, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism, and ableism are informed by and support speciesism and how analyzing the ways these forces intersect can produce less violent, more just practices" (1). Thus, the poem explicates the shape the Earth takes with this history of human destruction; therefore, it can also be suggested that through her critical approach to Mother Earth/Mother Goddess cult in "Thetis" Duffy also deals with the body, nature and our planet as a home, as a dwelling place. She not only critically rewrites the Mother Goddess cult by revealing the problems that surround a patriarchal approach but also explores the problems concerning the human approach to nature as humanity's first and primary dwelling-place; thus, in her poems, her ecofeminist approach is united with ecopoetics.

Following the current Covid-19 crisis which has stricken all humanity and pushed human civilization to reconsider its relationship with nature and the idea of home, Duffy "has launched an international poetry project with major names [...] as a response to the coronavirus pandemic" and she "leads British poets creating 'living record' of coronavirus" (Flood). Duffy,

who believes in the exigency of poetry as a response to such dark moments, inevitably places particular importance on giving voice to the problematic relationship between nature and human civilization in her poetry. With its focus on the marginalised ones, the unique representation of nature, human and nonhuman others, and with the way she explores the possibilities and limits of language, Duffy's poetry is a significant example of ecofeminist ecopoetics.

"Ecological feminists ("ecofeminists") claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature" (Warren 1) and ecopoetics "asks in what respects a poem may be a making (Greek poiesis) of the dwelling-place" (Bate 75), Duffy's poetry unites both of them by critically investigating the dwelling places of human and nonhuman others: cities, villages and even bodies, history and literature as a dwelling place, and by giving voice to the dominated, marginalised women, people of color, nonhuman animals.

Ecopoetics is also a "healing process [which] requires a 'letting-be of Being' that allows for a rediscovery of familiarity with nature in which the idea of 'dwelling', immanently 'revealed' rather than instrumentally 'narrated' " (Huggan & Tiffin 106–7). Although Duffy's poems, specifically the ones discussed in this chapter, seem to draw a bleak picture of humanity as out of touch with nature, they create hope as Duffy tries to find ways to heal the wound of, therefore the trauma of, being out of touch with nature by exploring and proving the power of language and the way we use it, and creates a new dwelling-place, a new connection with our home (eco-) on a metaphorical, textual, and physical level.

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