

63. Being and Greenness: Phenomenology of the Poetic Persona and Nature in Dylan Thomas's Green Poems¹

Fatma KARAASLAN ÖZGÜ²

APA: Karaaslan Özgü, F. (2024). Being and Greenness: Phenomenology of the Poetic Persona and Nature in Dylan Thomas's Green Poems. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö14), 1101-1112. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1455159.

Abstract

Ecopoetry, a relatively recent approach in ecocriticism, refers to nature poems which are closely linked to environmental issues. Deliberating nature in poetry is indeed not something new, yet, what is new in ecopoetry, which is a characteristic that discerns it from, especially Romantic poetry, is that it delineates the relationship between the human and non-human worlds. In other words, ecopoetry stands out from both contemporary nature poetry and Romanticist poetry. It is characterized by the eco-centric view it provides, which axiomatically brings with it the principle of reciprocity, interrelationship, and egalitarianism. In this perspective one might argue that the majority of Dylan Thomas's (1914-1953) nature poems could be rendered ecopoems as they see nature and natural phenomena as components of a unified and closely connected whole. In these poems Dylan Thomas's poetic eye adopts an eco-centric verb tense and functions as a camera which record the harmonised movements of the poetic persona and the natural phenomena manifesting *the intentionality of the eye* of the ecopoet. Through this particular vision Dylan Thomas generates a place out of space in which both human and the other-than-human are deployed, thereby creating a specific subject-object relationship according to which the existence of the human and the non-human are interrelated. This study focuses on the ontological relationship between the poetic persona and nature and analyses the subject-object relationship in Thomas's "Poem in October", "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", and "Fern Hill" through the lens of phenomenology and object-oriented ontology.

Keywords: Dylan Thomas, "Poem in October", "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", "Fern Hill", Phenomenology.

¹ This is an extended version of a paper presented at the "Twelfth International IDEA Conference: Studies in English" organized by Akdeniz University in 2018..

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest is declared.

Funding: No external funding was used to support this research.

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Source: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed during the preparation of this study and all the studies used are stated in the bibliography.

Similarity Report: Received - Turnitin, Rate: 6

Ethics Complaint: editor@rumelide.com

Article Type: Research article, Article Registration Date: 14.01.2024-Acceptance Date: 20.03.2024-Publication Date: 21.03.2024; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1455159

Peer Review: Two External Referees / Double Blind

² Öğr. Gör. Dr., Yařar Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu / Lecturer. Dr., Yařar University, School of Foreign Languages (İzmir, Türkiye), ozgufatma@outlook.com, **ORCID ID:** 0000-0001-9185-0622, **ROR ID:** https://ror.org/oodzleb96, **ISNI:** 0000 0001 0690 851X

Varlık ve Yeşillik: Dylan Thomas'ın Yeşil Şiirlerinde Şair ve Doğanın Fenomenolojisi³

Öz

Ekoeleştiri alanında görece yeni bir dal olan ekoshiir, çevreci ve çevresel konularla ilgilenen şiirleri ifade eder. Şiirde doğa ve doğa ile ilgili konuların işlenmesi yeni bir şey değildir ancak ekoshiirde yeni olan ve onu özellikle Romantik akım gibi akımlardan ayıran şey, bu şiir türünün insanın diğer varlıklar ve doğayla ilişkisini işlemesidir. Başka bir deyişle, ekoshiiri doğa şiirlerinden farklı kılan, onun, karşılıklılık, bağlılık ve eşitlikçilik gibi ilkeleri beraberinde getiren doğa-merkezli bakışıdır. Bu bağlamda, Dylan Thomas'ın doğayı konu eden birçok şiirinin ekoshiir olarak ele alınabileceğini ileri sürmek mümkündür. Nitekim bu şiirler doğa ve doğaya özgü görünümleri, bir bütünün birbirine sıkı sıkıya bağlı parçaları olarak yansıtır. Bu şiirlerde doğayı tasvir eden göz, doğa-merkezli bir bakış benimseyerek etraftaki her şeyi kaydeden bir kamera gibi şair ve doğa arasındaki ilişkileri gösterir ve böylelikle ekoshairin fenomenolojide yönelimsel denilen bakışını yansıtır. Dylan Thomas bu bakış yoluyla uzam içerisinde, insan ve insan olmayan varlıkların bir arada var olduğu özel bir mekân yaratır ve böylelikle, insan ve insan olmayan varlıkların varoluşlarının tamamen birbirine bağlı olduğu bir özne-nesne ilişkisi kurar. Bu çalışma, şair ve doğa arasında kurulan ontolojik ilişkiye odaklanarak Dylan Thomas'ın "Poem in October", "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" ve "Fern Hill" adlı şiirlerindeki özne-nesne ilişkisini, fenomenoloji ve nesne yönelimli ontoloji kuramlarını kullanarak incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dylan Thomas, "Poem in October", "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", "Fern Hill", Fenomenoloji.

Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) wrote during a chaotic period between the two world wars which is marked by economic and political crises on a global scale. He is famous for his own turbulent personal life as well as his verbally dense, acoustic, lyrical poems. The Irish poet, Seamus Heaney (1993) describes Thomas as a man of letters with many personas: "There is Thomas the Voice, Thomas the Booze, Thomas the Debts, Thomas the Jokes, Thomas the Wales, Thomas the Sex, Thomas the Lies [...]" and "Thomas the Poet" (p. 66). He is, yet, famous for his poetry, "his one main love," (Dylan Thomas's Poems, np.) and his poems are what distinguishes him from the other poets writing in the same period.

Unlike other famous modernist poets, such as T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas wrote poems which are charged with emotions and strong descriptions of natural phenomena. Thomas's poems are also different from the poems belonging to the twentieth century Anglo-American poetic movement of *imagism* which is characterized by its directness, the primacy of the image, and the poet's impression of a particular visual object or scene. Thomas's literary style is thought to be influenced by both modernist

³ **Beyan (Tez/ Bildiri):** Bu çalışma 2018 yılında Akdeniz Üniversitesi tarafından düzenlenen "Twelfth International IDEA Conference: Studies in English" adlı konferansta sunulan bir çalışmanın genişletilmiş halidir.

Çıkar Çatışması: Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.

Finansman: Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.

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Kaynak: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.

Benzerlik Raporu: Alındı – Turnitin, Oran: %6

Etik Şikayeti: editor@rumelide.com

Makale Türü: Araştırma makalesi, **Makale Kayıt Tarihi:** 14.01.2024-**Kabul Tarihi:** 20.03.2024-**Yayın Tarihi:** 21.03.2024; **DOI:** 10.29000/rumelide.1455159

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme

tradition and also by famous poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) and he is, thus, classified as a neo-Romanticist poet. Nevertheless, Thomas's treatise of natural phenomena differentiates his style from that of the neo-Romantics in the sense that he pictures human relationships with human and nonhuman entities through a specific kind of interconnectedness. In his nature poems Dylan Thomas delineates the natural world as a place wherein every single creature and *thing* is linked with everything else. This study postulates Dylan Thomas's nature poems as green and/or ecopoems which hold an ecocentric egalitarian attitude towards nature. By the same token, this study attempts to analyse how Thomas, in three of his green poems, "Poem in October", "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", and "Fern Hill", creates a familiarised space and uses the phenomenological subject-object relationship between the poetic persona and the natural phenomena thereby deploying nature as an agent which proves the poetic persona's ontology, bringing her/him into existence.

Reflecting nature and deploying natural phenomena in poetry is definitely not something new. It indeed dates back to ancient pastoral poems and idylls which are marked by the inclusion of idyllic and rustic portrayals and which "came to mean the represented situation of rural escape or repose itself" (Garrard, 2017, p. 35). Romantic poetry, which emerged in the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, reflects a distinctive relationship between nature and the poet. Romantic poems are marked by the emphasis placed upon personal feelings, imagination, sensibility, creativity, and nature. They offer sensitive depictions of nature which are reflected by means of the descriptive usage of countryside, rivers, forests, and so on. Nature also serves as the means through which the Romantic poet is able to reach sublime and/or that which triggers the poet's revelation invoking sublime musing. In ecopoems, however, the perception and treatise of nature is different. According to Bryson (2005) ecopoetry differs from pastoral and Romantic poems since ecopoetry as a mode complies with particular conventions of traditional nature poetry, yet it proceeds that tradition and is marked by different characteristics.

Ecopoetry, as Bryson (2005) writes, is a relatively recent approach probably because of the fact that during the inflation of ecocriticism during the 1990s, the critical focus was mainly on fictional and nonfictional works and thus poems with an ecological attitude drew less attention. The term ecopoetry does not indeed have a decisive definition (p. 1). There are several definitions and approaches to ecopoetry and ecopoems. Gifford calls this new branch of nature poetry, "green poetry" that refers to the "recent nature poems which engage directly with environmental issues" (1995, p.3). Scigaj (1999) defines ecopoetry as "poetry that persistently stresses human cooperation with nature conceived as a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems" (p. 37). In his rendering, ecopoetry is different from environmental poetry which idolises nature and mostly concentrates upon certain environmental matters yet without the ecopoet's focus upon nature itself as a whole made up of interdependent sets of cyclical structures. According to Gilcrest (2002) "environmental poetry is consequently distinguished from other types of nature poetry (and especially Romantic nature poetry) to the extent that it reinforces" what he calls "an environmental perspective" (p. 37, emphasis in the original). And finally, Fisher-Wirth and Street (2013) write that ecopoetry has recently come to refer a type of poetry that is framed by and addresses environmental crisis. They substantiate that this poetry responds to these issues in an "ecocentric" manner which "respect[s] the integrity of the other-than-human world" and at the same time it "challenges the belief that [human beings] are meant to have dominion over nature and is sceptical of a hyperrationality that would separate mind from body –and earth and its creatures from human beings– and that would give preeminence to fantasies of control" (Fisher-Wirth & Street, p. xxviii). This study investigates Dylan Thomas's three poems within the framework of Scigaj's postulation of ecopoetry in the sense that it stresses the syndetic cyclical systems in which nature and human beings

exist together. Also, these three poems, I believe, respect the presence of, in Fisher-Wirth and Street's words (2013), the other-than-human world, and their cohesion with human beings. And that is why these poems are designated as green poems.

Dylan Thomas, in his green poems, pictures human beings' relationship with both human and nonhuman nature. That is why it could be argued that his poems have a peculiar characteristic employed by ecopoetry, that is, "an ecological and biocentric perspective recognizing the interdependent nature of the world, [and] a deep humility with regard to our relationship with human and nonhuman nature" (Bryson, 2005, p. 2). The poetic universe of Thomas is thus a unified world. Within this *green* world there exists no hegemonic relationship, but everything is connected with one another; natural phenomena are not depicted as subordinate to human beings, nor the latter is deemed superior. So, the universe in his poems function like an *organic* clockwork.

Within this world where everything is mutually and closely connected, the universe and, indeed, biology are depicted as transformations that create unity. In order to reflect this very transformation, Dylan Thomas uses "his poetic imaginative eye like a camera, cutting from one perspective to another, panning, zooming from an overview to a close-up, and then pulling back for another wide-angle shot" (Greenway, 1989, p. 278). Thomas's imaginative eye in this sense aligns with what Thoreau calls the "intentionality of the eye" (qtd. in Walls, 2007, p. 200) of the ecopoetry and the ecopoet. Thomas, in his green poems, reflects a natural cycle in which birth, growth, and death follow each other constantly. This cyclical system does not contain only the birth, growth, and death of human beings but also those of the non-human entities. His green poems, thus, correspond to the ecopoetic characteristic of the "ecocentric ethic of interconnectedness, reciprocity, and, in some instances, radical egalitarianism" (Gilcrest, 2002, p. 24).

Deployment of the poet and nature within the same natural cycle is most clearly reflected in Thomas's "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower". The poem is dominated by powerful nature imagery. Throughout the poem Thomas compares how *the force*, cosmic and/or natural, affects both the poetic persona, that is, the human beings, and natural phenomena:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
 Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
 Is my destroyer.
 And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
 My youth is bent by the same wintry fever. (Thomas, 1952, p. 9)

As seen in the first stanza of the poem, there is a strong sense of interconnectedness between human beings and nature. To reflect this reciprocity Thomas draws parallels between natural phenomena and the poetic persona fortifying the strong similitudes by means of the employment of the first-person singular and analogous processes. For instance, human youth is referred as green age, and it is bracketed with the green fuse. So, not only the trees, the roses, and the fuse of a flower, but also humankind are all affected by the same forces. Also, since humankind is a part of nature, they are of the same essence as written in the second stanza of the poem: "And I am dumb to tell the hanging man / How of my clay is made the hangman's lime" (Thomas, 1952, p. 9).

Similarly, in "Poem in October" Dylan Thomas generates a world in which everything is firmly and eternally connected. In the poem, there is a complete harmony between the poetic persona's movements

and those of the non-human beings: The poet's day begins with water, "My birthday began with the water" (Thomas, 1952, p. 102), the morning with shore, water, and seagulls beckons the poet and then s/he sets off, which simultaneously happens when the tide is in and the heron dives into the water, "High tide and the heron dived when I took the road" (Thomas, 1952, p. 102). This dual motion instigates the reminiscences of the poet's childhood. In the middle of the fifth stanza the poet's recollection of the landscape around her/him are referred as such: when the weather changed into a summer day "with apples pears and red currants," "the blue altered sky" evokes the poet's childhood memories (Thomas, 1952, p. 103). So, there is a tenacious relationship between nature and the poetic persona's past as well as his present. The surrounding images not only bring endless reminiscences of the past but also accompany the poetic persona as they coexist harmoniously.

While in "Poem in October" childhood memories invoked by natural phenomena are partially used, "Fern Hill" completely leans on childhood memories of the poetic persona. In the poem, young age, in a similar manner to "The Force", is compared to the natural world in spring and summer: "Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs / About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green," (Thomas, 1952, p. 159). By the same token, the poem employs apparently harmonised motion; the poetic persona is moving with everything else around her/him and they complete each other:

And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the night-jars
Flying with the ricks, and the horses
Flashing into the dark. (Thomas, 1952, p. 160)

Such powerful and meticulous depictions display the camera-like vision in Thomas's green poems since he draws a vivid picture throughout the poem as if the poetic persona were carrying a camera while walking and the reader was watching what the camera recorded. In so doing he assures that "[w]e are placed behind the writer's eyes, looking out on this interesting and vital world and moving through it with the protagonist [or the poetic persona]" (Lyon 279). The simultaneous and congruous movement of the poetic persona and the natural world around her/him are present throughout the poems as the motion of the poetic persona is in perfect harmony with the non-human world around her/him. There clearly is a reciprocal relationship between the poetic persona and the natural world which move together and get affected by the very forces as Aivaz (1950) writes in relation to the poetic universe Thomas builds: "Thomas' world [...] is organic, the same process activates all its parts" (p. 389) as it is overtly present in "The Force", "Poem in October", and "Fern Hill". Within this world created by the ecopoet, human and non-human and their existence are interrelated; one's existence requires that of the other's. This very characteristic instructs us to recognise and appreciate the "spider-webbed' quality of the world, in which everything is connected to everything else" (Bryson, 2005, p. 12). So, these poems "give voice to all the participating agents, not by blending them together but by giving each a distinct hearing in a medium of sustained attention" (Walls, 2007, p. 205).

Dylan Thomas in these three poems emphasises the interconnectedness between nature and human beings while at the same time acknowledging the fact that unlike human beings, nature is in constant rejuvenation. Goodby (2017) describes this relational link in Dylan Thomas's poetry as a process: "The poems are certainly always about 'process' – the profound inter-involvement of the forces of growth and decay, of everything from molecules to galaxies, and their existence in a state of perpetual flux and change" (p. 17, emphasis in the original). So, both human beings and the natural phenomena might be

components of a larger system and get affected by the same forces; however, natural phenomena are in constant renewal and all the effects of these forces on nature are only parcels of a never-ending cycle whereas human beings approach death due to the very force. The represented creative yet destructive cosmic force prevails throughout the poems, especially in “The Force”, bestowing them with the ecopoetic interconnectedness and reciprocity.

The quality of ecological interconnectedness and congruity between nature and human beings in the poems are accentuated by a dense space and place relationship, which is one of the major qualities of ecopoems. The interrelatedness in Thomas's green poems might be considered a type of place-making. Within this relationship, the sphere for the poet to exist is created through a process called *ecopoetical place-making*. Ecopoets try to “create place, making a conscious and concerted effort to know the more-than-human world around us; and to value space, recognizing the extent to which that very world is ultimately unknowable” (Bryson, 2005, p. 8). In this context, space and place are two interrelated notions, which require each other to be defined, as Tuan (2001) puts forth, “from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa” (p. 6). Space and place, thus, are interrelated and interdependent. They are also essential for a healthy and complete conception of the world we are living in. According to Tuan (2001), “[i]n experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. ‘Space’ is more abstract than ‘place.’ What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (p. 6, emphases in the original). The definition of both space and place is, then, closely related with perception and how they are experienced. In this vein, one could argue that ecopoems successfully generate place out of space. Ecopoets are thus often place-makers because of the fact that they “attempt to move their audience out of an existence in an abstract space, where we are simply visitors in an unknown neighbourhood, and into a recognition of our present surroundings as place and thus as home; the goal would be to create a feeling of ‘topophilia’” (Bryson, 2005, p. 11, emphasis in the original) which, according to Tuan (1990), refers to the affective connection between human beings and place and/or locale (p. 4).

Through this very act of place-making the ecopoet achieves, the reader comes to realise the biggest component in their being, that is, the Cosmos. Ecopoetry, thus, impels the reader to perceive and to be aware of the Cosmos, which leads them to realise the local and their own presence in it. In this way, the landscape in the poems can become familiar and meaningful. Only then can the reader recognise the tiny place of the humankind in the Cosmos and that humankind alone cannot be the master of it. By the same token, they come to realise the reciprocal relationship of the human beings with the Cosmos (space), the place, and nature: “The Cosmos exists nowhere else but in the local, and the local becomes meaningful to us as we see in it the realization of the Cosmos in this place, at this time, unique in itself yet infinitely connected in all its relations with all other places, all other times” (Walls, 2007, p. 206). So, ecopoems promote spatial awareness and an improved understanding of the relationship between the local, the Cosmos, and the human beings.

In his green poems, especially the ones belonging to his late period, Dylan Thomas commits the act of ecological place-making. In “Poem in October”, for instance, the poet delineates waking up in the morning of her/his thirtieth birthday, “It was my thirtieth year to heaven”, and taking a walk at a place referred as “neighbour wood” (Thomas, 1952, p. 102).

And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore

The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and rook
And the knock of sailing boats on the webbed wall.
My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses
And I rose
In a rainy autumn
And walked abroad in shower of all my days
High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke. (p. 102)

Through intensely detailed depictions Thomas introduces the reader to a natural landscape, employing his memories from his thirtieth birthday, which clearly underscores the sense of familiarity. So, the poetic persona owns and at the same time elicits from the reader a spatial awareness. This very awareness is followed by the familiarisation of the reader with this very space the poetic persona is already familiar with thereby turning it into a place for both herself/himself and the reader.

Similarly, in “Fern Hill” one observes this familiarised place and, again, the effect of familiarity is emphasised by the employment of memory. Yet, this time, it is from a distant past as the poetic persona delineates “the familiar Welsh landscape [probably] as a [child],” and henceforth, the insertion of memory functions as “an elegiac device” (Daiches, 1954, p. 355). The recollection of the childhood memories implies the period when s/he was *one* with nature, which indeed continues throughout the poem as the poetic persona identifies with “the apple boughs,” “the grass,” “apple towns,” “the trees,” and “the leaves” (Thomas, 1952, p. 159). The state of communing with nature, together with Thomas’s meticulous and elaborated depictions of this familiarised place in nature, tempts the reader. It might also function as an instigator “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 first-hand experience within nature’s supportive second skin and to become more responsible about that necessary second skin” (Scigaj, 1999, p. 41).

In “The Force” as well Thomas constitutes a familiarised place. Nevertheless, what prevails throughout the poem is not childhood memories like it is in “Fern Hill”, nor is it identification with the non-human agencies within this landscape. Instead, the poem deals with creation and the natural processes of birth, growth, death, and rebirth through the use of a strong parallel and cyclical design of nature in which all beings are affected by the very forces. In this vein, the poem reflects not only the reciprocity and the spider-web quality of nature but also the act of *carving* a familiar place out of space. By so doing, Thomas makes the poem “a model for how to approach the landscape surrounding us so that we view it as meaningful place rather than abstract space” (Bryson, 2005, p. 12). He, in other words, imbues us “to discover and nurture a topophilic devotion to the places we inhabit” (p. 12). It is also clear that this poem is concerned not only “with the attitude to nature expressed by the author of a text, but also with its patterns of interrelatedness, both between the human and the nonhuman, and between the different parts of the non-human world” (Gifford 5). The poetic persona in the poems presents herself/himself as

being 'among' the natural phenomena and as a member of nature as Dylan Thomas stresses this identification of the poetic persona with nature. In this respect, all three poems elucidate what Bryson (2005) writes in relation to the mode of the eco-poems in terms of the eco-poetical space-place relationship:

Paying close attention to the places in which they reside leads the poets to an increased awareness of the ecological interconnection between all the inhabitants of that particular place. And a healthy space-consciousness is closely connected to the other primary characteristics, since such a perspective is inherently humble and by definition brings to light the inadequacies in human attempts to control, master, or even fully understand the world around them. (p. 22)

It is through this very quality of place-making and reciprocity in the poems that the ontological being of the poetic persona is proved to be dependent upon the existence of nature. If we are to analyse this mutual relationship between the *being* of the poetic persona and that of the natural phenomena within the framework of phenomenology, we must then have a look at the subject-object relationship within phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology, which is literally the study of phenomena, analyses structures of experience and how subjects experience phenomena. It is based on the conscious experience of the subject. So, there is a peculiar subject-object relation in phenomenology. Accordingly, as Edmund Husserl, the founder of the school of phenomenology, establishes, objects exist regardless of the subjects that see and/or sense them; however, when a subject looks at an object, they direct their *intentionality* at them and thus constitute them. To put it differently, an object's essence is built upon the very relationship between the object and the subject perceiving it. A similar idea exists also in the Existentialist thought, in which, according to Crowell (2012), more emphasis is placed upon human cognition/perception than on belief or supposition (pp. 200-215). In tandem with Husserl's idea of intentionality and consciousness, Sartre (1993) argues that human beings perceive their consciousness only if they direct their consciousness to something else because all consciousness is always-already the consciousness of some thing. According to Sartre, "consciousness is intentional and directive, pointing to a transcendent object other than itself" (Sartre, 1993, introduction by Barnes, p. x). So, what is central in the phenomenological experience is its intentionality, which, in this case, refers to the experience of an object by a subject. This peculiar experience, however, is by no means a passive one. It refers to a variety of actions such as perception, thought, understanding, imagination, sensation, vision, talking, touching, walking, and so on.

Nevertheless, in eco-poetry, there is no hierarchical relationship between the human subject and object. The matter and/or object is as crucial as the human subject that perceives it as Harman (2017) argues in relation to the ontology of the objects: "all objects must be given equal attention, whether they be human, non-human, natural, cultural, real or fictional" (p. 9). Therefore, we must acknowledge the autonomy of the object which stirs the subject's cognition. From the perspective of object-oriented ontology, what is at work here is more a mutual than a hierarchical or symbiotic relationship because "[s]ymbioses are often non-reciprocal, meaning that thing A can relate to thing B without the reverse being true. And all symbioses are asymmetrical" (Harman, 2017, p. 260). In eco-poems, nature and material itself are not treated as inert, passive entities that human beings as active, vital agents have effects upon. Jane Bennett (2010) argues that we have to take the *vitality* of matters seriously and she designates the meaning of vitality as "the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (p. viii). In eco-poems, all the non-human agencies are construed as autonomous, independent, and ontologically self-efficient entities that are "active players in the world" (Bennett, 2010, p. 4). In phenomenological and/or existential terms, the subject

has to be a conscious being to direct their intentionality at the object and thus constitute their own presence; however, “the external world [and/or the object, the matter] exists independently of human awareness” even if they are “not ‘conscious’ in the same way as humans or animals” (Harman, 2017, p. 10; 259, emphasis in the original). The object, then, is a being that has agency.

The mutual relationship in ecopoetry stands as an *eco-response* to Cartesian dualism, and in a way that the poet proofs her/his existence as Bryson (2005) argues that in ecopoems “we perceive an intense desire to respond to the modern crisis associated with Cartesian dualism” and the aim is to “recover a sense of the world as one organism is made up of” both human and other-than-human components (p. 121). It is as if in these three poems Thomas implied this motto: ‘Nature exists, therefore I (the poetic persona) am’, which paves the way for the acknowledgment of the kinship between human beings and the natural world.

In Dylan Thomas’s green poems, the ontological subject-object relationship is built by means of the reciprocal relationship between the poetic persona and the other-than-human world. This relationship is sometimes in the form of a special connection or attachment of the poetic persona to other-than-human entities. All three poems reflect the perceptual experience of natural phenomena through the poetic persona. So, in the ontological sense, there is an intentional connection between the human subject and nature. In “The Poem in October,” during her/his motion within the natural setting the poetic persona acts as the perceiver directing her/his intentionality at natural beings thereby inventing and reinventing her/his own existence. “The Force” reflects this connection through the shared *openness* of the poet and the nonhuman phenomena to natural forces. In “Fern Hill,” on the other hand, the intentional bond is exhibited through memory which is supplied by the poetic persona’s corporeal and cognitive experience of the natural world as a child.

This very connection is closely related with the poet’s act of place-making since the experience of the poetic persona serves as proof for the ontological being of the poetic persona who ‘exists’ within the space, which the ecopoet has turned into a place shared with nonhuman beings. In this vein it would be wrong to argue that the ontological subject-object relationship is also formed through *spatiality*. In this case, the ecological place making stands out as an important factor in the intentional, that is, ontological, connection between the poet and the natural phenomena because in the poems, the human perceiver is inserted in natural settings, and they constantly interact with each other in an active and multisensory manner. Within this relationship the environment is treated as “a field of forces continuous with the organism, a field in which there is a reciprocal action of organism on environment and environment on organism and in which there is no real demarcation between them” (Berleant, 1988, p. 93). There clearly occurs what Love (1993) calls “the allying of place to body” (p. 93) which refers to the ontological line between the human beings and the place they occupy as Casey (1993) writes in relation to the connection between human subject and the place, “[j]ust as there is no place without body –without the physical or psychical traces of body – so there is no body without a place” and thus human beings are “embodied-in-place” (p. 104). The human subject then must have an environment, a place to exist as there is no *body* without an environment.

Within this place that is made out of space the human subject is living along with all the nonhuman agencies which s/he entails to exist. In “Poem in October” for instance we see the poetic persona’s existential entailment for nature in these lines: “My birthday began with the water / Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name / Above the farms” (p. 102). Here in this stanza, the poet, stating that the birds fly her/his name, implies that the name is represented by the flying of the birds, which

refers to the naming process in the Saussurian understanding of semiotics. Hence, the poet's bodily existence relies upon the existence of nature and her/his name also exists as long as the birds' flight refers to it. The poet cannot exist without being named and the birds' flight creates the poet's name hailing the poet and thus bringing her/him into existence. In this specific process of coming into being the focus is on the individual ego:

Ecopoets deemphasize the individual ego by making place, by offering readers an opportunity to view themselves as members of what David Abram calls a 'more-than-human world,' while simultaneously maintaining that that world will always elude our attempts to contain or grasp it, either literally or figuratively. Often, the means to achieving place- and space-consciousness is an immersion of the self in the natural community, not by leaving the ego behind or by becoming a transparent eyeball, but by recognizing that we are members and citizens of (in Aldo Leopold's phrase) a 'land-community' to which we belong but will never master or fully comprehend. (Bryson, 2005, p. 22)

From the perspective of the phenomenological subject-object relationship we could see the Ego's intentional relation to the Other. According to Sartre, a human being perceives her/his consciousness only if s/he directs it to something else because all consciousness is the consciousness of the Other; that is to say, "consciousness is intentional and directive, pointing to a transcendent object other than itself. Here is the germ for Sartre's later view of man's being-in-the-world, for his 'ontological proof' of the existence of a Being-in-itself which is external to consciousness" (Sartre, 1993, introduction by Barnes, p. x). Ego always requires the Other to form a consciousness and confirm that it (Ego) really exists. In Sartre's postulation, the Other is present in Ego "not only as a particular concrete appearance but also as the perpetual condition of its congruity and richness" (Karaaslan, 2016, p. 16). So, it is clear that one's self by no means has a privileged position since a person's empirical Ego and that of the Other exist contemporaneously. Sartre (1993) clarifies this idea when he states that

[W]ithout consciousness, being does not exist either as a totality (in the sense of 'the world' 'the universe') or with differentiated parts. ...Without consciousness there would not be a world, mountains, rivers, tables, chairs, etc.; there would be only Being. In this sense there is no thing without consciousness, but there is not nothing. Consciousness causes there to be things because it is itself nothing. Only through consciousness is there differentiation, meaning, and plurality for Being. (p. IV)

Based on Sartrean existentialism it can be argued that the consciousness in ecopoems is not only the consciousness of the poet herself/himself, but at the same time that of the nature; these two are interrelated, one's existence requires the other's. In Thomas's "Poem in October", for instance, the poet is a *nature-conscious* one who reflects the intermingled quality of the consciousness of the poetic persona and that of the natural phenomena as it is seen through the third stanza:

A springful of larks in a rolling
 Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
 Blackbirds and the sun of October
 Summery
 On the hill's shoulder,
 Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
 Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
 To the rain wringing
 Wind blow cold
 In the wood faraway under me. (pp. 102- 103)

These lines show that there is an intentional relationship between the bushes, blackbirds, rain, and the poet. They both are reflected as active agents; for instance, as the blackbirds whistle, or fly towards the poet, the poetic persona directs her/his intentionality at them proving her/his being by means of their presence. Similarly, in the fourth stanza of the poem, the presence and thus, the consciousness of the rain, sea, owls, and cloud are represented in a way that each of them verifies the existence of the other.

In conclusion, Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill," "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," and "Poem in October" could be postulated as green poems and/or eco-poems in which Thomas pictures a harmonious natural organism. The natural world in Thomas's understanding is not an arcadia, nor is it a metaphor or fable, but rather a living organism, that is to say, Thomas creates a poetic ecosystem in the poems. So, the poems are not about nature and environment, they *are* environments in which isomorphic relationships are built and ecology is never used solely as a metaphor. Thomas in his green poems generates a place by narrowing and familiarizing a space through the use of nature imagery. He also reflects the universe and biology as magical transformations that create a whole. In this very place he situates a subject and an object, whose existences are interrelated. From a phenomenological perspective, it is clear that Thomas renders the poetic persona as the subject and natural phenomena as the object: the former needs the latter in order to perceive her/his ontological presence. In tandem with this peculiar connection, it is implied in the poems that not only the poet's bodily existence relies upon the existence of the nature, but also her/his name exists as long as the nonhuman beings refer to it since the poet cannot exist without a name. It is thus clear that in these poems there is a "a poetic voice which is necessarily human and reflective" (Garrard, 2017, p. 47) yet is always closely related with the natural other as the natural phenomena independently perform the act of *being*. So, it is manifest in the poems that the natural phenomena exist not because the human subject/poetic persona perceives them; they are always already present in the universe where they mutually exist with the poetic persona. The poetic persona is, thus, named and originated by the existence of nature.

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