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Posthuman Poetics of the Anthropocene in Contemporary British Poetry: Ecocentric Echoes in Mario Petrucci's *Bosco*[*]

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Abstract

This study aims to question the discursive construction of the hierarchical order attributed to the human/nonhuman dichotomy through an ecocentric reading of Mario Petrucci's *Bosco* (1999). *Bosco* consists of poems that represent catastrophic consequences of deforestation, and it demonstrates how the more-than-human world reacts to egocentric schemes of humankind via its delineation of the agential faculties of the trees. In the collection, trees can no longer remain silent about the desolation that has been wrought upon nature, and they start addressing humankind to make them realise that they have long turned the planet into a barren space. Although it is too late to mitigate the ecological loss, *Bosco* explores the self-annihilating capacity of the anthropocentric mindset and warns against the imminent extinction that threatens all life forms. Given the increasing impact of the human imprint on Earth, therefore, it is seen that cultural modes of representation are bound to re-evaluate the undercurrents of the dialogue between human and nonhuman agents. In this manner, the Anthropocene functions as a material-discursive foundation that raises questions not only about the ecological crises triggered by humankind, but also about the exceptional status of the human 'subject.' Relatedly, it can be argued that traditional 'nature' poems fall behind in representing the complexity of human-nonhuman, culture-nature relations in the Anthropocene, and that contemporary 'nature' poetry needs a more inclusive dictionary that is devoid of egocentric insinuations. In this way, it will be possible to deal comprehensively with the multi-dimensional and intricate features of human-nonhuman relationship(s) in contemporary British poetry. While such terms as environmental poetry and/or ecopoetry have been used to denote a less anthropocentric position, none of them has been able to exhibit a well-developed ecocentric stance that can address the entanglement of human and nature thoroughly. Thus, the term 'posthuman poetry' is presented as an alternative tool that does not flatter the egocentric hubris of humankind but keeps the necessary aesthetic distance between humans and nonhumans by putting neither of them in the centre or in the periphery. Within this perspective, this study argues that, exploring the nonhuman agent's inherent capacity to counter the negative consequences of egocentric mindset, *Bosco* serves as an ecocentric critique problematising the rationale for human authority over the more-than-human world in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Mario Petrucci, *Bosco*, posthuman poetry, anthropocene, climate change, contemporary British poetry

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ÇAĞDAŞ İNGİLİZ ŞİİRİNDE ANTROPOSEN'İN POSTHÜMAN POETİKASI: MARIO PETRUCCI'NİN *BOSCO* ESERİNDE EKOMERKEZCİ YANKILAR

Öz

Bu çalışma, Mario Petrucci'nin *Bosco* (1999) adlı eserinin ekomerkezci bir okuması üzerinden, insan/insan olmayan ikiliğine atfedilen hiyerarşik düzenin söylemsel inşasını sorgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. *Bosco*, orman tahribatının yıkıcı sonuçlarını örneklendiren şiirlerden oluşmakla birlikte, ağaçların eyleyici özelliklerini betimleyerek, insandan-daha-fazlası olan dünyanın insanlığın benmerkezci planlarına nasıl tepki verdiğini göstermektedir. Eserde ağaçlar, doğanın maruz kaldığı yıkıma daha fazla sessiz kalamaz ve gezegeni çorak bir alana çevirdiklerini anlatabilmek için insanlara seslenmeye başlar. Her ne kadar verilen ekolojik hasarı bertaraf etmek için artık çok geç olsa da *Bosco* insanı merkeze konumlandıran zihniyetin kendi kendini yok etme kapasitesini irdeler ve tüm yaşam formlarını tehdit eden nihai yok oluşun her an gerçekleşebileceğine dair uyarıda bulunur. İnsanın yerküre üzerinde bıraktığı izin fiziksel sonuçları göz önüne alındığında, kültürel temsil tarzlarının insan ve insan dışı eyleyiciler arasındaki ilişkinin dinamiklerini yeniden değerlendirmek zorunda olduğu görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla, Antroposen, sadece insanlık tarafından tetiklenen ekolojik krizlerle ilgili değil, aynı zamanda insan 'öznesinin' biricikliğine dair eleştirileri da gündeme getiren maddesel-söylemsel bir temel işlevi görür. Bu bağlamda, geleneksel 'doğa' şiirlerinin, Antroposen'deki insan-insan olmayan, kültür-doğa ilişkilerinin karmaşıklığını temsil etmede geride kaldığı ve çağdaş 'doğa' şiirinin, benmerkezci imalarla lekelenmemiş daha kapsamlı bir terminolojiye ihtiyaç duyduğu çıkarımında bulunulabilir. Böylelikle çağdaş İngiliz şiirinde temsil edilen insan ve doğaya ait girift ilişkilerin çok boyutlu özelliklerini kapsamlı bir şekilde ele almak mümkün olacaktır. Çevreci şiir ve/veya ekoşiir gibi terimler daha az insan merkezli bir konumu belirtmek için kullanılmış olsa da bunların hiçbiri insan-doğa birlikteliğine tam anlamıyla cevap verebilecek ekomerkezci bir tavır geliştirememiştir. Bu nedenle, 'posthüman şiir' terimi, insanlığın benmerkezci gururunu beslememekle birlikte ne insanları ne de insan dışı varoluş biçimlerini merkeze ya da çepere konumlandırmayan ve böylece her iki grup ile arasındaki gerekli estetik mesafeyi koruyabilen alternatif bir araç olarak öne sürülmüştür. Tüm bunlardan hareketle, bu çalışma, insan olmayan eyleyicilerin, insan müdahalesinin olumsuz sonuçlarına tepki vermeye dönük içkin kapasitesinden yola çıkarak, *Bosco* eserinin Antroposen Çağı'nda insanın insandan-daha-fazlası olan dünya üzerindeki tahakkümünün gerekçelerini sorunsallaştıran ekomerkezci bir bakış açısını önceleğini tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mario Petrucci, *Bosco*, posthüman şiir, antroposen, iklim değişikliği, çağdaş İngiliz şiiri

INTRODUCTION

The main scope of this study includes the analysis of posthuman poetics represented through selected poems of the contemporary British poet Mario Petrucci (b. 1958). Having his PhD in Opto-electronics (1989) at University College London and completing his postgraduate studies in Environment and Literature department (1995) of Middlesex University, Petrucci is an interdisciplinary poet who is in a close contact with multifarious disciplines and methodologies. Elaborating on his liminal status, Petrucci describes himself as follows: "As an ecologist and lapsed physicist, I'm forever delving into the interfaces between poetry and ecology/science/war, and always through a variety of forms: with 'open-door' articles, as well

as within the stanzas of poems" (2005, par. 11). Combining his scientific and aesthetic propensities, therefore, Petrucci cannot ignore the impacts of the eco-catastrophes that have become more alerting in the Anthropocene. Using poetry as an instrument to reflect on the most pressing environmental issues, he attempts to go beyond the traditional representation(s) of 'nature' and embraces an ecocentric vision that acknowledges the agential faculties of the nonhuman sphere.

The socio-ecological crises that we have been facing all around the globe impel the need for a fresh re-conceptualization related to the delineation of human-nonhuman continuum in material and conceptual realms. Aligning with the physical dynamics of the Anthropocene, cultural modes of representation are also bound to update themselves so that it will be possible to introduce a more egalitarian standpoint which reminds humankind that they are not the 'masters' but the 'members' of this co-existence. Within this perspective, as a creative outlet, poetry may enable us to trace the evolution of the egocentric mindset towards a more ecocentric vision in the twenty-first century. Here, it is beneficial to underline the figurative potentialities of the poetic language, for it has the capacity to bridge the hierarchical gap between humans and nonhumans. Since ancient times, bards and poets – such as Homer, Ovid, Virgil – have been in close contact with nature, and they have represented the nonhuman sphere in a myriad of forms in their works. In the upcoming ages, the legacy of the ancient poets has been well-preserved by Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, as well as the Romantic poets, and they also explored the intricacies of the relationship between humans and nonhumans in their poetry. However, as will be explained further below, with the rise of the Anthropocene, especially starting from the twenty-first century onwards, it is no longer possible to represent nature as an external spectrum on which joys and/or anxieties of a human 'subject' are reflected. As an expression, 'nature' has been much wearied out, for it has been used and misused as a tool that evolves into a mechanical gadget in the hands of the *anthropos*. In other words, emptied off its original meaning, 'nature' has been situated as an accessory that needs to be polished from time to time – which has eventually led to its ultimate objectification. In its original sense of the word, 'nature' cannot be disentangled from humans; on the contrary, both parts belong to each other. In this ontological equilibrium, there are not any 'servants' or 'masters.' Thus, it is maintained that Petrucci's poetry negates the anthropocentric[1] legacy of 'nature poetics' where the lyric I/eye is prioritised before an idealised/romanticised landscape. Setting the human and the nonhuman in relation to each other, Petrucci projects a 'posthuman space' which is based on an inclusive and unitary groundwork. Here, the term, 'posthuman space,' is used as an alternative indicating the collective space(s) shared by human and nonhuman inhabitants of the universe – without necessarily implementing a hierarchical set of relations that perpetuate the dualistic distinction between the 'self/subject' and the 'other/object.'

[1] In its prioritization of the *anthropos* as the ultimate denominator of the more-than-human world, anthropocentric legacy bears ideological affinities with Jacques Lacan's (1901-1981) phallogocentric stance which predicates the authority of the patriarchal domain over the female 'other.' See Lacan's *Écrits: A Selection (2001).*

The dialogic[2] connection between humans and nonhumans is illustrated in Petrucci's *Bosco*[3] (1999), which consists of poems that depict the catastrophic results of humankind's estrangement from forests. As people keep on destroying the flora, they violate the sustainable dynamics of the ecological order. To the dismay of the *anthropos*, however, Petrucci enables the reader to hear the moaning calls of the trees in his work because the more-than-human world[4] can no longer stay silent to the atrocious acts of humankind. As a counterargument, however, it may be asserted that "it is again the human subject speaking for nature in a paradoxical attempt to overcome the human/ nonhuman divide within the discourse itself" (Oppermann, 1999, p. 33). Moreover, since the articulation of the nonhuman as a speaking 'subject' works in accordance with the premises of anthropomorphism, the more-than-human world continues to be objectified perpetually. Nevertheless, the poet's giving voice to the world of nonhumans does not have to "risk falling back into the hubris of that anthropocentrism which has always assumed language to be an exclusively human prerogative" (Rigby, 2004, pp. 433-434). On the contrary, anthropomorphism and/or personification function(s) as a "heuristic strategy" (Iovino and Oppermann, 2014, p. 8) that challenges the hierarchical boundaries between culture and nature. In other words, rather than immortalising the discursive split attributed to human versus nonhuman dichotomy, this strategy nullifies the gap between them and illustrates the points of convergence shared by both agents. Thus, as argued further, "anthropomorphism can even act against the dualistic ontologies and be a 'dis-anthropocentric' stratagem meant to reveal the similarities and symmetries existing between humans and nonhumans" (Iovino and Oppermann, 2014, p. 8). In the same vein, Timothy Clark contends that language is a discursive environment that is mainly shaped under "the overwhelming and often oppressive weight of centuries of anthropocentric modes of thought and perception but that still contains hidden resources and inventive possibilities for those writers and thinkers" (2011, p. 54). In accordance with the idea of using figurative language as an analytical stratagem to go beyond human/nonhuman binary, Clark also notes that "language that may seem problematically figurative or 'merely anthropomorphic' can also require provocative value as a way of doing justice to the agency of the non-human" (2011, p. 192). Hence, it can be stated that the figurative language, as an aesthetic mode of creation, has the capacity to dismantle the mimetic expectations of 'classic realism' which presupposes a direct correlation between the text and the outside world. Reading through the mimetic discourse(s), however, poets use anthropomorphism[5] within a stylistic and

[2] Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) uses the concept of dialogism/polyphony to challenge the hegemony of a single voice which continues validating its own perspective. Going beyond the limited spectrum of monologue, dialogism acknowledges the points of convergence between various agents – which, according to Bakhtin, can be observed in literature. As he maintains, it is the dialogue and the interaction between multiple characters in a novel that create meaning. Here, meaning is not presented as a pre-determined and authoritarian set of reality; instead, it is a dynamic and open process of becoming that continues to be affected by multiple participants – including the reader. See Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981).

[3] The word *bosco* means 'forest' in Italian. Since forests denote the collective existence of various trees and plants, starting from its title *Bosco* accentuates the significance of connection and solidarity.

[4] Coined by David Abram in *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1997), the phrase is used to designate the nonhuman sphere from an ecocritical perspective.

[5] See Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things* (2010) for her argument concerning the use of anthropomorphism as a strategy to dissect the hierarchical division between human and nonhuman realm(s), pp. 98-100.

imaginary perception, and in this way, they indicate deeper levels of meaning that cannot be pinned down by any representative model which constantly gets stuck in binary oppositions.[6] Within this context, Petrucci does not simply include the voice(s) of the trees in *Bosco*; more than that, he attempts to demonstrate an interconnected groundwork where humans and forests are depicted to be the co-constitutive members of a mutual attachment. When the components of this communal design are destabilised by global warming and climate change, however, egocentric hypotheses of the *anthropos* are also shattered to the ground because in such an ecologically insecure platform there are no ultimate victors or saviours. In a similar vein, rather than seeing the human as the sole perpetuator of all these ecological disasters, it is to be argued that Petrucci embraces a more extensive standpoint that takes a critical note of the agential capacity of the nonhuman matter. In this way, Petrucci's posthuman poetics entails an ecocentric reading of the Anthropocene because nonhuman agents can no longer be projected as passive bodies that remain unresponsive to the human intervention. Hence, the first part of this study examines the reverberations of the posthuman turn as reflected in contemporary poetry, and it tries to trace the emergence and the development of posthuman poetics as an alternative to the earlier modes of nature/environmental/eco poetries. The second part, on the other hand, makes an analytical introduction to Mario Petrucci to better understand the contextual and formal qualities of his posthuman poetry, as well as providing information related to his background as an ecologist. Eventually, the last part analyses *Bosco* within the context of environmental crises such as deforestation, climate change and global warming, and it highlights the ecocentric echoes of the mutual relationship between human and nonhuman forces.

1. POSTHUMAN POETICS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

It would be a narrow point of view to ignore the immaterial causes of the ecological disasters that destroy the Earth's well-being. Material trajectories of this ecological deterioration, on the other hand, can be traced back to the European Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century – which may be considered as the starting date of the Anthropocene[7] (Nixon, 2018, p. 2). Immaterial or the cultural origins of humankind's growing aggression and indifference towards the more-than-human world, however, are rooted in the anthropocentric discourses of 'nature' in Western intellectual history. In *Green History* (1994), for instance, Derek Wall re-examines the human – nature relationship against a historical background and argues that it is the "attitudes of early societies, especially those of classical Greece, [that] strongly influence contemporary approaches to environment" (p. 32). However, it should be noted that the attitude of the Greeks towards the environment was also full of contradictions. To illustrate, while "Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and the

[6] French feminist critic Hélène Cixous (b. 1937) criticises the appropriation of the binary oppositions within a hierarchical spectrum because it always gives priority to one side over the other. Patriarchal ideology, therefore, consolidates itself upon the perpetuation of the categorical divisions between man and woman, and it continues attributing the patriarchy with active qualities whereas woman is seen as passive. As an attempt to break up with this vicious circle, Cixous proposes that women should be able to introduce a 'feminine' style of writing (écriture féminine) that will challenge the oppressive circuits of the patriarchal binary vision. See Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976).

[7] The starting date of the Anthropocene has been the subject of many intellectual discussions. Instead of pinpointing an exact date, it is beneficial to have a general grasp of the suggestions presented: "some date its emergence to the rise of sedentary agricultural communities roughly 12.000 years ago, others to 1610 and the colonization of the Americas, others still to the onset of Europe's industrial revolution circa 1800 or to the Trinity nuclear test of 1945" (Nixon, 2018, p. 2).

early Stoics claimed that nature was a resource placed before humanity for its exclusive use," (Wall, 1994, p. 32) – thus turning the nonhuman sphere into an object to be exploited – "[s]ome Greeks continued to worship Pan and Gaia [yet] others agreed that nature, even if it was to be used primarily for human gain, should at least be conserved and maintained with wisdom" (Wall, 1994, p. 33). With the introduction of Cartesian dualism,[8] the gap between the body/matter and the mind/soul widens drastically, and it sharpens the egocentric projections of the human as the ultimate 'master(s)' of the nonhuman world. As a tragic attempt to justify its myopic stance, humankind continues paving the way for the emission of the greenhouse gases which gradually transforms the Earth into a huge fireball that starts consuming itself from within. Obviously, the grave effects of climate change and global warming, which started with the Great Acceleration[9] (1945-2015), have become more disturbing, and humanity is now on the edge of making an important decision: to initiate an (im)material paradigm shift – that will answer the material and the discursive roots of the problem closely – or not. Without acknowledging the disruptive and hierarchical projections of the egocentric perspective, it is not possible to implement a practical solution that will address the heart of the problem. Focusing on the response of contemporary poetry to the pressing ecological issues of the twenty-first century, therefore, it is intended to illustrate the need to exchange the anthropocentric legacy of the Cartesian world with a multifunctional nomenclature that can transcend the artificially constructed hierarchies pertaining to the human/nonhuman, mind/body, culture/nature, self/other, subject/object dichotomies[10]. Within this perspective, it can be argued that Petrucci's *Bosco* exemplifies one of the earliest reactions of the contemporary poets to the (im)material consequences of the ecological decline that has become more alerting towards the last phase of the Great Acceleration in the Anthropocene.

As stated above, *Bosco* was first published as a pamphlet in 1999; therefore, it serves as a closing remark to the previous century. Analogous to Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) "The Darkling Thrush," which was written by the end of the nineteenth century, the poems in Petrucci's collection describe a dying world which has been murdered by the hand of human. Still, the bird in Hardy's poem keeps on singing, and it announces a hopeful foundation for the new century where the cultural decay of the Western civilization may be cured. Having witnessed two world wars, nuclear catastrophes, along with the exploitation of (non)humans, it is obvious that the twentieth century could not introduce a better chapter into the socio-geological history of the planet. However, similar to the darkling thrush, which 'chooses' to sing instead of mourning before the dying body of the previous century, *Bosco* inspires its readers to develop a comprehensive standpoint that will help

[8] Introduced by René Descartes (1596-1650), the father of the modern philosophy, Cartesian dualism celebrates a mechanical view of the material world by foregrounding the idea that the nature of the mind is completely different from that of the body.

[9] Great Acceleration is directly related to the drastic and sudden increase of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. As Chris Otter explains, this period (1945-2015) "is characterized by a swathe of phenomena including the explosion of novel pollutants from plastic to synthetic nitrogen, the emergence of megacities, and the steadily increasing concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases, which have pushed the planet beyond its Holocene climatic norms" (2018, p. 569).

[10] Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985) envisions the cyborg "as a symbol for the technological enhancement of the human body and […] the overcoming of the nature/artifice polarity associated with the Cartesian thought" (Aretoulakis, 2014, p. 172).

them take action – that is, rather than taking refuge in an idyllic past or benumbing ourselves via apocalyptic scenarios, where the more-than-human world is projected as a grotesque entity that will take revenge on humankind, we must revise our relationship with the Earth and understand its agential existence from an objective insight.

It is functional that *Bosco* was composed just a year before Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer's proclamation of the 'Anthropocene' as a new geological epoch in 2000.[11] To elaborate on the correlation between the intellectual circulation of term – Anthropocene – in the 2000s and its repercussions in contemporary poetry, various guidelines can be offered: 1) Considering the huge number of contemporary works, it is beneficial to narrow down the scope of the study to the early twenty-first century and onwards, so that it will be possible to trace the developmental phase of the posthuman poetics thoroughly. 2) Anthropocene not only illustrates the detrimental intervention of humankind in the welfare of the planet, but it also raises questions regarding the catastrophic consequences of the anthropocentric mindset. In this sense, posthuman poetics of the Anthropocene deals with the direct outcomes of this egocentric standpoint and introduces a critical approach. 3) Born into the second-wave ecocriticism, posthuman poetics amalgamates the rural and the urban spaces in the same pot, so it employs a naturecultural[12] perspective that continues feeding on the philosophical trajectories of the third and the fourth-wave ecocriticism in the twenty-first century. Given all these factors, it is argued that contemporary 'nature' poetry should be redefined according to a more enveloping terminology that not only acknowledges the agential faculties of the nonhuman sphere but also develops an intellectual dialogue with posthumanist philosophies: it is maintained that posthuman poetry serves for both ends; however, it would be more illuminating to explain the reason(s) why other terms, such as ecopoetry or environmental poetry, cannot foreground a totally ecocentric perspective.

Ecopoetry is often associated with recent environmental disasters (Walton, 2018, p. 393), and it tries to warn people of the harmful consequences of their aggression against nature. In this context, it is also helpful to understand how the term has started to circulate among literary circles: Arielle Greenberg explains that ecopoetry "was first used by literary critic Joseph Meeker in the 1970s, and became part of the discourse in the 1990s through British scholar Jonathan Bate's book *The Song of the Earth* and an essay by Lothar Honnighausen on Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry" (2014, p. 27). Choosing *ecopoetics* as the title of his literary journal in 2001, Jonathan Skinner introduces the term into the academia and describes it as follows: "'Eco' here signals—no more, no less—the house that we share with several million other species, our planet Earth. 'Poetics' is used as *poesis* or making, not necessarily to emphasise the critical over the creative act (not vice versa). Thus: ecopoetics, a house making" (2001, p. 7, emphasis in original). However, as the poet Harriet Tarlo asserts, the house-making analogy is "uncomfortably domestic" because it insinuates "the human's residence

[11] It was in the early 1980s when Eugene F. Stoermer first coined the term 'Anthropocene'. However, the term earned its academic recognition following the publication of Stoermer and the Dutch atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen's co-authored article, "The Anthropocene" in 2000.

[12] Introduced by Donna Haraway, the term *natureculture* manifests the tightly interwoven quality of nature-culture entanglement. See Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008).

on earth as the centre of the universe" (2008, par. 11), and such a vision continues justifying the anthropocentric agenda. Moreover, concentrating on the etymological background of the word and elaborating on the connection between 'eco' and *oikos*,[13] Jonathan Bate states that "[e]copoetry is not a description of dwelling with the earth, not a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it" (2000, p. 42). Here, Bate continues validating a dualistic division between the rural and the urban spheres because, according to him, a poem does not necessarily appeal to the mind, but to the senses. Preserving the nature/culture divide, Bate goes on to argue that

> [t]he poet's way of articulating the relationship between humankind and environment, person and place, is peculiar because it is experiential, not descriptive. Whereas the biologist, the geographer and the Green activist have *narratives* of dwelling, a poem may be a *revelation* of dwelling. Such a claim is phenomenological before it is political, and for this reason ecopoetics may properly be regarded as pre-political. Politics, let us remember, means 'of the *polis*', of the city. For this reason, the controlling myth of ecopoetics is a myth of the pre-political, the prehistoric: it is a Rousseauesque story about imagining a state of nature prior to the fall into property, into inequality and into the city. (2000, p. 266, emphasis in original)

As opposed to Skinner's interpretation of the phrase, ecopoetry, as 'house making,' and Bate's assertion of the nature/culture dichotomy via his idealisation of a pre-industrial state, posthuman poetry stresses the dissolution of the egocentric perspective. In other words, rather than "becoming entangled in the symbolic load of nature, or of nature-culture dualisms" (Alston, 2016, p. 94), posthuman poetry engages in a universal approach defining the meeting points between human and nonhuman agents, and it closes the long-lasting hierarchical gaps that continue to re-surface in ecopoetics.

Along similar lines, criticising the conventional definitions of 'nature' poetry, Ben Oliver Sebastian Smith states that "[t]he move from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism necessitates a fundamental shift in the way we think about environment" (9). Grouping the works of John Burnside (b. 1955), Thomas A. Clark (b. 1944), Alice Oswald, (b. 1966) and Richard Caddel (1949-2003) under the title *environmental poetry* (2012, p. 13), Smith states that

> [a]s alternatives, I find 'ecopoetics' too specific to describe such a range of poetic techniques, and 'nature poetry' too reliant on the problematic concept of 'nature' defined in opposition to human culture. The term 'environment,' meanwhile, is very useful for thinking about the relationship between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, human and more-than-human scales. (2012, p. 13)

However, the word 'environment' is also tainted by anthropocentric traces. As postulated by Jonathan Bate in his work, *The Song of the Earth* (2000), "'[e]nviron' means 'around.' Environmentalists are people who care about the world around us. The world *around us*: anthropocentrism, the valuation of nature only in so far as it radiates out from humankind, remains a given" (2000, p. 138, emphasis in original). Without ignoring the anthropocentric hues emanating from the term itself, Smith states that he agrees with Bate's argument to a certain extent: "[I]f we talk about 'our environment,' we are viewing the world in terms of the self; but inherent within

[13] It means 'home' or the 'dwelling place' in Greek.

the term is also the capacity for viewing the self in terms of the world" (2012, p. 13). Hence, for Smith, environmental poetry can "be defined as poetry that explores the concept of 'our environment' and the interconnection of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism that this term suggests" (2012, p. 13). Nevertheless, referring to the *OED* definition of the 'environment' as "'the external conditions in general affecting the life, existence or properties of an organism or object,'" Vermonja R. Alston argues that "the retention of the term 'surroundings' continues to connote enclosures or cordoned-off places rather than the more fluid concept of interdependent and interrelational ecological systems" (2016, p. 95). Thus, the interpretation of the 'environment' as a 'bounded zone' not only continues preserving the nature/culture dualism but also reinforces the excuses for the human hegemony over the nonhuman matter by underscoring the "logic of colonisation" (Plumwood, 1993, p. 41).

Humankind has always been a biological component of the Earth; therefore, it is not surprising to see its dialogue with flora and fauna since ancient times. However, to understand the intellectual expansion of posthuman poetics, Romantic period deserves special attention – because the emergence of the Romantic poetry coincides with the sudden increase of industrialisation and mechanisation in the eighteenth-century England. In a similar vein, Lynn Keller notes that "the tradition of the Romantic nature lyric […] is most formative for twentieth- and twenty-first-century poets" (2017, p. 246), because Romanticism emphasises the glorification of nature as a reaction to the dehumanising gadgets of the mechanised world. However, it would be wrong to assert that Romantic poets' return to nature enabled them to dethrone the image of the all-powerful human 'subject' and introduced a 'naturecultural' domain. This is because, unlike the intellectual spectrum of posthumanism which is based on a multidisciplinary stratum, the subject/object pyramid continues marking the characteristics of Romantic poetry since "the ingrained romantic structures of thought" (Clark, 2011, p. 13) tend to interpret nature as a foundation of creative stimulus for the poet. Even so, it should also be noted that Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991) "forms a leading example of a significant early step […], especially in Britain" (Clark, 2011, p. 15) because it reads the Romantic poetry through ecocritical lenses. As opposed to the tendency to pinpoint the Romantics as dreamy figures who take refuge in nature, Bate positions "the poets Wordsworth and John Clare, the Victorian critic John Ruskin and others at the beginning of a green political movement" (Clark, 2011, p. 16). Furthermore, in accordance with the Romantic evaluation of 'nature' as a transcendental ground that encompasses everything, Bate recognizes the Earth "as a single vast ecosystem which we destabilize at our peril" (1991, p. 40), and he draws attention to Wordsworth's "proto-ecological, anti-industrial arguments in his *The Guide to the Lakes* [1835]" (Clark, 2011, p. 16). In this way, Jonathan Bate formulates a link between the co-founding trajectory of the eco-philosophical approach and the integrated perspective of the Romantic era. Still, as Timothy Clark further argues, despite recognising the prominence of the natural world as a subject for ecocriticism, Bate's 'Romantic ecology' runs "the risk of over-idealising premodern and capitalist ways of life" (2011, p. 19), and such an anthropocentric stance continues objectifying nature as an 'ideal' base. This is the reason why Romantic poetry – whether ecological in its outlook or not – cannot succeed in situating human

and nonhuman entities within a non-hierarchical relationship and, thus, it ends up spotlighting the hegemonic manifestations of the *anthropos*.

It is seen that constant idealisation of *nature* results in *her* objectification because the gap between the lyric eye/I and the nonhuman sphere continues to widen. Posthuman poetics, however, is concerned with the interruption of the discursive chasm between the 'self' and the 'other.' Accordingly, elusive definitions pertaining to 'nature' and 'environment' are exchanged with a more enveloping and extensive term, namely the 'posthuman space.' Within this spectrum, 'posthuman space' serves as an ecocentric alternative that incapsulates all humans and nonhumans, and it enables us to confront the epistemological error[14] of the Western viewpoint, which supports "a vision of culture and nature as separate or even opposed, a vision that many environmental thinkers find at the root of environmental crises" (Armbruster, 2016, p. 157). Hence, instead of using such expressions as nature poetry, ecopoetry or environmental poetry, the term, 'posthuman poetry,' is introduced as an eligible alternative to keep up with the theoretical repercussions of the Anthropocene.

Here, it should also be noted that the broad spectrum of posthuman poetry cannot simply encompass the representation(s) of eco-catastrophes that intimidate (non)human life forms in a local geography. As a more comprehensive term, posthuman poetics introduces an ecocentric stance that embodies positive and/or negative after-effects of human-nonhuman entanglement on a global scale. Without ignoring the vitality of nonhuman agents, therefore, posthuman poetry allows its readers to shift their perception from that of the egocentric/local to the ecocentric/global one. In other words, going beyond hierarchical dichotomies pertaining to the conventional portrayals of 'nature,' posthuman poetry entails a fresh understanding that magnifies the limited scope of ecopoetry and/or environmental poetry. In this manner, employing an ecocentric perspective that tries to discipline the arrogant impetus of the human 'self,' I argue that Petrucci's posthuman poetry highlights the entanglement of the human and nonhuman matter through its representation of posthuman space(s) that repudiate the so-called exceptional status of humankind.

2. MARIO PETRUCCI'S ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO POETRY

Unlike the post-structuralist tendency to disconnect the language/semiotic from the physical/material, Mario Petrucci adopts an eco-philosophical approach, for he foregrounds his works upon an all-inclusive understanding. In this manner, Petrucci challenges the anthropocentric repercussions of traditional 'nature' poetics and underscores the significance of human-nonhuman dialogue on an equal basis. For him, at the heart of the ecological crises there lies humankind's hubristic short-sightedness to see itself distinct from the natural realm, and as a solution he suggests that poetry has the capacity to lead the *anthropos* back to a 'relational ontology'

[14] According to Laurence Coupe, the error is twofold: "First, there is the failure to see that 'mind' […] is not the exclusive possession of humanity. […] Second, and following from that, is the wrong-headed belief that the individual organism may be understood in isolation from its own environment" (2013, p. 161).

which accentuates the connective spaces that are shared with the more-than-human world. Accordingly, in his interview with Matthew Griffiths, Petrucci explains his point as follows:

> In a sense, it also reflects what's gone wrong with our relationship to ecology. We see ourselves as separate from it, as merely responding to changes in it, asking ourselves – how are we going to fix it?
>
> *So it's an instrumental thing?*
>
> Yes. Yes. We' are all Benthamites. But what ecology (or language, for that matter) needs is for us to get back into a right relationship with it, and live it as it is. And that means perhaps living it in a degraded mode over the next century, but being fully involved and immersed – let's not even call it "environment." (2009, pars. 7-8)

Instead of setting egocentric boundaries to the 'more-than-human world' and labelling it with symbolically loaded expressions – such as 'nature,'[15] 'environment' or 'ecology' – Petrucci formulates a 'posthuman space of becoming' where all human and nonhuman entities "exist in complex relationship" (Petrucci, 2009, par. 9), and he reaches beyond "the problems of traditional place-based poetics and strategies" (Pearson, 2013, p. 184). What is more, it should also be stated that Petrucci not only underscores the intra-action[16] between humans and nonhumans as a thematic input in his works, but also welcomes an intra-active mode of communication between poetry and other disciplines. As a "tireless experimenter in poetry," ("curriculum vitae," 2001, n.p.) therefore, Petrucci makes an intellectual contribution to the contemporary British poetics by proposing new conceptual principles, namely *Spatial Form*, *Poeclectics* and *LiterARTure* – which are explained as follows:

> *Spatial Form* draws attention to the effects and influence on readers of the 'Gestalt' (or 'shape') of the poem on the page. As for *Poeclectics* and *LiterARTure*, the former describes, engages with, and enacts, the diverse and eclectic tendencies of contemporary poetry, while the latter describes the ways in which a writer can generate 'synaesthetic' effects through the deployment of poetry in three-dimensional space at various public sites. ("curriculum vitae," 2001, n.p.)

Related to the three-dimensional re-conceptualisation of poetry, it can be argued that the textual presence of the poem can also operate like a posthuman space in which the poet, the reader and the 'environment' come together to embody an all-inclusive set of intra-actions. So conceived, Petrucci's posthuman poetry points to a collective, connective and posthuman space of co-existence – both in content and form – thereby making it a more comprehensive medium to reflect on the dynamics of the Anthropocene. To illustrate the way in which Petrucci dismantles the ideological walls between theory and practice, his Poet-in-Residence experience(s) should be

[15] Basing her argument on Donna Haraway's "naturecultures," Sarah Nolan argues that the word 'nature' cannot truly account for the complex 'naturecultural' spaces of the contemporary world. Therefore, she uses the word 'unnatural' to be able to go beyond the "rigid conceptions of nature" (2015, p. 7). See *Unnatural Ecopoetics: Unlikely Spaces in Contemporary Poetry* (2017), for Nolan's extensive analysis of four American poets (A.R. Ammon, Lyn Hejinian, Susan Howe, Kenneth Goldsmith) and their disengagement with the traditional definitions of nature.

[16] Here, it is also beneficial to touch upon the difference between *interaction* and *intra-action* because, while analysing Petrucci's representation of the human-nonhuman continuum in his poetry, I prefer the latter. The term '*intra-action*' is introduced by Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007). While the term *interaction* signifies a hierarchical interplay of the human and the more-than-human world, *intra-action* bears upon a posthumanist vision since it projects an egalitarian framework where conceptual divisions between the 'self' and the 'other' are annihilated.

mentioned: It was in 1999 when Petrucci worked as the first ever Poet-in-Residence at the Imperial War Museum. During his stay at the museum, Petrucci developed the "Imperial War Museum's Poetry Hunt (entitled *Search and Create*)," which required the visitors to discover the poems situated in different parts of the building (Petrucci, 2006a, p. 70, emphasis in original). In this way, Petrucci was able to create "a *synaesthetic space* in which text, reader and environment draw on one another for new associations and resonances" (Petrucci, 2006a, p. 70, emphasis in original). Hence, it can be deduced that Petrucci not only experiments with the page-space of the poem to challenge the stylistic practices of poetry, but also takes the poem off the page and points to its physical existence as a material-semiotic being. In other words, Petrucci turns his poems into three-dimensional bodies and enables the reader/viewer to co-operate with them physically. To exemplify:

> *Trench* is a keystone item in *Search and Create* […]. It involves a telescopic sight down which, almost invariably, visitors cannot resist looking: whereupon they see the poem fixed to a distant pillar. *Trench* has been designed to create a *synaesthetic* space in which text, reader and environment draw on one another for new associations and resonances. The poem extends itself into – and is conditioned by – the optical system of the telescope, an interaction underscored through careful sitting of the poem. […] There are also strong resonances between the poem's structure and the act of viewing, stressed visually and sonically through certain formal aspects of the piece. (Petrucci, 2006a, p. 70, emphasis in original)

Combining the posthumanist legacy with Petrucci's endeavour to construct a *synaesthetic* space, it can be asserted that just as the way human/nonhuman, nature/culture, subject/object dichotomies are undermined in a 'posthuman space of becoming,' the textual body of the poem also functions like a material-semiotic passage where the poet, the reader and the 'environment' meet to celebrate an endless plethora of permutations. In a similar vein, referring to the dialogue between the poem as a 'page-space' and the physical world as a 'posthuman space,' Harriet Tarlo argues that "the more dynamic, open form style of writing, which makes use of the whole *page-space* to create, is more capable of reflecting and engaging with the landscape, that the open form page-space is closer to an open field or a moorland or a hillside than closed forms of poetry" (2008, par. 28, emphasis added). Accordingly, Tarlo suggests that the open form "is also more open to the reflection, or even embodiment, of the vast, complex, interrelated network of vegetation, insect and animal life that we call ecology and to intelligent reflection upon it" (2008, par. 28). Therefore, Petrucci's experimental attempts to carry the poem off the page, as well as his use of the page-space of the poem as an open field, can be interpreted to indicate an overflowing network of intra-active relations that deconstruct logocentric and anthropocentric dualisms.

Moreover, *The Stamina of Sheep: The Havering Poems* (2002), too, is the outcome of Petrucci's 'poetry-in-residence' experience as part of the *Year of the Artist* placement. Petrucci was the poet-resident in the London Borough of Havering during the summer of 2000 ("biography," 2001, n.p.). While writing his work, the poet did not assume the role of a distant commentator; on the contrary, through his direct presence as a resident in Havering, he became a part of the process and obliterated the distinction between the observer and the observed. In other words, Petrucci acted

as a medium intra-acting with the geology of Havering through a flow of relations, and he let the place invoke the poems themselves. In his "Foreword" to the collection, Petrucci draws attention to the historical and geological narratives of Havering and explains how his egocentric presence is nullified:

> I have spent all Summer steeped in the various incarnations of Havering's history. In these juices I have been marinaded and enriched. In particular, Havering has a remarkable geology. For instance, the proto-Thames laid a series of gravel terraces here as it was forced south by the massive ice-sheets of the Anglican ice-age. These never got much further than Hornchurch and have imbued this place, somehow, with a cusp-like metaphysical quality. There is also a depth and temperament to Havering's folk-lore which I have found both compelling and challenging. No shortage of material then; and I cannot remember ever before writing so much, so quickly. (2000, p. 7)

Thames, composed as a sequence for the *Year of the Artist* project in London Borough of Havering, "'translates' the geology of the Thames Basin into a series of voices whose various tones, styles and rhythms attempt to capture the personalities of the different types of soils in that area" (Petrucci, 2006a, p. 68). Hereby, Petrucci formulates a connection between the historical and geological narratives of the Thames – not through projecting the domineering human gaze on it, but through 'listening' to the voices that the river has introduced. In this way, the poet gets fully involved and immersed in the Thames's multifaceted 'translation' via his embodied intra-action with the river's material presence.

All in all, considering Petrucci's delineation of a liminal space of becoming, where we move from the projection of the human as an imperious potency upon nature to an ecocentric vision validating the mutual bond between humans and nonhumans, it is possible to assert that Petrucci's posthuman poetics reads through the human-culture/nonhuman-nature binaries and embraces an ecocritical perspective. Within this context, posthuman poetry functions as a critique against the objectified representation of the more-than-human world – from which people have distanced themselves by turning it into a transcendental[17] principle that exhibits the projection of their anthropocentric mindset. In posthuman poetics, however, the "natural world is no longer a romantic mirror for human emotions; rather, the nonhuman inhabitants of the world are our *collective partners* in the ongoing process of creating ways of knowing" (Welch, 2013, p. 7, emphasis added). Thus, instead of upholding the discursive hierarchy set up between nature and culture, Petrucci welcomes an "anti-Cartesian mode of poetry," which does not discriminate between "the language over here and the experience over there" (Petrucci, 2009, par. 6), but brings them together in a 'naturecultural' domain.

[17] John Donne (1572-1631) is one of the most prominent figures of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry, and he employs transcendentalism to go beyond the restrictive standards of daily experience. In "The Flea," (1633) he uses the image of a nonhuman agent, that is the flea, in a totally different context, and in this way, the poet attempts to transcend its physical existence. Through the mingling of the male speaker, the lady, and the flea's blood, the flea is used as a conceit that brings such diverse elements as sexual intimacy, marriage bed, and Holy Trinity together. Here, it is seen that, the poet objectifies the natural world and projects the flea as an extended metaphor to seduce the lady. In other words, he turns the more-than-human world into a transcendental ideal and implements his subjective view on the flea – rather than taking it as it is. See "The Flea" in *The Collected Poems of John Donne* (2002), pp. 26-27.

Regarding the posthumanist call to move from the 'subject/object hierarchy' to a 'subject-object intra-action' that undermines the dominance of the lyric I/eye in traditional 'nature' poetries, Petrucci also negates the supremacy of an imperious voice in his works. In his introduction of the term *Poeclectics*, Petrucci explains that "[a]s opposed to having *a voice*, poets seem increasingly to shift voice according to the formal, emotional and functional requirements of the work at hand" (2001, par. 5, emphasis in original). Hereby, as Petrucci clarifies more about the concept, "Poeclectics welds a powerful sense of 'making' (Greek: *poiesis*) to the desire to work inventively with a variety of sources and processes (*eklegein*: to choose out, select)" (2006a, p. 66). In other words, through confronting the authority of a singular voice, Poeclectics re-asserts plurality and intensifies the sympathy of the self towards the so-called 'other.' In this context, Poeclectic appropriation of the plurality in voice allows the self to intra-act with the 'other' so that it becomes possible to introduce hybridity and porosity as mediums challenging the static existence of the anthropocentric legacy. Hence, it can be asserted that as an experimental practice, Poeclectics empowers Petrucci to enrich the intellectual impetus of his posthuman poetry. As a poet-ecologist, therefore, Petrucci not only redefines humans as co-constitutive members of an intra-active set of relations, but also formulates an eclectic synthesis by employing a wide variety of texts, styles, voices, and forms on the 'page-space' of the poems.[18]

It no longer makes sense to follow the tenets of anthropocentric discourses and to continue objectifying 'nature' as a platform, which is either idealised or destroyed by the hand of the human because global well-being of the Earth is threatened at such a large scale in the Anthropocene. Relatedly, eco-philosophical paradigms announce the dissolution of the binary oppositions, and, in such a scheme, the lyric I/eye of 'nature' poetry is bound to be replaced by a "tangle of interwoven voices, genres, and literary traditions" (Ergin, 2017, p. 86). Thus, in an age of environmental crises, people can no longer lock themselves in ivory towers and assume that they will not be affected by what is happening in the *'outer' world* and continue philosophising about *it* from a superior stance. As stated above, in light of a growing consciousness concerning the intra-action between the human and the more-than-human world, it becomes crucial to introduce a posthuman space "in which human actors are still there but now *inextricably entangled* with the nonhuman, no longer at the center of the action" (Pickering, 1995, p. 26, emphasis added). In this ecocentric vision, the poet cannot assume the position of the lyric I/eye – who is staying outside and observing the more-than-human world from a distance – but gets completely involved in it. Within this perspective, therefore, 'nature' can no longer be seen as a mirror to reflect the inner world of the poet; rather, it delineates the onto-epistemological existence of human-nonhuman

[18] Co-founded by Petrucci himself, *ShadoWork* project, which is an experimental collaborative poetry group, "adopts a 'co-vocal' approach to poetry in which poems are rewritten, co-written and intercut in order to sound new resonances beneath language and ego" (Petrucci, 2001b, par. 22). In this way, *ShadoWork* "challenges the concept of 'one poet, one voice,' interweaving a 'co-vocal' performance which transcends the individual" (Petrucci, 2001a, par. 11), and the poems, both in context and in form, "become the springboard for a dramatic exploration of communal work, where the authorial stance is breached via techniques such as interjection, juxtaposition and vocal simultaneity" (Petrucci, 2001b, par. 22). Moreover, also cofounded by Petrucci, *Diorama*, which is "a multi-vocal and multimedia performance enterprise" ("curriculum vitae," 2001, n.p.) develops the same "impetus into innovative multi-vocal and multimedia contexts for poetry" ("biography," 2001, n.p.).

entanglement – which is also conveyed by Petrucci as follows: "The environment is everything, including me" (2006b, p. 257).

3. TREES ARE NOT SILENT: GLOBAL WARMING IN *BOSCO*

Going beyond the hierarchical appropriation of the discursive division between humans and nonhumans, Petrucci introduces an ecocentric mode of being that denotes "the interlaced quality of life" in *Bosco* (Burnside and Riordan, 2004, p. 20). As stated above, this interlaced feature of human-nonhuman dialogue is first seen in the title of the collection, for the word '*bosco*'[19] does not relate to a single tree, but it signifies a group of trees that make up the whole forest. Structurally, however, *Bosco* is divided into three sections, which are entitled "Arboretum,"[20] "The True Service" and "Woodsmoke."[21] "Arboretum" and "Woodsmoke" both consist of eight poems, while "The True Service" has a single poem of the same title. Each section is centred around a certain theme exploring "different kinds of loss associated with our estrangement from forests and the destruction of trees" (Petrucci, 2008, n.p.).

In "The True Service," *Bosco* starts bringing the ecological problems of the Anthropocene to the surface and helps us understand what is really happening to the natural world – since it shows that trees, as nonhuman agents, are also responding to the global impacts of ecocatastrophes. To illustrate, in the poem "The True Service," the newly cut tree 'speaks' through its corpus which is lying 'silently' before the human speaker. Similarly, in "Logwood"[22] and "Dodona," trees start to speak directly to human beings: In "Logwood," the logwood tree laments for humankind's lack of foresight, and in "Dodona," devastating consequences of climate change and global warming are brought to the foreground through the dying body of an oak tree.

Forests are often compared to the lungs of the Earth, for they are indispensable elements in controlling the increasing levels of greenhouse gases. However, as Paul J. Crutzen notes in "Geology of Mankind," since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the destruction of the rain forests continues at an extraordinary rate (2002, p. 23). In this context, the poem "The True Service," which is about the felling of a single tree, warns people of the dire consequences of their catastrophic practices and asks them to expand their vision beyond egocentric parameters. In accordance with "a reorientation of objectivity toward *intersubjectivity*" (Gander, 2012, p. 11, emphasis added), the poem projects the trunk of a newly cut tree as an all-hosting space where a great number of entities – ranging from worms to birds and ants – come together. Seeing the intertwined characteristic of the 'vitality' revealed by the piece of wood lying before him/her, the

[19] Preferring the Italian word, 'bosco' for woods/forest, Mario Petrucci may have tried to make a reference to his Italian origins. In relation to the overall argument of the collection, however, the Italian title might also create a sense of unfamiliarity for the English-speaking readers who have long been accustomed to taking the word 'forest' for granted – without necessarily thinking about its ecological merit and significance.

[20] The word *arboretum* means "a botanical garden devoted to trees" ("arboretum", n.d., n.p).

[21] "Woodsmoke" refers to the uncontrollable levels of the increase in the overall temperature of the Earth's atmosphere – which is likely to be the ultimate cause of various catastrophic wildfires in the future.

[22] Considering the ultimate annihilation of the logwood tree by the axeman, the term 'logwood' also connotes the objectification of the flora by cutting large logs from fallen trees for firewood and timber.

human persona undergoes an illuminating experience and realises that humans want nothing but more firewood/money in a world of limited resources (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17) – and this is tragic.

"The True Service" begins by relating the death of a tree and its silent scream: "Tree is almost silent – gives / only the traditional whispers / To speak fully would deafen" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17). In these lines, the tree is not described as an 'object' that comforts and inspires the poet in hot summer days. Quite the contrary, it is a dying tree – which is too real to be idealised. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the poem the speaker is not able to comprehend the reason behind the tree's humility and silence:

> I am ungrateful for this
> consideration, the simplicity
> of leaf and bole revealed to me
>
> from a distant brow, the ground
> that buries its mirror-image of roots. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17)

As observed in the lines above, the human persona shows ingratitude to the tree's calm acceptance of its death because, as per him/her, the body of the tree appears trivial from far away. However, with a closer look at the trunk of the tree lying before him/her, the speaker's vision evolves to understand the fact that everything exists in a dynamic stream of co-founding relationships. To illustrate, for the human persona, it is startling to see how this 'inanimate' log serves as a home for various nonhuman entities: "There are grubs beneath the bark / even birds do not know of, a tribe / of ants busy among the twigs" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17). Since it is part of a symbiotic realm, the tree cannot detach itself from this posthuman space of co-existence: It coexists with worms living under its bark, ants wandering among its branches, and nestlings that have not yet tried flying (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17). At this point, the human speaker begins to question whether s/he will go on treating the nonhuman 'other' as an 'object' or s/he will employ an ecocentric understanding that deconstructs the dichotomies between humans and nonhumans by 'becoming other.'[23] Then, s/he goes on to answer his/her own query, "If all this were to come alive / if I were to take it all in – / what, on earth, would become of me?" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17), as follows:

> I would become an octopus
> of sense – out of water, forced
> to squirt about me an ink of fog.
>
> I would be as a tree –
> petrified. Finding all I want
> is wood, the axeman to swing his axe. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17)

Here, the poem reminds its readers that people should be able to empathise with the suffering of 'the other' so that they can have a small – yet significant – impression of what it means

[23] Alerting the reader to the function of *poiesis*, Petrucci explains that poets can make us aware of "the presence of the Other" or "draw attention to important issues we're forgetting to look at, or perhaps even to the more fundamental problem of no longer knowing how to look" (qtd. in Carthew, 2004, par. 19). In his portrayal of a 'posthuman space of becoming,' therefore, Petrucci helps the speaker conceive what it means to be a nonhuman 'object' and/or 'other': first by *becoming* an octopus that cannot survive out of water, and then *becoming* a tree that waits to be chopped.

to be a dying tree. In this manner, "The True Service" transforms the speaker's role from 'master' to 'member' and highlights the significance of regenerating an ecocentric viewpoint that has long been forgotten by humankind. Representing the whole humanity, the human speaker can no longer project his/her egocentric outlook onto the forests now because, with the help of imagination, s/he succeeds in seeing him/herself as the part of a posthuman space of becoming. However, as noted above, people are likely to fail when it comes to act out, for the axeman's ominous existence continues lurking in the background: "[…] Finding all I want / is wood, the axeman to swing his axe" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17). Here the poem does not explicitly indicate whether the axeman will quit swinging his axe in the long run or not. Instead, the main question is whether humankind can experience a 'painful' awareness by relating to the silent suffering of the tree. Accordingly, the poem warns us against the dire consequences of destroying the relational ontology pertaining to the human and nonhuman members of the Earth. Thus, at the end of "The True Service," the speaker realises that if the axeman continues destroying the forests, then just like the octopus that is forced out of water, s/he, too, will be left without oxygen and will perish. In this manner, the poem enables us to visualise the negative impacts of the deforestation via the dying body of the tree: Although the tree is portrayed to be "almost silent" at the beginning of the poem – since "[t]o speak fully would deafen" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 17) – it 'speaks' through what the cutting of its trunk discloses to the speaker.

In the last part of *Bosco*, entitled "Woodsmoke," Petrucci envisions a futuristic environment in which the catastrophic effects of deforestation and global warming reach unprecedented levels. "Logwood,"[24] for instance, represents a dying tree that accuses humankind of sustaining egocentric interactions with the more-than-human world. "Dodona," on the other hand, is about the death of the last oak tree – which has been kept on life support. Finally, "Deserted" and "Exodus" describe how the remaining bits and pieces of 'vital existence' on Earth will be replaced by lifeless fossils and destruction. Overall, the poems selected for analysis in this section warn the reader of the possible ecocatastrophes that threaten all life forms in the Anthropocene.

"Logwood" is told from the perspective of a tree that harshly criticises the egocentric practices of people. It starts off exhibiting the tree's direct appeal to humankind:

> You have me stumped. Severed
> to heat your blood.
> Charred out, my heart – blistered
> by bucketfuls of sparks,
> stinking out your grate. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 25)

Here, the tree invites human beings to face the outcomes of their destructive habits towards the more-than-human world.[25] Thereby, the poem not only criticises the anthropocentric mindset, but

[24] Native to Central America and West Indies, logwood tree was mainly used as a source of black dye and for the construction of fences among many other versatile purposes. When England started controlling Jamaica in the seventeenth century, however, its seeds were taken to Europe ("logwood," 2019, n.p.).

[25] By attributing human traits to a nonhuman being, Petrucci does not suffer from the problem of representation, which presupposes that the natural world continues to be represented by the human 'subject' and thus becomes objectified. On the contrary, interlocking his creative philosophy with the tropes of poetic diction and the Poeclectics's challenge to the

also draws attention to humankind's ignorance of the ecological after-effects of deforestation. Within this perspective, it is not difficult to visualise the negative consequences of global warming and deforestation because the total amount of the carbon released into the atmosphere since the eighteenth century has reached "200 billion tones […] (that is approximately equivalent to the average weight of 41 billion African elephants!)" (Whitehead, 2014, p. 45), and the clearance of the forests since 1950 "has been equivalent to the rates of loss that had occurred over the previous 6000 years" (Whitehead, 2014, p. 82). However, as the logwood tree expresses in the lines above, humankind does not seem to take a serious note of what happens to the natural world.

The poem's starting in such a straight way illustrates people's inertia and apathy since they simply choose to cut down and destroy the logwood tree – without paying attention to the agential impetus of the nonhuman sphere. To the dismay of the *anthropos*, however, what really happens is that humans continue preparing their own end by chopping the logwood to warm their own blood. The tree, disappointed with humankind's mistreatment of the more-than-human world, goes on to express its purpose as follows:

> I was meant for smaller things
> than your conflagrations
> of thought: the mute wheedling
> of grubs, hyphae.
> Cool draughts of oxygen. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 25)

The logwood tree underlines the fact that as an active component of the ecology, it was supposed to absorb carbon dioxide and sustain the ecological welfare of the planet – which is far more crucial than the egocentric schemes of the 'self.' Condemning these plans in an ironic tone, the tree speculates that there must be a 'valid' reason behind the carbon emission:

> But there is purpose in carbon
> a release
> to thicken the swart rind of your stacks
> seed black-heaped portions of cloud
> unravel a thin-skinned planet (Petrucci, 1999, p. 25)

Paradoxically enough, people are more interested in increasing the number of wood sacks than attempting to reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere. Relatedly, the uncontrolled consumption of the fossil fuels triggers the rising levels of the greenhouse gases, and the Earth gradually evolves into a thin-skinned planet which is unlikely to survive for long, because the ozone layer has long been destroyed by the human intervention. Showcasing the material and the immaterial consequences of the disruption of the relational ontology in a posthuman space of becoming, the tree suggests that humankind is preparing not only for its own end, but also that of the nonhuman realm. In this way, "Logwood" problematises the anthropocentric mentality by drawing attention to the agential faculties of the tree(s)[26] and points to a more eco-philosophical and relational existence.

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dominance of a single voice, Petrucci articulates a 'posthuman space of becoming,' where human versus nonhuman dichotomy is destabilised.

[26] "In True Service" and "Logwood," trees have been represented as mourning, crying, and silently protesting for what has happened to them. Portraying their reserved agony, *Bosco* shows that the more-than-human world suffers in its own

The next poem, "Dodona," which reveals the active role played by the oak tree in the preservation of ecological balance throughout history, also distorts the hierarchical distinction between human and nonhuman agents. The poem likens the last surviving oak tree to a female patient that is "kept on 'life support' by technical apparatus as part of a public show" (Petrucci, 2008, n.p.). Here, "Dodona" not only emphasises the ecological importance of the oak tree, but also demonstrates her spiritual value, because after the tree's death, humankind gives up its last hope for reversing the adverse impacts of global warming. Moreover, "Dodona," the title of the poem, also expresses the cultural significance of the tree, for it is associated with an ancient Greek oracle. In Greek mythology, heroes and historical figures including Achilles, Odysseus, the Spartan king Agesilaus, and the Roman emperor Julian are represented to be consulting Dodona when they are in search of important answers (Cartwright, 2015, par. 5). It was thought that the oak tree conveyed prophecies with the rustling of her leaves and shared prophetic knowledge with people. Accordingly, it can be said that Petrucci's choice of the title "Dodona" for his poem forms a bridge between the future and the ancient past: While the oak tree was respected as a sacred medium that could unravel prophecies, in the poem she is associated with the 'glorious' days of the bygone centuries when it was still possible to ameliorate the eco-catastrophic tribulations of the Anthropocene.[27] Now, as the poem addresses us from a futuristic setting, the world has already crossed the climate danger threshold:

> Too late, they see
> there was no logic in wood
> no need for it – except
>
> to shade them from the chimaera
> that begins to strike root
> ineradicably
>
> in their sleep. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 27)

Petrucci does not refer to the global warming explicitly, for he thinks that "the poem demands an absence of that kind of rhetoric" (2015, par. 7), so he uses metaphors and symbols to define the issue at hand. To exemplify, in "Dodona" the 'chimaera' image is presented in order to indicate the harmful consequences of the 'greenhouse effect.' Establishing a link between the chimaera – which is a mythological creature associated with heat and fire – and the Sun, Petrucci implies that the Earth is exposed to the solar ultraviolet radiation, and it results in the cumulative accumulation of excessive heat in the atmosphere. Moreover, chimaera is described as a fire-breathing hybrid monster "resembling a lion in the forepart, a goat in the middle, and a dragon

way. Although it may be interpreted as a kind of passive resistance on the part of the trees, it is a form of confrontation and disavowal. Therefore, audible or not, it is the trees' idiosyncratic capacity to cry and protest that turns them into agents.

[27] Here, again, it should be noted that there are different interpretations about the start date of the Anthropocene. As Rob Nixon elucidates, it is even possible to trace the Anthropocene back to the "rise of sedentary agricultural communities roughly 12.000 years ago" (2018, p. 2), so it can be asserted that even ancient civilisations 'contributed' to the dynamics of the current geological epoch that humans and nonhumans inhabit today.

behind" ("Chimera," 2023, n.p). Similarly, it was also interpreted to be a metaphor for a Lycian volcano, by the late classical writers ("Khimaira," n.d., n.p.). Hence, as Will Steffen also contends, the chimaera's association with hot weather is likely to stand for "the highest temperatures experienced in more than 1.2 million years, [thereby] creating a '*Hothouse Earth*' that humanity has never experienced before" (qtd. in "Point of No Return," 2018, par. 4, emphasis in original). In this context, the poem draws attention to the foreboding consequences of global warming, and it reminds us, once again, that one of the most effective mediums to cure the red-hot Earth is to help the flora endure longer. Oak trees, in this sense, have the utmost potential to fight off the scorching heat of the chimaera because they are hardy species that can survive for hundreds of years. It is, therefore, ironic that in "Dodona," the last oak tree is about to die because she is not as strong as she used to be: "[…] The lobes / of her leaves grow / crisp and shrivel" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 27). Revealing the desperate efforts of humankind to keep the oak tree alive, the poem warns that necessary precautions should have been taken long ago, because now it is too late:

> Drizzles of atomised water
> daily wheedle her; still she suffers
> the haze of fumes, abhors
> their heat – defies all
> chemical incentives.
>
> And so they stand, and pay
> to watch. To listen. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 26)

It is not possible for the oak tree to survive in this sterile and artificial setting because she is totally disconnected from the soil. Despite all the tragic efforts of humankind to help her go on, the oak tree cannot respond to the treatment because the chimaera has grown too strong to be kept in check. Therefore, humankind is helpless before the burning breath of the chimaera and all they can do is to 'watch' the dying oak tree – without realising that they are, in fact, witnessing their own death. Children also come to 'accompany' the tree, but their friendship fails to inspire a sense of faith and salvation:

> Now, all these children. Endlessly.
> And she so sick, nothing good
> to tell. Their little hands – pink
> watersnails pressed to her aquarium. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 26)

Totally enshrined in a glass globe, the oak tree is denied any corporeal and natural communication with the world outside, so her death can be compared to the passing away of a patient who is taken to intensive care unit in a hospital. Thus, it is functional that Dodona's decease is portrayed in similar terms to that of a human being whose heart stops beating – as revealed by the computer signal in the poem:

> Too old to fight.
> No spring left. The lobes
> of her leaves grow
> crisp and shrivel. Afternoon
> passes like an era.

Computer beeps – then emits
the insistent signal. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 27)

Through the portrayal of the death of an oak tree whose heart stops beating, the poem suggests that the oak tree and humans need each other to continue surviving in a sick world which continues consuming itself from within. Sharing the same body/posthuman space, it is not surprising that when the heart dies, all the other organs in the corpus go through the same destiny.

In *Bosco* humankind is not merely described as an observer, but as a member of the more-than-human world. Within this context, via its description of the replacement of green areas by the cold silhouette of cities, the next poem, "Deserted," portrays the negative effects of disrupting this symbiotic relationship. In Petrucci's own words, opening "with the irony of concreted areas and asphalt strips (designed for cars) being called Greens, Walks or Roads" (2008, n.p.), "Deserted" describes how humans exchange what is natural with the artificial rather effortlessly and carelessly. Recalling the oak tree that is kept in an aquarium, "Deserted" illustrates how people lock themselves into an artificial simulation, which, paradoxically enough, is designed to evoke the effect of the natural. Moreover, as the lines below suggest, as humans continue taking shelter in an artificially constructed habitat and exchange the earth with the asphalt, they will have to face their own extinction eventually:

I use them too easily – lanes
of motorways, the dodgy walks
that turn to blackspots, roads
that are riderless, their trees
shorn like army haircuts (Petrucci, 1999, p. 30)

However, the speaker does not seem to care about what is going on; on the contrary, s/he desperately acknowledges that the loss is irreversible:

Never mind
It's fine
Between strata of streets
I fossilize (Petrucci, 1999, p. 30)

Hence, "[t]ogether, the poem's title ["Deserted"] and the phrase 'I fossilize' suggest that the loss here is total: our species; life itself" (Petrucci, 2008, n.p.). Within this context, "Deserted" subtly, yet quite effectively, summarises the alarming condition that is awaiting us: Humankind is not only endangering its own species but the whole creation; and it, again, illustrates the magnitude of the myopic viewpoint and inertia that keep on sharpening the hierarchically designed extremes of the human/nonhuman dichotomy.

In a similar vein, "Exodus," the last poem that closes *Bosco* offers a comprehensive outlook at the ecological problems of the Anthropocene. It consists of three parts that represent the journey of a bird: The first part of the poem describes the bird soaring above the forest; she continues to flutter her wings until the trees turn into small dots. Then, in the second part, the bird flies in front of the setting sun, and finally, in the third part, she reaches the altitude of space where she can see everything. In the last part, however, the joyful flight comes to an end because the bird realises that she has already turned into a fossil (Petrucci, 1999, p. 33). Thanks to the bird's panoramic vision,

therefore, "Exodus," allows us to envisage ourselves as seen from the space. In this way, it becomes possible "to understand the world at much larger and much smaller scales than before," which, in return, "requires us to extend our restricted anthropocentric vision" (Keller, 2017, p. 33). Thus, "Exodus" and *Bosco* conclude by describing how the remaining traces of life gradually fade away and are replaced by death:

> Only an eye glints
> – diamond. Predictably
> it dulls to graphite.
> She enters the gob
> of the Crab. Unheeding
> the nebular, extinctions
> behind her – the last twinkle
> of that jaded spark
>
> turning grey. (Petrucci, 1999, p. 33)

It is also worth mentioning the Biblical allusions of the word, *exodus*, to better understand its correlation with the poem itself. In its basic definition, *exodus* refers to the journey of a group of people who try to escape from a threatening setting. Within a religious context, however, *Exodus* is the title of the second book of the Old Testament, and it recounts the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. According to the story of the *Exodus*, Israelites release themselves from the bondage of slavery and travel with the prophet Moses to Mount Sinai where they are sanctified with the promise of the land of Canaan where they will get united as a holy nation. However, as opposed to the secular and religious definitions of the expression, which connotes the mass departure of people from one location to another for good, it is not possible that humankind can leave the Earth to settle in a new planet – unless the hubristic propensities of the *anthropos* to colonise the space turn out to be applicable. Here, the irony is that in the futuristic setting of the poem humans have already destroyed each spark of life by their own hand, and now they are surrounded by total desolation. As the closing lines of "Exodus" also indicate, it is not just trees that are endangered, but also the birds and finally humankind. Following the extinction of the last tree, the remaining melodies of the birdsong will also die and "[…] the last twinkle / of that jaded spark [will be] / turning grey" (Petrucci, 1999, p. 33). For this reason, reading against the anthropocentric schemes of humankind, *Bosco* embraces the ecocentric vision which argues that people are not exceptional beings, but co-constitutive members of a universal and intra-active co-existence. Underlining "the entanglement of human fate with that of other species" (Keller, 2017, p. 239), therefore, Petrucci's posthuman poetics confronts the culture/nature, human/nonhuman binaries and designates a posthuman space to exhibit the agential faculties of the (non)humans.

CONCLUSION

Considering the material and the discursive proponents of the Anthropocene as a geological epoch in the twenty-first century, it is obvious that the undercurrents of human-nonhuman continuum need to re-conceptualised. As a creative outlet, poetry is one of the most effective

mediums appealing to the heart and mind of the *anthropos*, so it functions as a suitable literary tool that can also interrogate the intellectual echoes of this re-conceptualisation. Limiting the scope of this study to the representation of human-nonhuman relationship in the early 2000s, it has been demonstrated that contemporary nature poetry can employ a fresh vocabulary that is not marked by anthropocentric insinuations. When currently available terms, such as nature poetry, environmental poetry, and ecopoetry, have been dissected from a critical standpoint, it is realised that none of them are able to work in tandem with the contemporary literary theories thoroughly – because they continue projecting the elusive definition(s) of nature, environment, and *oikos* from an anthropocentric standpoint. Interchanging all these problematic expressions with the term 'posthuman space,' it has been suggested that neither humans nor nonhumans can be placed at the centre or in the periphery, for they all belong to the same relational ontology. In a similar vein, Mario Petrucci's projection of the dissolution of the conceptual boundaries between humans and trees in *Bosco*, highlights a dialogic and intra-active basis that is marked by ontological bridges rather than intangible gaps. However, it should be noted that Petrucci's posthuman poetry does not paint 'idyllic' and/or 'dark' scenes where human-nonhuman intra-action is devoid of any positive or negative outcomes. In other words, without objectifying the more-than-human world as a 'safe haven' or as a 'dark doppelganger' that waits to take revenge on humankind, Petrucci's *Bosco* claims that people can no longer be seen as autonomous and all-powerful 'rulers' who can escape from the eco-catastrophic consequences of their actions. Within this context, *Bosco* demonstrates an ecocentric reading of the Anthropocene, for it suggests that instead of promoting the *anthropos* as the ultimate 'terminator' or the 'guardian' of the more-than-human world, we should recognise the intermediary role of the nonhuman matter and its capacity to react to human intervention negatively and/or positively. Hence, it can be concluded that, taking an 'ecocentric turn' and criticising the anthropocentric rhetoric, Petrucci illustrates the complexity of the co-constitutive dynamics shared by humans and nonhumans in his posthuman poems of the Anthropocene.

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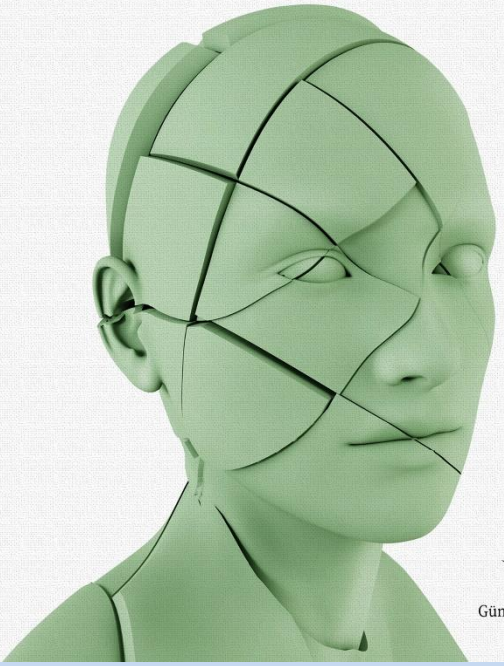

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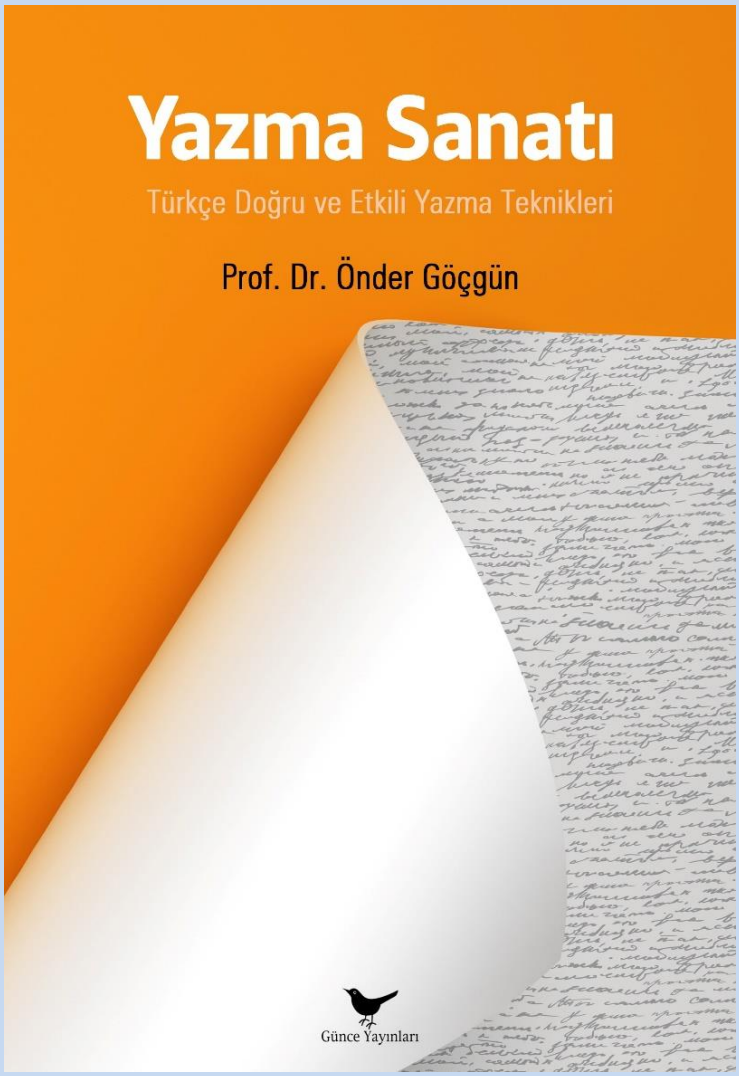

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