

Ecopsychological Reading of Paul Thwaites' *Silent Spring*

قراءة نفسية بيئية لقصيدة بول ثويتس "الربيع الصامت"

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Abstract

The current environmental catastrophe, which threatens the extinction of all species, is a problem not merely of unregulated pesticides or excessive misuse, but of awareness itself. There are a few studies dealt with the impact of Covid-19 on the human psyche from an ecopsychological perspective. Thus, this study examines Ecopsychologically Paul Thwaites' *Silent Spring* to put an end for the destructive battle between humans and Earth. Ecopsychology is the investigation of psychological mechanisms that connect and disconnect people from the environment. There are numerous new and traditional ways that ecopsychologists advocate for dealing with typical challenges like depression, anxiety, and stress, including reconnecting with nature and the body. Poetry is a cure-all for ailments such as COVID-19, and it has a profound effect on people's minds, bodies, and spirits. The study concludes that this poem provides solace and inspiration in the Covid-19 time. It can mend people's souls and help them overcome their mental health challenges.

Keywords: COVID-19; ecopsychology; Silent Spring; environment.

المستخلص

إن الكارثة البيئية الحالية، التي تهدد انقراض جميع الأنواع، ليست مجرد مشكلة تتعلق بمبيدات الآفات غير المنظمة أو سوء الاستخدام المفرط، بل هي مشكلة الوعي بحد ذاته. هناك عدد قليل من على النفس البشرية من منظور علم النفس الإيكولوجي. Covid-19 الدراسات التي تناولت تأثير وهكذا، تفحص هذه الدراسة قصيدة بول ثويتس "الربيع الصامت" من منظور نفسي بيئي لوضع حد للمعركة المدمرة بين البشر والأرض. ان علم النفس البيئي يحقق في الآليات النفسية التي تربط بين الناس وتفصلهم عن البيئة. هناك العديد من الطرق الجديدة والتقليدية التي ينادي بها علماء النفس البيئي للتعامل مع التحديات مثل الاكتئاب والقلق والتوتر، بما في ذلك إعادة الاتصال بالطبيعة والجسد. وبما ان الشعر يستخدم كعلاج لبعض الامراض مثل كوفيد-19، وله تأثير عميق على عقول الناس وأجسادهم وأرواحهم، فقد خلصت الدراسة إلى أن هذه القصيدة توفر السلوى والإلهام في زمن كوفيد-19 حيث يمكنه إصلاح أرواح الناس ومساعدتهم على التغلب على التحديات الصحية العقلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كوفيد-19، علم النفس البيئي، الربيع الصامت، البيئة .

1. Introduction

Human health and well-being cannot be isolated from natural environments. The full effect of a changed environment is causing significant damage to natural life-support systems and a danger to human sustainability. A sustainable future is dependent on a thorough knowledge of ecology as well as human capacity to anticipate or create results under many circumstances, which puts ecologists in a unique position. As Mishra, and Mishra, A. (2020) affirm that it's much more critical during a coronavirus pandemic since the disease has spread across society. As a result, it has become clear that building and restoring social sustainability is of the utmost importance if people from all walks of life are to make it through these trying times.

Pandemic time evolved from being an immediate public health crisis to a systemic catastrophe that had far-reaching effects on people's daily lives. Because it evolved from a medical shock to a worldwide economic and social catastrophe, COVID-19's effects have been unparalleled, as Simon et al. (2021) declare. Onyeaka et al. (2021) clarify that because of the potential for psychological damage caused by an unexpected pandemic and the ensuing lockdown measures, people may experience sleep difficulties, worry, and other forms of psychological discomfort.

People turned to literature to try to make sense of the terrible scenario of COVID-19. Literature (regarding its different genres) is used in bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy is a method and a tool used to help people: “think about, understand, and work through social and emotional issues” (McCulliss & Chamberlain, 2013, 13).

When it comes to expressing one's thoughts and feelings, poetry has the ability to do it in a way that would otherwise be impossible. In this way, poetry gives individuals a doorway into another universe where they may interact with others, know about their pleasure and pain and realize that even in the face of tragedy there is beauty to be found in communities should go beyond saying.

"*Expressive Therapies*" signified the fact, after considering many, numerous poems, humans discover that almost every event under the sun has indeed been depicted in poetry. Thus, Poems are certainly a list of passion and grief, but more: “birds, bees, babies, butterflies, bugs, bambinos, babayagas, and bipeds, beating their way up bewildering bastions” (Sandburg, 1950, “Tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry,” p. 319). But the underlying thing is really an effort to sustain life against our existential limits of finality, solitude, fragility and death. Loss shadows vary every time.

2. Ecopsychology

Ecopsychological approach in Thwaites' *Silent Spring* investigates ecopsychology's possible application to the broader realm of environmental thinking and activism, to assist articulate, to offer voice, and develop a vocabulary for the inherent human element in the larger ecological environment. An additional goal of the study is to provide insight into how humans lost their beneficial, therapeutic, and respected connection with nature when they became industrialized and separated from the environment.

Roszak (1992) claims in his book that ecopsychology's objective is “to bridge our culture's long-standing, historical gulf between the psychological and the ecological, to see the needs of the planet and the person as a continuum.” (Roszak, 1992, 14) As a result, Roszak identifies two main and critical goals: ecologizing psychology (re-imagining psychology in an ecological context) and psychologizing ecology (creating an environmentally aware and intelligent movement that is psychologically sensitive).

It was Shepard's landmark book *Nature and Madness* (1998) that opened the door to a critical examination of the relationship between human psyche and

humanity's growing environmental devastation. He wanted to know: Why do people keep ruining their natural environment? Ecopsychology was born out of an effort to find an answer to this issue. According to its definition, ecopsychology seeks to get a psychological understanding of the ecological problem.

Ecopsychology aims to bridge the gap generated by our epistemic fallacy: the inclination to isolate the mind from the natural world. Human consciousness is defined by human desire for a sympathetic relationship with the natural world, which Roszak (1992) developed in the term "ecological unconscious".

Hafford argues that in both conservation psychology and ecopsychology, the focus is on understanding human connections with the natural environment, but they are diverse in their approaches to psychology as a discipline. An ecopsychologist's goal is to bring together the concepts of ecology with psychology in order to better understand and enhance human-nature relationships. Connecting with the natural world and uncovering human wilder self may help enhance the surroundings in which people live and learn, as well as their own well-being, according to this theory.

In modern cultures, nature's commodities and services are not often acknowledged as the foundations of life and health, even though this reliance may be indirect, dispersed in space and time, and hence overlooked. As a result of these increasingly distant and intricate connections, people require a broader perspective on environmental health. Ecopsychology investigates the evolutionary history of human-nature connections and tries to understand the psychological mechanisms that either bind or distance us from the natural environment. Earth and its ecosystems are fundamental to the well-being of all living things, including humans. This is a core concept in environmental health.

3. Ecopsychological Reading of Thwaites' *Silent Spring*

Paul Thwaites is a retired special needs teacher, ex-miner, and former mental nurse, now lives and works in West Yorkshire. *Norse Gods*, *Box of Ochre*, and *Water Dancing with the Moon* are just a few of the many collections and individual poems he's penned during the course of his literary career. He enjoys mythology, literature, history, and gardening, as mentioned in *Viral Verses* (2020).

Silent Spring is one of Thwaites's pandemic poems, published in "Viral Verses: Art in an Exceptional Time" (2020). The four-stanza blank verse poem within the couple, the first and the third sestet, while the second and the fourth are quintain, tackles the same referential concept of (Spring season) as William Blake's "*Spring*" in the "*Songs of Innocence*" collection, whose principal focus is on elucidating to the audience the importance of innocence in both nature and human beings. In William Carles Williams' "*Spring and All*", life is described as a basic daily experience, which depicts the transition from winter to spring. Humans are always evolving. Winter is a reminder that life isn't always joyful, but spring is a reminder that sorrow doesn't last forever. It's common for natural pain to be a stepping stone to happiness. The poem by Romantic poet William Wordsworth, "*Lines Written in Early Spring*," is about nature's tranquility and humanity's inability to follow it. First line: "Nothing is so beautiful as spring" is dramatized in Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Spring" poem as it ties the season of rebirth to Christ's resurrection, among many other poems. Spring season has historically been seen as the beginning of a fresh life for those who have endured the harsh winters of fall.

The title refers to the main theme (Spring), which is personified as (silent) and repeated twice in the second and fourth stanzas. The first stanza provides the reader with contrary attitudes that concern nature, as in "daily flourishes", "wakens morrows hope", and "heaven", and the other of what surrounds nature as "dark certainties", "sad worlds weep".

Through curtain calls, the encore of the sky
Still being itself with daily flourishes,
Wakens morrows hope from all her sorrows,
Dark certainties of the starred eyes
Of souls who soar the sleep sparked heavens,
Whilst sad worlds weep. (1-6)

The effect of nature's attitudes affects creatures who live in harmony with her as "birds build in their hope" and also those who live in superiority with her as "wed..too soon divorced", "in isolate remorse and swift purloining of the breath" that may end "in death".

Birds build in their hope and blossom blows,
Pink confettis on this silenced spring,
We wed to here, too soon divorced,
In isolate remorse and swift purloining of the breath
We ring to here in death. (7-11)

Experiencing such types of depression leaves no choice but to hope that the innate feature brought up in humans by nature and created in times of harmony with nature, the same that is found in "birds," will be found in humans. Thus, the poet, on behalf of all those souls who experienced "sad worlds weep" asks "May" to renew life, as in the word "green", to renew connection and renew relations between nature and human beings in order to end the suffering of "chained streets", "despair", "season's weeping" and "Binding hands" as a metaphor for any obstacles that prevent people from engaging with nature and interacting with its beauty, portrayed as COVID-19 since the poem was written through its spread time.

Waken May's green this desert air,
Loose chained streets to sing –
Borne with palms and paeans of release,
Sweet grieving last being wakened from despair,
And mute the season's weeping undertone,
Binding hands to bid us walk alone. (12-17)

The fourth stanza clarified the reason for the silence of such a specific season in such a specific time as mentioned (this silent spring), as Vogel (2006) clarified: modern people have convinced themselves that only human words can be heard, and as a result, they are unable to hear the other voices around them. Nature looks at them as silent, with no inner life or communication, and so they assume they may do with them whatever they want. Because they don't pay attention to what nature has to say, or even that it is saying anything at all, they see natural beings as simple things rather than as subjects with whom they share a shared universe.

This silenced Spring, sun holding truth to bring,
To burdened earth the winging encore of the sky,
And we the sea kin bound,
By these chained feet of clay,
To this bane Spring and silent Day. (18-22)

Thus, modern people agree to some extent with what Freud concluded: "Nature is forever beyond our reach." Despite our [as humans] best efforts, she annihilates us. " Even though Freud's theories have been amended and rejected, this sad sense of alienation from nature continues to plague psychology, making the natural world appear distant and hostile, according to Roszak (1996).

On the other hand, authors like Scott Friskics and David Abram apparently agreed that language usage is tied to moral consideration, adding simply that humans need to widen their idea of language to realize that non-humans also

use it. "*Dialogical Relations with Nature*" (2001) by Scott Friskics offers a number of extremely strong statements concerning nature's language. He makes it seem like common sense that objects talk. "*The Spell of the Sensuous*," published in 1996, likewise claims that nature talks and that we must re-learn to listen to it. Abram says my capacity to touch or see items in the universe is based on the tangibility and visibility of my own embodied self, according to Vogel (2006).

Since people do not listen to nature, it means they cannot understand it for its own sake. Rather, they interpret her actions according to their understanding and experience. For instance, the poet sees proper interpretation of "silent spring" repetition and "silent Day" as a defensive mechanism for repressing arousal by diverting it to the organs and systems of speech, which are thought to be responsible for discharging affect. For Lane et al. (2002), silence is an overdetermined state of mind that serves several ego functions. As an example, silence was seen as expressing or carrying out unconscious transferring fantasies, such as reenacting or living out bits of past experiences with things. During these moments of quiet, these transference imaginations, memories, and interjects are effectively conveyed.

Moreover, Lane et al. affirm Silence, psychologically, can be a sign of wrath, anxiety, despair, apathy, retreat, or a lack of feeling, but it is relevant in that it is the outcome of a psychological battle and is a product of unconscious imaginations. It's not only a lack of words, but a vital human silence that may aid in changing unconscious tension linked to a disagreement into far more controllable, conscious anxiety associated with the analytic connection. Silence can be a form of self-censorship in the face of such fear, allowing one to persuade oneself that they are not saying anything incorrect, even words that would show violent, retaliatory, or sexual sentiments (Ibid).

Fisher affirms in his book "*Radical Ecopsychology*" (2013, p.83), "inner selves grow mute and practically disappear"; a period characterized by the sensation of loss, of yearning for something we can't identify, and a feeling that we're off-center. Such loss sensations and decentering are caused by alienation from nature, as the poet indicates, "isolate" and "walk alone" and the best way to get over such "despair" is to reconnect with nature, as Roszak clarifies in his article *The Nature of Sanity* (1996): a well-known maxim in alternative medicine is that "nature heals." Ecopsychologists are discovering new methods to use that old wisdom. Over a century earlier, Emerson bemoaned the fact that few mature beings can perceive nature. If they could, they would realize that "in the woods, we return to reason and faith." Emerson believed that "nothing can happen to him in this life, no humiliation or tragedy, which nature cannot restore".

Ecopsychologists are beginning to discover in people symptoms of a hidden grief for the tremendous environmental losses that the globe is experiencing. The client's own experience of loss is regarded seriously in treatment when it is requested by the client, which isn't uncommon at all.

Naturalists such as Edward Osborne Wilson believe that humans have an "innately emotional association with all living organisms" (biophilia) that inclines us to promote biodiversity. Ecopsychology supports these findings.

One of Roszak's ecopsychological concepts in "The Voice of the Earth" is that the ecological unconscious has an "inherent sense of environmental reciprocity" that may be awakened, therefore resolving the "basic estrangement between the human and the natural environment." (Roszak, 1992, 320). Thus, the loss of natural connection and isolation awakens the human need to reconnect.

Thwaites' poem seems so close to Carson's book in title and content. Agricultural and chemical industries were accused in "*Silent Spring*" published in (1962) of indiscriminately applying pesticides. Rachel Carson's assertions appeared outlandish, but if they were true, they would be unimaginably terrifying. There has never been a period when "every human being" has been in contact with toxic substances "from the moment of conception till death," she stated in her book. The book became a phenomenon in a matter of days. It sparked outrage among the population and was accused of exaggeration. According to Time Magazine, the book had "oversimplifications and blatant mistakes," and was described as an "emotional and erroneous outpouring." It split the government, industry, and science, causing individuals to pause and rethink their perspective on the world. According to Lear (1993), who goes on to review the term "ecology" became commonplace after its publication.

The poet has complete control over the words he chooses to express his ideas and feelings. A key contrast between literary and practical language is that in poetry, for example, individual words are used to their fullest potential. The major distinction between poetic language and literary language is the high degree of subjectivity in word usage. The poet uses this individual's vocabulary because he wants to communicate his thoughts in a way that makes him feel comfortable and satisfied. When it comes to spring, most people think of it as a joyful time, but doesn't seem to share this sentiment in any way. His poem paints a picture of the darker side of human nature, hidden beneath the surface of everyday existence.

Thwaites' message comes interconnected to what Pala (2019) assumed: as a celebration of the biological reality that humans are nature, Eco-poetry

employs language to enhance a feeling of nature's presence in our existence; and all these invocations of nature's presence are commemorative of the ecological fact that humans are nature. In this poetic, cultural, and spiritual worldview, the human worlds are viewed as interconnected. It was at this point that the study of ecology began to deviate from its original definition, which focused on the role of people in the natural world and on spatial metaphors. Wisdom is gained as a result of engaging with a wide range of events throughout life.

In order to thrive in the biosphere, humans must learn to live with nature instead of attempting to conquer or exploit it. Wisdom comes from his ability to live in harmony with the natural world. In order for him to grow as a person, he must have an ecological outlook. Experience and awareness combine to make a person imaginative. Man is shaped into a whole being by nature. He is the only one who has both creative and destructive powers in equal measure. To be whole, his perspective must shift dramatically. Interdependence on the environment, symbiotic interaction, and organismic comprehension might establish him as a part of nature and the universe through his logical perspective.

4. Conclusion

Thwaites' *Silent Spring* implies a deep concern for the individuals who were forced to live in self-imposed exile or quarantine. As a medical remedy for people's constant fears and worries, as well as an antidote to their dread and excessive terror, they connect with this strong dedication to collectivity than individuality. Through words and lyrics, poets and their readers strove to make sense of their disordered thoughts, their new social contexts, and to restore completeness and haleness. Ecopsychologists urge people to exchange photographs of the world outside their windows in order to create a new kind of global virtual seeing. They encourage greater attentive observation of what is in front of us, much as taking a photograph is about not just getting a visual image but also training the eye to perceive what is worth recording in the first place, when the world is too much with us.

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