

**Nature poetry as a form of Psychological
therapy: A Study in Mary Oliver's Selected
Poems**

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شعر الطبيعة كشكل من أشكال العلاج النفسي : دراسة في قصائد ماري

أوليفر المختارة

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الهدف من هذا البحث هو تقديم وتحليل مفهوم مهم في الشعر الانكليزي الحديث ، وهو استخدام الطبيعة كمعالج نفسي. يدرس البحث هذا المفهوم في ضوء النظرية النفسية البيئية ، وهي نظرية حديثة تركز على العلاقة بين الطبيعة والإنسان من أجل الرفاهية المتبادلة. بعد تعريفات موجزة ومقدمات لعلم النفس البيئي ، يخصص البحث هذه الانعكاسات البيئية والنفسية في شعر ماري أوليفر. يقدم البحث تحليلا نفسيا للقوائد المختارة للشاعرة في ضوء الطريقة النظرية لعلم النفس البيئي.

Key words: Eco-psychology, Therapy, Nature, Union, Heal, Religion, and Ecology.
الكلمات المفتاحية: علم النفس البيئي ، العلاج ، الطبيعة ، الاتحاد ، الشفاء ، الدين ، والبيئة.

Abstract

The aim of this research is to introduce and analysis an important concept in modern English poetry, that is of using nature as psychological healer. The research examines this concept in the light of Eco-psychological theory, a modern theory that focuses on the bond between nature and human for mutual well-being. After a brief definitions and introductions of eco-psychology, the research examines these eco-psychological reflections in Mary Oliver's poetry. The research offers a psychological analysis of the poetess selected poems in the light of the theoretical modality of eco-psychology.

Introduction

The multidimensional and complex crises of modern world, stemmed from various abrupt natural disasters, such as earthquakes, on-going natural catastrophes, like droughts, and Man's intentionally stirred situations, including violent struggles, wars and dictatorship, for example, lead to a series of alterations on the fields of ecology, economy, sociology, and many other fields. These alterations result in a set of psychological troubles that affect individual's psyche and his mental well-being. In response, modern world witnesses an increasing interest in adapting new tendencies and theories in the psychological field.

Modern psychologists rush to offer a deeper exploration of the humanitarian crises and their psychological influences on Man, family and community as a whole. Their foremost desire is to propose validated psycho-therapeutic concepts to heal Man's soul and mind, and hence restoring his psychological balance.

"Eco-Psychology", also known as "Eco-therapy", is the most prominent psychological concept in this direction. It is perceived as a new form of Psycho-therapy that admits the vital role of nature and addresses Man's "relationship with his environment" (Sulphrey & Safeer, 313). In the light of Terminology, "Eco-Psychology" is composed of two parts: "psychology," which means the "study of spirit or soul," (Borden,6) and "eco", which stands for "home" (Bell,Fawcett, et al.,248). Thus, the term is applicable for those "emerging synthesis of psychological and ecological disciplines,"(Siddon & Nash,3) which approaches human psyche in relation to its earthly or natural home.

Eco-psychologists contend to propose a satisfactory definition of eco-psychology. W.J.Burroughs defines it as "the study of the interrelationships between physical environment and human behaviour."(Nagar,34) Similarly, Robert Gifford defines it in relations to the "transactions between individuals and their physical settings"(Nager,34). Whit Hibbard argues that eco-psychology stands for the "greening of psychology" by which he intends "the healing of Man's psyche in relation to nature" (Fahad & Shareef,690). John V. Davis and Jeanine M. Canty define it as "a re-awakening and development of the lost connection of human beings to nature." (Friedman & Hartelius,600). W.W. Adams identifies it as a phenomenon of modern culture instigated by Man's alienation from nature and sees it as a method of handling such crisis: a crisis which he depicts as "the idolatry of the supposedly separate egoist subject and its insatiable quest for security, certainty, control, and power" (Adams,270).

A review on the historical context of this concept demonstrates that eco-psychology emerges in the United States after the green movement in the 1980's, a movement which raises awareness around the rise of global climate alteration and looks to spread eco-friendly practices to preserve global ecosystems. This movement gives birth to a new wave of psychology, and takes into consideration the sociological and psychological consequences of global climate alteration on human beings. Hundreds of years before to the coining of the term "Eco-psychology" a wide range of horticulture therapies were prescribed, particularly in the United States. Benjamin Rush was credited with prescribing gardening activities for psychiatric clients and horticulture therapy was practiced after World War I and II to treat those psychiatrically and physically handicapped soldiers. (Perryman & Keller, 2009).

Put simply, “Eco-psychology” has a long history returning back to the early 1900s (Swartz&Martin,5). In 1992, Theodore Roszak was the first to coin the term “Eco-psychology”. In his book, *Voice of the Earth*, Roszak outlines the basic ingredients of eco-psychology. He draws attention to Man’s unconsciousness about his environment. He confesses that “the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious,”(Fox,106) and the repression of it will lead to insanity” (Fox, 107). Roszak proposes that humanity should admit ecological consciousness to gain a healthy mind and behavior toward the natural world. For him, this can be attained via awakening the unconscious mind, awakening an inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that has the ability to heal the alienation between Man and his environment.

In other words, Modern human alienation from nature and the threatening global environmental crisis damage modern Man psychologically. Eco-psychologists admit that such traumatic separation, in turn, plays role in the degradation of Man’s mental health and his environment. They evoke practices that have the capacity to deal with the alienation from nature and the despair, pain, and anger that emerge from experiencing the environmental deterioration. Such practices involve eco-therapy, deep ecology workshops, wilderness encounter sessions and nature-encounter experiences. In essence, all these practices aim at retrieving Man’s feelings of interconnectedness with nature. It creates a set of re-earthling rituals that seeks to instigate commitment, joy and inspiration derived from One’s re-attachment with the natural world. These nature based practices are perceived as therapeutic for Man and “fundamental to ecologically dignified living and the elevation of unprecedented strands of natural vitality” (Jenkins & Bauman,144). They support individuals to think positively and convert their feelings of anxiety and sadness into love and joy.

These eco-psychological practices are reflected vividly in the body of modern poetic products. Modern poetic theories witness paradigm shifts about nature writings: modern poets start to examine the environmental issues in relation to humanity’s psychological troubles. Thus, eco-psychology appears as a poetic discipline that focuses on nature as a psychological therapy. Eco-psychological poem becomes a vibrant term that is applied for a poem that combines ecology and psychology into its text.

In his book *Reconciliation: The Uniqueness of Knowledge*, E. O. Wilson equalizes eco-psychological poetry with modern poetic efforts that seek to “reconcile ecology disciplines with psychological ones” (Durdević, et al, 2021). Poets of eco-psychology focus their poems around nature and its therapeutic capacity, especially in the benefit of furthering personal understanding of one’s psychological make-up.

This research selects Mary Oliver’s poetry as a sample of eco-psychological poetry. Like the majority of eco-psychological poets, Oliver combines elements from ecology and psychology to assert the healing power of nature: its importance in Man’s psychological and mental growth. To such end, Oliver draws on a set of eco-psychological treatments that asserts the oneness of beings, a core principle in eco-psychology which is exploited by psychologists to advocate psychological therapy. Among these treatments is: Twinship /Alter-ego treatment, Wilderness treatment, Religious/ Spirituality treatment and Ecological Consciousness treatment.

Twinship/alter-ego is one main psychological concept upon which Oliver relies to advocate the oneness of beings. Twinship/alter ego is a self-psychological concept which is described by Heinz Kohut as “confirmation of the feeling that one is a human being among other human beings” (Lessem, p.51). Kohut proposes that individuals need to “feel a sense of a likeness with others, and to be accepted by those that are experienced as similar to ourselves” (Banai, et al., 2005). People like to share experiences, interests and activities, which foster a sense of belonging and connectedness (Frank,74). Such sense of connectedness, as *Kohut demonstrates*, grants individual a sense of security that comes from his/her realization of being “a human among humans” (Detrick,et al,166). Eco-psychologists see this fact as the essential likeness between human, the Self, and the natural world, the Other (Stewart,73).

Oliver’s “Hurricane” from *A thousand mornings* is a fitting example of Twinship/Alter-ego treatment concept. Exploiting the twining ties between Man and Nature, Oliver deduce lessons from nature to help her readers to retain hope in life even during their gloomy days. She urges her readers to twin their situation with that of the trees in the midst of a hurricane. She opens her poem with a portrayal of trees under the effect of a strong storm, a hint to the psychological problems that blows in Man’s life. She writes:

. . . . The wind
tore at the trees, the rain
fell for days slant and hard.
The back of the hand

to everything. I watched
the trees bow and their leaves fall
and crawl back into the earth.
As though, that was that.
This was one hurricane
I lived through, the other one
Was of different sort, (T.M, 3-13)

The above lines create a fearful atmosphere. The readers get the experience of the trees living through a hurricane themselves. The power of the hurricane is introduced as the most destructive one in the solar system. Oliver compels her readers to twin their plights with that of the trees' in the midst of hurricane. In an attempt to convince her readers to retain hope in life even in the midst of trails, Oliver calls them, her readers, the resisting power of the trees in the midst of the hurricane. I.e., Oliver encourages her readers to over their psychological defects via showing the survival orientation of the trees as they re-blossom and re-grow in the hurricane's aftermath:

. . . . But listen now to what happened
to the actual trees;
toward the end of that summer they
pushed new leaves from their stubbed limbs.
It was the wrong season, yes,
but they couldn't stop. They
looked like telephone poles and didn't
care. And after the leaves came
blossoms. For some things
there are no wrong seasons.

Which is what I dream of for me. (T.M, 16-26)

One more example of Twinship / Alter-ego treatment concept is Oliver's "[White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field](#)" from *House of Light*. In this poem Oliver urges humans to defeat their psychological worries of death via twining their experience with that of natural beings. To achieve this end, Oliver presents the owl, hunter, as an agent of death, whilst Man is instigated to be immersed in the form of, a hunted natural creature. Oliver writes:

Coming down out of the freezing sky
with its depths of light,
like an angel, or a Buddha with wings,
it was beautiful, and accurate,
striking the snow and whatever was there
with a force that left the imprint
of the tips of its wings — five feet apart —
and the grabbing thrust of its feet,
and the indentation of what had been running
through the white valleys of the snow —
and then it rose, gracefully,
and flew back to the frozen marshes
to lurk there, like a little lighthouse,
in the blue shadows — (H.L, 1-14).

The above lines comments on the relationship between the predator ,owl, and prey. It is introduced as a factual and dispassionate one, yet not out of balance with the natural world, nor without any grace. Described as "a little lighthouse" lurking in the "blue shadows" of a frozen world, the predator becomes an indicator of light, life and warmth. Drawing on the preceding conceptualization, Man struggles against the inexorable and ultimate power of death is twined with that of the prey, a non-human natural creature, against its hunter, owl. Oliver perceives that the act of predating is a nourishing act upon which the continuity of life relies. Thus, she urges human to accept the inevitability of death pleasantly, like the many other non-human natural creatures who are preyed by predators and accept such act as a natural act to let life goes on:

and let ourselves be carried,

as through the translucence of mica,
to the river that is without the least dapple or shadow,
that is nothing but light — scalding, aortal light —
in which we are washed and washed
out of our bones. (H.L, 21-25).

Thus, Oliver demonstrates her readers that it would be wise to twin their trails with those of the other natural beings, and hence to surrender themselves to the inevitability of death as an inevitable step in the cycle of life. The readers are encouraged to encounter the end of their life not as the ending stage of life, but as an ecstatic, wondrous induction back into the big Story of our world : “a plunge into the river of time from which all things are nourished, and which we feed in turn with our own lives when death comes to take us.”

“Wild Geese” from *Dream Work* is another poem which can be examined in the light of Twinship/Alter-ego treatment concept. The poem focuses on the psychological pressure humans often confront, that of not being morally flawless. By urging her readers to leave behind the idea that they always have to be good, Oliver opens her poem in a welcoming, gentle way. She invites her readers to twin their imperfection with that of the other natural creatures:

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves. (D.W, 1-5)

Oliver sees that human imperfection is a natural part of the cycle of life. I.e., Oliver encourages her readers to “be more imaginative to shed loneliness” by exploring their place in “in the family of thing,” (D.W., 18) and twining their situation with other non-human nature creature. “the family of sun and rain, prairies and trees, mountains and rivers” (Gale, i) are taken as models in this poem. Yet, the wild geese flying home are what Oliver focuses on to show her readers how, despite the struggles and pains, these geese continue flying in a manner that keeps their place in the “family of things” (D.W.,18). Oliver says:

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers. (D.W., 6-11)

The above lines draw on the twinship treatment concept. she stirs her readers to examine their pains in the light of others. She asserts that everybody has his/her own despair/ For her, everybody needs to be told that he/she does not have to be perfect. One’s Twining his/her own troubles with those of others natural creatures helps him/her to recover from his/her own troubles. Similarly, listening to the pains of the natural creatures could create a connection between Man and nature. Oliver sees this deep and loyal connection as that among geese, and hence she calls her readers to let “the world goes on” (D.W.,7). Oliver writes:

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things. (D.W.,14-18)

Wilderness Treatment or “Adventure Therapy,” (347) as Brian Seaward terms in his book, *An Introduction To Counselling*, is one more type of psycho-therapies which Oliver uses in her poems. Seaward identifies this kind of treatment with the act of “undergoing a wilderness experience,” (347) like having a personal journey in nature. Such experience could enliven one’s five senses via exposing his/her body to nature for an extended period of time, and often shocking him/her to his/her own core (Easley, et al, 86). Thus, Wilderness Treatment asserts the sense of vitality and energy that a patient senses after seeing the sunlight, smelling the earth and listening to the gossipy brooks. In her poems, Oliver exploits the ingredients of such treatment type to urge her readers to explore the psychological joy, happiness and relief after being exposed to nature.

In "The Fish" from *American Primitive*, for instance, Oliver advocates Wilderness Treatment in the light of the sensual joy and happiness individual gets after a physical connectedness with nature. The physical attachment with nature, in this poem, is identified with the speaker's act of being nourished by a fish. The poem introduces the speaker's joy after eating the first fish he catches:

in the slow pouring off
of rainbows. Later
I opened his body and separated
the flesh from the bones. . . . (Oliver,A.P.,9-12)

Oliver presents the act of eating a fish as an assertive act of the bond between humans and nature. She asserts that being nourished by a fish makes the poem's persona to be drawn to nature, a drawn which instigates feelings joys and relief:

. . . .Now the sea
is in me: I am the fish, the fish
glitters in me; we are
risen, tangled together, certain to fall
back to the sea. Out of pain,
and pain, and more pain
we feed this feverish plot, we are nourished
by the mystery. (Oliver, A.P.,13-20)

the speaker of the poem declares that the fish will live inside her, and the its meat will bring him in touch with the "the dense orb that is all of us" (Mann,20). That is why, the poem's persona concludes his poem with a sense of joy and happiness. Oliver makes it clear that such joy and happiness is derived from the sensual attachment the speaker shares with nature, incarnated in the act of being nourished by the fish's meat.

Similar to "The Fish" is Oliver's "August" from the same collection of poems, *American Primitive*. In "August," Oliver describes the sensual joy of being exposed to the wilderness of nature: an exposure which Oliver reveals via the speaker's act of eating the blackberries which swell in the woods. The act of picking and eating blackberries in the forest is presented as a chance to forget and overcome the speaker's own troubles. The speaker spends the entire day among the high trees, fleeing his pains by collecting and eating "nature's juicy fruits," an acting which allows the poem's persona to "celebrate a union with nature, a union which make his "body surface . . . assumes the function of consciousness," and hence "the body/mind duality is overcome" (Heinz,et al.,180). Oliver says:

.....I spend
all day among the high
branches, reaching
my ripped arms, thinking
of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body (A.P.3, 3-9)

In an effort to forget his own troubles, the speaker devours the sweet, pleasant fruits, an act which symbolizes the refugee nature can provide to those in distress. The primitive act of picking and eating blackberries in wilderness of nature alters the speaker's psychological state: the poem's focus travels from a daunting state of mind to a peaceful one, all is done through the harvesting of fruits. The speaker says that he,

accepts what it is. In the dark
creeks that run by there is
the thick paw of my life darting among
the black bells, the leaves; there is
the happy tongue. (A.P.3, 10-14)

The speaker's newfound contentedness proves the symbolism of blackberries as a safe haven from the world's evils. The subject specifically turns to blackberries to overcome and seek refuge from the troubles of life, confirming the fruits' power as a cleansing retreat.

Oliver's "Sleeping in the Forest" from *Twelve Moons* is one more vivid instance of the soothing effect of spending time in the wilderness of nature. The poem highlights the experience of spending a night in the darkness of a forest. In the first lines of poem, the speaker starts with describing what it is like to sleep in a forest. He thinks that the earth takes him back "tenderly." He remembers his past times there. There is a feeling of peace and oneness with the earth:

I thought the earth remembered me, she
took me back so tenderly, arranging
her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds.

I slept as never before, . . . (T.M.,1-5)

Spending time in the forest outlets the speaker's innate love to nature: a love that instigate her to feel no boundaries between him and the stars: a beautiful image that evokes a feeling of aliveness and peace. The speaker is clearly happy there in the wood, he has the feeling of peace and aliveness:

On the riverbed, nothing
between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts, and they floated
light as moths among the branches
of the perfect trees. . . . (T.M.,6-10)

Oliver portrays the sounds of the various small kingdoms and creatures going about their nightly tasks. She sees sights and hears sounds that she wouldn't normally during the daylight:

. . . . All night

I heard the small kingdoms breathing
around me, the insects, and the birds
who do their work in the darkness. . . . (T.M.,10-13)

The concluding lines of the poem are quite moving. The speaker describes how by the morning she vanishes "at least a dozen times / into something better" (T.M.,15-16). She loses track of her own humanity during the night, experiencing the world from a series of new perspectives. These, she asserts, endow her with feelings of peace, happiness and aliveness.

Oliver's "When I am among the trees" from the *Thirst* is another evidence of Man's joy after being exposed to wilderness of nature. I.e., in this poem, Oliver advocates the healing power and joy of being among the trees, spending time in the wilderness of nature. At the opening of the poem, Oliver calls her readers to open their senses to the forest, bridging the gap between them and the natural world:

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.

I would almost say that they save me, and daily. (T.,1-5)

Thus, the poem, as Catherine Stewart claims, "talks about the saving power of the tree" (67). The poem's persona claims that exposing her body to the trees save her life. She unfolds the observation that "the trees stir in their leaves" (T.,10) enables her to look deeper, beyond the usual, to imagine not leaves stirring in trees, but trees stirring in leaves. The trees' invitation to "Stay awhile" (T.,11) urges the speaker to pause and reflect on the bark that she notices, on the pulp on the roots and soil that nourish the tree, all of which give life to the leaves. Oliver's image of "the light flows from their branches," (T.,12) captures a moment of being when she realizes the life force, the spirit, that animates humanity as a whole.

These recognitions invite Oliver to "linger awhile and recover those feelings of hope and joy." In the final stanza, the trees call the speaker with brief words "to go easy," and to walk with awareness and soft steps through the world:

And they call again, "It's simple," they say, "and you too have come"
"and you too have come with light, and to shine."
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine." (T.13- 16)

Religious/Spiritual Treatment is the other eco-psychological treatment on which Oliver depends in composing eco-psychological poems. In her nature poems, Oliver carries the eco-psychological assumption that earth-based spirituality and religiousness has a healing power upon human souls. Her nature poems

can be examined in the light of the eco-psychologists perception that when one experiences features of the natural world that are “sacred, transcendent, or beyond the ordinary,”(Ammerman,225) he will feel himself part of a transcendent terrestrial story. Such experience is viewed by Anne Frank Fonds as:

The best remedy for those who are frightened, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere they can be alone, alone with the sky, nature and God. For then and only then can you feel that everything is as it should be and that God wants people to be happy amid nature's beauty and simplicity. As long as this exists, and that should be forever, I know that there will be solace for every sorrow, whatever the circumstance. I firmly believe that nature can bring comfort to all who suffer (p. 125).

Drawing on such facts, Oliver sees in nature a divinity and religiousness that has the ability to restore human's positivity and the spiritual balance. (De Roche,900) She admits that every natural part holds a spiritual message to guide humans through hardships and moments of doubt. Each part of nature provides Man with a hint or a lesson of spirituality, as it feeds human's soul : it guides Man to cope with the psychological tension of life, and hence coming back stronger than before.

Oliver's "Gethsemane" from *Thirst* is an excellent example of using the spirituality and religiousness of nature to advocate psychological healing. The poem's title implies a religious allusion as it is a Biblical hint to "the garden of Gethsemane" where Jesus prays "before the day light on morning of the crucifixion" (Rhoads, et al.,172). Oliver interweaves this biblical reference in a manner that interpolates a spiritual elevation. She recalls the anecdote of Jesus which is known in the Bible with unprecedented insights. She opens the poem with a declaration that nature never sleeps, whether roses, the grass or the lilies. She re-tells this biblical tale as it is told in the church: the story of Jesus urging his disciples to remain awake while he is praying in the Gethsemane, but they fell asleep. Oliver asserts that the natural creatures, such as the grass, the roses and the crickets were awake with Jesus and they were singing and did not sleep. Oliver gives proofs that nature does not give up supporting Jesus, she writes:

The grass never sleeps.

Or the roses.

Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.

Jesus said, wait with me.

But the disciples slept. (T 1-4)

Oliver goes on asserting the fact that, unlike the Jesus' disciplines, nature with all its creatures does not leave the Jesus:

Jesus said, wait with me.

And maybe the stars did,

maybe the wind wound itself into a silver tree,

and didn't move, may be the lake far away,

where once he walked as on a blue pavement,

lay still and waited, wild awake. (T 8-12)

Oliver demonstrates that the wind, the stars, the lake, and the trees were awake with Jesus and did not sleep like his disciples. Oliver exploits this anecdote to indicate that in time of need nature never lets Man alone, even if other people do. She portrays nature as a caring figure to depend on in hard times and trials. This portrayal provides her readers with a spiritual relief. She assures her readers that there is always an open door and a shelter in nature to turn to in times when everyone else abandons them and leaves them down. These eminent insights help the readers to consider nature in a different way, knowing that it will be always awake, nature empowers the reader spiritually. At the poem's end, Oliver says that "knowing this too/must be a part of the story" (F 16-17). That is way, there will always be possibilities of hope that will improves one's lives spiritually.

Similarly, in "Six Recognitions of the Lord" from *Thirst*, Oliver vividly affirms her belief in eco-psychological therapy on basis of religious and spiritual aspects of the natural world. In this poem, Oliver clarifies her despondency and depression pleading for God's tenderness and mercy. She, instantly, returns back to the religious perspectives of nature for solace: she rushes to the fields, biding for God's tenderness and voice. She thinks that God can be sensed in the lap of nature. She remembers those times when she found God in nature and how her life was shining and was filled with peace. However, in the present time, Oliver is in darkness, and she is spiritually weak, obsessed with pain and sadness. Therefore, Oliver

turns to nature, to God, to restore the peace and happiness once she was living in in nature. For her, nature can heal one's soul and transform him to a better spiritual condition:

Lord God, mercy is in your hands, pour
me a little. And tenderness too. My
need is great. Beauty walks so freely
and with such gentleness. Impatience puts
a halter on my face and I run away over
the green fields wanting your voice, your
tenderness, but having to do with only
the sweet grasses of the fields against
my body. When I first found you I was
filled with light, now the darkness grows and it is
filled with crooked things, bitter
and weak, each one bearing my name. (T., 1-12)

Throughout the rest of the poem, Oliver strives to illustrates how the religiousness and spirituality of nature transcends her to a better spiritual state. She continues to enhance the idea that nature is the place where she finds God. She addresses God saying that she has always felt that she can find Him in nature. She knows He is present in the clouds, in the wings of the birds, and in the oak which she loves. She admits that it is usual for one to be changed physically, but the spiritual change cannot be attained unless one understands the world of nature: "It is mystery/ It is love of God. It is obedience" (T 17/18).

In the fifth stanza Oliver talks about the Holy Spirit that has created the fields with fragrances and the oceans with freshness, and She asks it to feed her with spiritual freshness and delightfulness. She begs God to aid her, hearing "words of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: Follow me" (T.,56-57).

The concluding stanza proves that nature and religion are important elements in Man's psychological and spiritual transformation. She presents a lot of shining natural images to reflect the new spiritual state of the poem's persona. Oliver chooses summer to be the season of this stanza, as it is the season of change and productivity as all the lilies flourish and rise to cover the black water. This portrayal maintains that the darkness is substituted by the white lilies, a hint to the new spiritual state of the speaker. Oliver personifies the lily as a human who rises, the action implies elevation to a better spiritually level. She declares her thankfulness to God, yet she thinks that she cannot thank him sufficiently, because what she gains is beyond words of thanks:

Every summer the lilies rise
and open their white hands until they almost
cover the black waters of the pond. And I give
thanks but it does not seem like adequate thanks,

Not so far from Oliver's "Six Recognitions of God" are her "Why I Wake Early," the title poem in her collection of poems *Why I Wake Early*, and "Lingering with Happiness" from the same collection of poems. In these two poems, Oliver, once again, dwells on the idea of having joy and happiness via mediating on the religious and spiritual aspects of the natural world.

To illustrate, in "Why I wake Early", Oliver opens up space to see God in the infinite mystery of creation, she marvels at the sun in her face and "the nodding morning glories" (W.W.E.,5). The poem opens with a greeting addressed to the best preacher, the maker of the morning and the creator of the world.

Hello, sun in my face.
Hello, you who make the morning
and spread it over the fields
and into the faces of the tulips
and the nodding morning glories,

Oliver asserts that although the world have its "miserable and crotchety" people, yet the preacher, who speaks through nature, is the source of light and guidance as he "ease[s] us with warm touching"(W.W.E.,12) The poem's speaker declares:

and into the windows of, even, the
miserable and crotchety—
best preacher that ever was,
dear star, that just happens

to be where you are in the universe
to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching,
to hold us in the great hands of light—
good morning, good morning, good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day
in happiness, in kindness. (W.W.E.,1-16)

Oliver's "Lingering in Happiness" works on the idea of having joy and happiness via mediating on the religious aspects of nature, raining process in this poem. The poem, symbolically, depicts the process by which happiness is dispersed throughout God's world. The poem's persona dwells upon the processes of raining as an evidence of God's presence in nature. Thus, the rain in this poem denotes religious connotations. Oliver admits that the rain, after a drought cleanses, vanishes from one's eyes as it enters the ground, she writes:

After rain after many days without rain, it stays cool, private and cleansed, under the trees,
and the dampness there, married now to gravity, falls branch to branch, leaf to leaf, down to the ground
where it will disappear—but not, of course, vanish
except to our eyes. (W.W.E.,1-6)

Oliver wants her readers to exceed their restricted vision by asserting that the rain's drops permeate the ground, and touch everything, including the "small stones, buried for a thousand years," an assertion that reinforces the existence of a divine piety in the natural world. Out of these assertions, Oliver urges her readers to have faith in a natural incidents that transcend human understanding, the unseen drops of rain in this case. Such urgency goes in resonance with Emerson philosophy, a philosophy that proposes that God is revealed through nature. In this vein, Michael McLoughlin writes that: "*God is revealed in the soul and in nature, particularly in religion, art, and history, which are evolving toward humanitarian ideals of harmony and fullness of growth*" (McLoughlin,10). In the light of this philosophy, realizing the revelation of God in nature enhances Man spirituality and contributes in his mental growth. Oliver writes:

. . . ,the roots of the oaks will have their share,
and the white threads of the grasses, and the cushion of moss;
a few drops, round as pearls, will enter the mole's tunnel;
and soon so many small stones, buried for a thousand years,
will feel themselves being touched. (W.W.E.,6-10)

Ecological Consciousness Raising is another type of treatment which is implied in Oliver's eco-psychological poems. Working on this type of treatment, Oliver provides her readers a path out of their suffering. The essence of this type of treatment is derived from eco-psychologists perception that the earth is "a planet that is deteriorating ecologically and inhabited by people who are psychologically troubled" (Dhingra, et al.,78). They notice that "humans' unhealthy relationship with nonhuman nature" (Weiten, 511) is the source of their mental health problems and depression. They assert that people feel grief for things happening in nature, such as deforestation, because they are losing things they love most such as trees they played around in their childhood. Eco-psychologist see that individuals inability to express such depression creates a lot of hidden psychological problems. That is why, eco-psychologists attempt to enable ill-troubled people to overcome their depression via awakening their ecological consciousness, Man's "sense of ethical responsibility with the planet" (Gore,1995). Oliver poetry implies many stances of such ethical responsibility that have the ability to raise her readers' ecological consciousness, and hence soothing their troubled souls.

In "I Worried", From *Swan*, for example, Oliver develops a sense of ethical responsibility inside her readers: making them "feel guilty for their overconsumption . . . of natural resources" (Rackete&Weiss,2022). I.e., Oliver, throughout this poem, is in an extreme dilemma. She is surely apprehensive to see the climatic changes in the natural environment. Oliver's anxiety about the degradation of the earth's ecosystem is due to the catastrophes that modern individuals bring to the natural world. Oliver opens her poems with:

I worried a lot. Will the garden grow, will the rivers
flow in the right direction, will the earth turn
as it was taught, and if not how shall
I correct it? (S,1-4)

Through these lines, Oliver, epitomizes her worries concerning Man's greed for money and wealth at the expense of the natural environment. She demonstrates how the natural world is going astray. She puts herself at the core of the entire universe in an attempt to stir her readers ethical responsibility toward their environment. Oliver says:

Was I right, was I wrong, will I be forgiven,
can I do better?
Will I ever be able to sing, even the sparrows
can do it and I am, well,
hopeless.
Is my eyesight fading or am I just imagining it,
am I going to get rheumatism,
lockjaw, dementia? (S.,5-12)

This indicates that Oliver is feeling sorrowful over humanity's actions against the ecosystem of the Earth. She is in doubt whether she can do better, or just she will return.

The benevolent soul that Oliver positions herself in in front of the natural world is a sample of her efforts to develop her reader's ecological consciousness: Oliver sets herself as an observer of nature and its significance, and she brings her findings for the advantage of all humankind. Thus, Oliver self-responsibility toward her environment helps her to get rid of her worries and see the morning again:

Finally I saw that worrying had come to nothing.
And gave it up. And took my old body
and went out into the morning,
and sang. (S.,13-16)

Similarly, in the "Ocean", Oliver offers her readers a psychological comfort via raising their ecological consciousness. In this poem, Oliver expresses her dissatisfaction with the technological and industrial developments across the natural world. For her, the complete satisfaction is lying in the lap of nature, and its splendid beauty:

I am in love with Ocean
lifting her thousands of white hats
in the chop of the storm,
or lying smooth and blue, the
loveliest bed in the world.
In the personal life, there is (R.B.,1-6)

To awaken her readers ecological ego, Oliver presents the Ocean as "the loveliest bed in the world," a presentation which stands in sharp contrast to "the dusty road," a symbol of the materialistic society which Oliver abhors:

always grief more than enough,
a heart load for each of us
on the dusty road. I suppose
there is a reason for this, so I will be
patient, acquiescent. But I will live
nowhere except here, by Ocean, trusting
equally in all blast and welcome
of her sorrowless, salt self. (R.B.,7-14)

Oliver is very frustrated, the alterations in the primitive world of nature become intolerable for her soul and mind. Thus, she leaves "the dusty road," in favour of resting on the sea bed, and that lets her reader with a "sorrowless, salt self."

In "Starlings in Winter" from *Owls and Other Fantasies: Poems and Essays*, Oliver, once again, presents the deterioration of the natural world at the hand of modern materialistic society as a mean to evoke her readers ecological consciousness. The poem reveals that the abode, a natural creature, is being ruined and it vanishes, a matter which Oliver sees as a cause of the climatic turmoil of the environment or of the Earth's ecosystem. The image of the starlings jumping from telephone wire to the building is exploited by Oliver to demonstrate her readers confused life inside the system of the contemporary industrialized world. Similar to the starlings, Oliver portrays herself trapped in the troubled system of the

materialistic modern society: she inhales the *polluted* air under the artificial scope of her society. Oliver writes:

Chunky and noisy,
but with stars in their black feathers,
they spring from the telephone wire
and instantly
they are acrobats
in the freezing wind.
And now, in the theater of air,
they swing over buildings,
dipping and rising;

(O.P:P.E.,1-9)

From an eco-psychological point of view, “Starlings in Winter” fits exactly true to the ingredients of Ecological Consciousness Raising Treatment. Oliver manages to advocate her reader’s ethical responsibility toward nature via showing the growing pollution in the natural atmosphere, a case which is explicit in this poem when Oliver turns to talk about the ashy city. Indeed, the ashy city symbolizes the wrong behaviors modern man commit against his natural surrounding: “Ah, world, what lessons you prepare for us,/even in the leafless winter,/even in the ashy city” (O.P.:P.E.,24-26).

In other word’s Oliver’s “Startling in Winter” excellent instance of looking into the modern Man’s dilemma in the midst of the materialistic society. In the light of such showing off, Oliver successes in raising her readers’ ecological coconsciousness, and hence shifting their mood from awkwardness to grace, from grief to desire, and from improbable to possible, Oliver concludes her poem saying:

I am thinking now
of grief, and of getting past it;
I feel my boots
trying to leave the ground,
I feel my heart
pumping hard. I want
to think again of dangerous and noble things.
I want to be light and frolicsome.

I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings. (O.P:P.E.,27-36)

“A Dream of Trees” from *No voyage* is another poem that Oliver writes in accordance with the criteria of Ecological Consciousness psychological treatment. In this poem, Oliver strives to uncover the perils that the present world is facing. I.e., in this poem, Oliver allows her readers’ ecological consciousness to be raised via portraying the direct violations of the continuity of the natural world at the hands of the modern materialized society. Oliver shows the disastrous influence of the materialistic society: its ignorance of the ecological system of the Earth in favour of its greed for wealth and money. These showings off urge Oliver’s readers to awake their ecological consciousness: they becomes aware of the ecological deterioration of the eco-system of the Earth. Hence Oliver urges her readers to seek mergence with nature away from the “troubling town” and “factories”:

A quiet house, some green and modest acres
A little way from every troubling town,
A little way from factories, schools, laments.
I would have time, I thought, and time to spare,
With only streams and birds for company. (N.V.,2-6)

To put it differently, Oliver offers her readers a psychological comfort. She compels them to dream of trees, and to ignore the materialistic alterations which destroy the charm of the natural world. She wants her readers to isolate themselves from the materialistic developments, clarifying her desire to spend her life peacefully in the natural lap:

There is a thing in me still dreams of trees,
But let it go. Homesick for moderation,
Half the world’s artists shrink or fall away.
If any find solution, let him tell it.
Meanwhile I bend my heart toward lamentation

Where, as the times implore our true involvement,
The blades of every crisis point the way.
I would it were not so, but so it is.
Whoever made music of a mild day? (N.V.,10-18)

Conclusion:

Nature as a psychological therapy is a relatively new perspective of modern English poetry. In fact, modern psychological theories are the source from which this perspective is derived. Theodore Rozak's Eco-psychological Theory is the most prominent one in this vein. In essence, this theory aims at deepening humans' relationship with their ecological environment, with the aim of healing their psychological problems. The ingredients of this theory permeate the texture of modern poetic works, and result in the appearance of eco-psychological poetry, a poetry which promote human's mental growth and psychological recovering via asserting the essential bond between Man and Nature.

Mary Oliver's poetry is a fitting example of eco-psychological poetry. Her poems view nature as a psychological cure to Man's psychological troubles. Her method to do so goes in resonance with the theoretical essence of Eco-psychological theory. i.e., Oliver carries out the theoretical conceptions of many eco-psychological treatments to frame her eco-psychological poems. Twinship Treatment, Wilderness Treatment, Religious/Spiritual Treatment and Raising Ecological Consciousness Treatment are among the most prominent eco-psychologist treatments on which Oliver draws on in her writings to advocate psychological healing via nature. In relation to the first type of treatment, Twinship/Alter-ego Treatment, Oliver encourages her readers to overcome their psychological trials through twining theirs with those of the other natural beings. The second, Wilderness Treatment, benefits Oliver to urge her readers to seek psychological remedy through spending time in the wilderness of nature and enjoying a sensual connectedness with it. In relation to the third, Religious/Spiritual Treatment, Oliver offers her readers psychological sooth via mediating on the religious and spiritual aspects of the natural world. Whilst the fourth treatment, Raising Ecological Consciousness Treatment, enables Oliver to awake her readers' sense ethical responsibility toward the natural world, and hence getting the happiness and joy of such sense.

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