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Ecocritical analysis of the Poem *Sea Songs* through the Lens of the Third Wave of Ecocriticism

ABSTRACT

This article presents an ecocritical analysis of the poem *Sea Songs* (translated into Greek as *Θαλασσινά Τραγούδια*), included in the Greek school textbook *Texts of Modern Greek Literature for the First Grade of Secondary Education* (*Κείμενα Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας της Α' Γυμνασίου*). The main objective of the study was to identify and analyze the implicit ecological meanings of the poem that go beyond its superficial representations of idyllic beauty, drawing on the theoretical framework of the third wave of ecocriticism, as conceptualized by Buell (2005) and further developed by Heise (2008). The methodology was qualitative and interpretative, based on textual and discursive analysis of the poem, with emphasis on poetic language, metaphors, and similes. This approach made it possible to examine how these literary devices construct a specific conception of "nature" within the school text. The analysis revealed that, despite an initial appearance of harmony, complex dynamics underlie the poem, such as anthropocentrism, the reduction of the autonomy of the non-human world, and the symbolic appropriation of the natural landscape. Among the main findings, it was evident that human presence, even when seemingly integrated harmoniously with nature, actively influences its meaning and contributes to neutralizing the agency of non-human beings. In conclusion, the study highlights the need to promote more critical and reflective readings of educational texts, questioning anthropocentric hegemony and emphasizing the formative potential of ecocriticism in pedagogical contexts (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014).

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Third Wave, Anthropocentrism, Nature, Literature, School Textbooks.

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Análisis ecocrítico del poema *Sea Songs* a través del enfoque de la tercera ola de la ecocrítica

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta un análisis ecocrítico del poema *Sea Songs* (traducido al griego como *Θαλασσινά Τραγούδια*), incluido en el libro escolar griego *Textos de Literatura Neogriega para el Primer Grado de Secundaria* (*Κείμενα Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας της Α' Γυμνασίου*). El objetivo principal del estudio fue identificar y analizar los significados ecológicos implícitos del poema que trascienden sus representaciones superficiales de belleza idílica, a partir del marco teórico de la tercera ola de la ecocrítica, conceptualizado por Buell (2005) y

desarrollado por Heise (2008). La metodología fue cualitativa e interpretativa, basada en el análisis textual y discursivo del poema, con énfasis en el lenguaje poético, las metáforas y los símiles. Este enfoque permitió examinar cómo dichos recursos construyen una concepción específica de la “naturaleza” en el texto escolar. El análisis reveló que, pese a una aparente armonía inicial, subyacen dinámicas complejas como el antropocentrismo, la reducción de la autonomía del mundo no humano y la apropiación simbólica del paisaje natural. Entre los principales hallazgos se evidenció que la presencia humana, aun cuando parecía integrarse de manera armónica con la naturaleza, influye activamente en su significado y contribuye a neutralizar la agencia de los seres no humanos. En conclusión, el estudio pone de manifiesto la necesidad de promover lecturas más críticas y reflexivas de los textos educativos, cuestionando la hegemonía antropocéntrica y destacando el potencial formativo de la ecocrítica en el ámbito pedagógico (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014)

Palabras clave: ecocrítica, tercera ola, antropocentrismo, naturaleza, literatura, libros escolares.

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Análise ecocrítica do poema *Sea Songs* a partir da perspectiva da terceira onda da ecocrítica

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma análise ecocrítica do poema *Sea Songs* (traduzido para o grego como *Θαλασσινά Τραγούδια*), incluído no livro didático grego *Textos de Literatura Neogrega para o Primeiro Ano do Ensino Secundário (Κείμενα Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας της Α' Γυμνασίου)*. O objetivo principal do estudo foi identificar e analisar os significados ecológicos implícitos do poema que transcendem suas representações superficiais de beleza idílica, com base no arcabouço teórico da terceira onda da ecocrítica, conforme conceituado por Buell (2005) e desenvolvido por Heise (2008). A metodologia adotada foi qualitativa e interpretativa, fundamentada na análise textual e discursiva do poema, com ênfase na linguagem poética, nas metáforas e nos símiles. Essa abordagem permitiu examinar como esses recursos literários constroem uma concepção específica de “natureza” no texto escolar. A análise revelou que, apesar de uma aparente harmonia inicial, emergem dinâmicas complexas, como o antropocentrismo, a redução da autonomia do mundo não humano e a apropriação simbólica da paisagem natural. Entre os principais achados, evidenciou-se que a presença humana, mesmo quando parece integrar-se harmonicamente à natureza, influencia ativamente seu significado e contribui para neutralizar a agência dos seres não humanos. Em conclusão, o estudo evidencia a necessidade de promover leituras mais críticas e reflexivas dos textos educacionais, questionando a hegemonia antropocêntrica e destacando o potencial formativo da ecocrítica no contexto pedagógico (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014).

Palavras-chave: ecocrítica; terceira onda; antropocentrismo; natureza; literatura; livros didáticos.

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INTRODUCTION

Ecocriticism emerged in the 20th century and has developed through a continuum of stages — sometimes called “waves” — which offer a new way of understanding how literary texts make use of issues of ecology. The first ecocriticism – Anglo American– was limited to the way in which literature represented nature in enjoying its natural beauty or its spiritual aspects and extolling the intrinsic nature of the natural world (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). In contrast to the one during the initial two waves, the second expanded the field’s horizons by incorporating concepts of justice, ecofeminism, and postcolonialism, while drawing attention to the relationship of ecological fragmentation and social inequality (Garrard, 2012 pp. 3–

12; Nixon, 2011). The third wave this analysis is foregrounding represents a shift that is more radical and theoretically richer. Disentangling from representations of nature and the moral outcry over the ecological destruction, its exploration of the muddier, less sharply defined angles of entanglement of human nature runs. In doing so, it draws on posthumanist, material ecocritical and biopolitical perspectives recognizing that the borders we have drawn between the human and the nonhuman are fluid, porous and in a state of constant remaking. It examines the specter of disaster, the bleakness of dystopia, the liminality of hybridity, and the very agency embedded in matter itself, thus embedding literature in a tangled web of mutually dependent human and nonhuman actors (Buell, 2005 pp. 137–143; Heise, 2008 pp. 121–129; Iovino & Oppermann, 2014 pp. 1–8; Clark, 2015). From this perspective, Georgios Drossinis's poem "*Sea Songs*" (Θαλασσινά Τραγούδια)—listed in the Greek school textbook "Texts of Modern Greek Literature for the 1st Grade of Junior High School" (Κείμενα Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας της Α' Γυμνασίου)—serves as a particularly revealing case study. At its core, the poem seems to present a picture of peaceful seas and an apparently balanced relationship between human beings and their environment. In the shallow sea, the gentle sea breeze whispers and the sun glows and twinkles off the sapphire surface, fish meander in a pattern, dolphins dart in sparkling arcs of movement, dolphins skip in joyful arcs, seagulls float on their feathery wings and ships cruise as if they are a flock of gentle sheep. This collage of moments intersperses a respectful tableau, a muted tribute to the sea's allure and the sea's unrivaled potential for renewal. But at the level of third wave ecocriticism, this trite harmony invites an interrogation. And in its calm, there are many nuances behind its imagery that can hide more subdued strains between the human and the nonhuman, raising questions about agency, anthropocentrism, and the domestication of nature. The aesthetic rendering of the sea — at once nurturing and muted — sets up the poet's ambivalent stance of the natural world, toward it a stance that vacillates between reverence and a need to exert control. Seen this way, "*Sea Songs*" lands in the Mediterranean ecocritical dialogue, where depictions of the sea frequently reflect cultural identity, evoke nostalgic feelings, and emphasize ecological consciousness (Oppermann & Serenella 2017; Huggan & Tiffin 2015).

The poem *Sea songs* translated in English*:

*The breeze blows softly,
The sea grows cool,
In its blue waters
The sunlight glimmers.
And as though they play in love,
Flying without care,
Tiny fish with golden wings
Dance in silver waves.*

*Beside the boat
A mad dolphin
With swift wings takes flight
And leaves us behind.
And as though in boast
The sea-horse proud
Adorns itself with foam
And turns away from us.*

*Seagulls made of snow,
With wings beyond all price,
Their sleepless eyes seek no fish in vain;*

* This translation of the poem was rendered by the author of the present scholarly work.

*Circling the riggings
They fly untiringly,
Or joyfully whistling,
They dive into the sea.*

*And around small boats
That sail the open sea
Like white sheep grazing
Turning as they leap
In the fields all day long,
With waves as pasture,
And the wind as shepherd.*

The aims to be achieved are to revise the poem once more applying the third wave ecocriticism which is aimed at the aesthetic interpretation alone. This research seeks to explore these implications, which point to other more nuanced types of anthropocentrism, the appropriation or domestication of nature and subcurrents of existing environmental concerns in ways that stand in contrast to the radical ecological concerns of all time. With all these considerations, using this approach provides fresh ways to think about *Sea Songs*; it's far more than a paean to marine celebration; it's a study of the complex borders that bind the human and the nonhuman, the experience of questioning agency, control and cohabitation. The originality and inter-discipline nature of this work is what sets it apart, because as noted in Goga's article (Goga, Guanio-Uluru, Hallås, & Nyrnes, 2018, pp. 73, 76), the addition of ecocriticism to the Greek and global syllabuses of schools remains a terra incognita. Although ecocriticism has developed throughout literary studies and offered multiple analytical frameworks, use of such frameworks in school literature, especially poetry, and academic reading materials has been limited (Gaard, 2017; Slovic, 2022). To analyze the poems' insipid reference to the sea, I ask: What ecological issues lurking under the superficial facade might the poems' benign depiction conceal? What anthropocentric issues might the poems' idealization of the sea obscure? I use third-wave and material ecocriticism to explain to myself the description and the visual and metaphorical imagery in the poem to expose complex ecological constructs that a poem contains. I shall respond to the questions about how agency, materiality, and meaning are challenged by Iovino and Oppermann (2014), Heise (2008), and Clark (2015) in their queries and relationships of these constituents. This will allow me to situate the poem as a cultural text, and as a space of ethical imagination, and of moral investigation.

THE THIRD WAVE OF ECOCRITICISM: THEORY

The so-called Third Wave of Ecocriticism and Writing – 'New Wave' or 'Catastrophe Ecocriticism' – marks an essential theoretical and ethical shift from prior forms of ecocriticism. While First Wave embraced the beauty of nature and its inherent value, Second Wave was concerned with socio-political aspects of ecological degradation and the justice/deep ecology movement, Third Wave pushes into more complicated and unclear territory and even disturbing places. It originates from the anthropocentric world or the "Anthropocene" epoch as a geological time period marked by the domination of human activities in controlling the Earth's ecosystem as well as the growing anxiety about the interconnectedness of human and non-human forms of being by the interlacing of world systems (Clark, 2015; Chakrabarty, 2021). This new phase is a departure from representational or moralistic approaches towards ontological and epistemological studies of materiality, agency, and relationality. Third-wave ecocriticism is influenced by posthumanist and new materialist thought, and is a critique of anthropocentrism, which considers the human separate from or at least better than the natural world (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014). It does not regard matter as a solid object but as dynamic and active, which emphasises the interactions between people and non-people (Barad, 2007). From this viewpoint, literature is not only a reflection of ecological events but also helps to invent both environmental

imaginaries and awareness. The third wave also creates awareness of ecological and cultural disaster. It examines the aesthetics of apocalyptic, posthuman, and dystopian narratives, trying to interpret how their accounts of collapse, crisis, and survival transform our relationship to and belief in the planet itself (Heise, 2016; Ghosh, 2016). Instead, it foregrounds systems of interaction, disruption, and transformation beyond models of nature, one in which destruction and regeneration find a common ground as parts of the same overall system of ecology. Following this theoretical framework, literary analyses become a tool for affective and ethical scrutiny with which to track environmental catastrophe, and to examine these two writers' works in light of affectively and ethically tracking environmental crisis — examining how their texts articulate themes of vulnerability, resilience, and reciprocity through sharing vulnerability, resilience, etc. Therefore, the third wave carries the third wave of environmental critique beyond traditional environmental criticism to a multiphasic, trans-corporeal, planetary perspective that acknowledges the interdependence of human and nonhuman fates in an era of ecological instability and ecological vulnerability beyond our ecological precarity.

EXPOSING THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC NATURE TO THE DARK ECOLOGY

The hallmark of third-wave ecocriticism is its struggle to go so far forward beyond anthropocentrism—the belief that human beings are the most important or dominant factor in the world. And this revolutionary move challenges centuries of Western philosophical and literary history that have maintained humanity apart from, or superior to, nonhuman existence. Many other academic figures, such as Timothy Morton, helped to define how this becomes represented, describing an “ecology without nature” that disrupts the concept that Nature is a pure, external, idealised setting (Morton 2007: 1–4, 130–131). For Morton, ‘nature’ is never a neutral term but rather a cultural construction – a romantic inheritance that obscures the intimate materials- and emotional-based relationships between human and nonhuman living. In *Dark Ecology* (2016) this critique is developed even further by Morton, who makes a point in *Dark Ecology* (2016) of concluding that ecological philosophy must abandon the comforting aesthetics of perfect harmony and purity for a more honest grappling with ecological entanglement and existential unease in order to counterbalance them, as Morton (2016) explains. Instead of a picture of an enchanted paradise, dark ecology does not idealize nature, as a lost paradise, but encourages readers to feel in dark ecology the uncomfortable emotions when confronted with the awareness of our environment's breakdown: melancholia, anxiety, guilt and, yes, even terror. These emotions are not to be overlooked, but rather are an integral part of building up a moral compass or awareness of the ecological problems from the deep-consciousness-building of ecological life and environmental issues. In this way, dark ecology is not negative attitude but a form of ecological realism that embraces life at large and nonlife, which recognizes our radical coexistence with all forms of life and nonlife, asserting that we are fundamentally situated within the very systems that we have disrupted (Morton, 2016, pp. 4–9, 102–105; Cohen, 2012). Morton extends this view through the concept of “hyperobjects”—large, unspecific groups of things that can be felt and known, which reach beyond human perception and understanding (Morton, 2013, pp. 1–3, 98–101). Hyperobjects — climate change, nuclear radiation, the biosphere itself — are temporally and spatially dispersed, interacting on scales so staggering that they defy standard methods of representation. They highlight the ways that human-centered epistemologies and aesthetic categories are ineffective in bringing to light the nonlocal, viscous and uncanny qualities of ecological reality. In literary and cultural analysis, this concept forces rethinking of scale, agency and temporality, urging readers to consider how texts register the distribution of these things through metaphors, mood and effects (Bennett 2010; Latour 2018). By employing these posthuman and speculative frameworks, third-wave ecocriticism not only expands the thematic boundaries of environmental critique but actually rethinks its ontology. The world is now no longer conceived as a background for human existence but now as a dynamic collection of bodies, materials and agencies all in action. Within this constellation, the human is decentered —

not erased, nor displaced, but placed: a single human within a constellation of other persons in a planetary web.

HYBRID NATURE AND POSTHUMANISM

The third wave of ecocriticism also rejects a monolithic separation of nature and culture or “natural” and “artificial.” This is inspired by the work of thinkers like Bruno Latour who questioned the modernist paradigm and criticized the artificial dichotomy between nature and society. In *We Have Never Been Modern* (Latour 1993 pp. 7–10; pp. 37–42), Latour contends that modernity is based on a myth of division between human and non-human realms, whereas in actuality we occupy a world of hybrid networked connections which envelop us in human, object and non-human elements. There is no longer a ‘pristine’ or “unconstrained nature” from this point of view, everything is co-constructed, is influenced or is already implicated in human systems (Latour, 1993, 103–105). Ecosystems, in this perspective, do not become “pure,” but are embedded in sociotechnical architectures in which the environment and human agency collide. Nature, therefore, is conceptualized as relational, dynamic and hybrid. The theory of “posthumanist” is introduced by Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* (Haraway, 2008, pp. 3–7; pp.15–20), “companion species” the co-agency and interdependence of human beings and those other forms of living matter in the world. She argues that these relationships should no longer be ruled by stratification and domination but reciprocity and co-constitution. In her most recent work, Haraway (2016) offers the idea of the “Chthulucene” in *Staying with the Trouble*, a time that urges us to “think with tentacles”: a connected, tentacular, non-linear model in which the living and the non-living cohabit a web of entanglement and collective becoming. Likewise, Braidotti’s *The Posthuman* (2013), articulated a radically different kind of critique in which the human is positioned as not the measure of all things, a transversal subjectivity emerging out of the streams of life, technology and matter. In parallel, Timothy Morton (2010) promotes the concept of “mesh” and “hyperobjects” to characterize the large-scale distributed forms of the ecological systems with which man cannot engage in perception or agency in his efforts, a phenomenon that also points up how relevant it is to engage with posthumanist conceptualizations to make sense of the present on the ecological level. Combined, these thinkers present an understanding of ecology as not a stationary stage upon which humans orient their action, and a highly complex, hybrid field of intra-actions (Barad, 2007) whose boundaries between nature and culture and technology are continually undermined. The hybrid and posthuman visions thus require new ethical and ontological orientations—which affirm relationality, interdependence, and the agency of all actants in the planetary network.

CRISIS, DYSTOPIA AND NON-HUMAN AGENCY

One characteristic of this way of doing this is to acknowledge the non-human agency. Applying Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* (2010), third-wave ecocriticism contests anthropocentric ontologies by asserting vitality and agentic capacity for non-human agents—objects, animals, plants, and even inorganic matter. Bennett’s materialist framework insists that “things” are neither inert nor passive, but active subjects in the co-production of material and social realities (Bennett, 2010, pp. xvi–xvii; pp. 31–35). Similarly, Stacy Alaimo’s (2010) concept of trans-corporeality articulates the porous relations between bodies and environments, showing that our and non-human worlds are inherently indissolubly entangled in the circulation of matter, energy, and poison. In such a constellation of theories the third wave refuses a reduction of nature to mere background or resource and aspires for an ontological conversation with non-human alterity. It understands ecological texts not as representations of ‘the physical world’, but as sites where human and nonhuman agents intersect, collide, and co-construct meaning. With this framework of thinking relevant to the poem *Sea Songs*, the intent is not only to study what is directly verbalized, but also to attend to what is not stated, the unvoiced, the unvoiced silences, the tensions and paradoxes within the poetic language. Reading the poem, it is examined through how its surface aesthetic of harmony may disguise subtle subcurrents in its lines

and thus reveal profound ecological unrest, de-bondedness, and shared existence that serve to expose the delicacy and contradiction of our connection to the living-world. The third wave of ecocriticism is useful in the analysis of the poem *Sea Songs*.

THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC GAZE AND THE APPROPRIATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

All these descriptions take as given a frame of perception and evaluation through which human beings are embedded. As Timothy Morton has argued, this imagery comes out of a long Romantic tradition in which nature is aestheticized, and rendered intelligible first and foremost through human emotion and perception. The adverb exists only in relation to human sensory state; refreshing is a bodily experience; reflection assumes a human gaze to close this circuit of visibility. By these modes of language and experience, the poem joins the ranks of what Morton refers to as the aesthetic ideology of Nature — a framework that treats this nonhuman universe, the “natural order,” as a beautiful picture of nature, a world to contemplate. Nature, in this ideology, is externalized, its raw and unstable materiality substituted for an aesthetic, an order, to be consumed and enjoyed by humans. This process does what Stacy Alaimo calls environmental dualism; the distinction between a subject that perceives and a passive, inanimate, natural object. Poetic gaze — tender, if also contradictory — consequently reasserts the human as the place of meaning-making and ultimate interpreter of the environment. This human-centered projection is crystallized in the verse “and it seems they play with love.” The act of “seeming” and the metaphor of “playing with love” force a human-type schema onto the other world. The golden-winged fish have aesthetic and emotional weight only as the structure of the human affective system. As Bernaerts et al. describe in their study of narrative domestication, such anthropomorphization represents containment: it subsumes non-human life and renders the latter into familiar, human-centered categories while discarding the ontological otherness of non-human existence. This domestication is a stylistic as well as an epistemic appropriation. It turns the sea’s inhabitants into mirrors of human sentiment, depriving them of the capacity to exist without human frames of meaning. Rosi Braidotti would read this as a symptom of human-centered humanism — a worldview in which human exceptionalism is maintained, and where non-humans become objects, to be aestheticized, managed or empathized with rather than encountered as a subject in themselves. As the poem progresses, the seascape turns into an aesthetically carefully curated tableau, “a picture to be looked at” — not an ecosystem inhabited by independent agents. Its style, aesthetically, bears witness to the persisting appeal of Romantic sensibilities, but through the language in it, taken to be read as third-wave ecocriticism, we can see that the human gaze persists and finds it possible only through human affect to illuminate the non-human world. The poem’s effort to render itself as “speaking for” the sea is a sign of the impossibility — or at least of the difficulty — of the human impulse that has always informed our understanding of nature in the West.

THE DIMINISHMENT OF WILD LIFE AND THE DOMESTICATION OF THE NON-HUMAN

The dolphin is described as having “swift wings” and as being the “horse of the sea.” The horse metaphor, of a laboring, domesticated animal, serves to symbolically reclassify the dolphin, an animal of freedom and complexity, as an expansion of human categories of knowledge. As Steve Baker notes, animal metaphors such as this serve as cultural translations that render animals “readable” under anthropocentric semiotics, though usually at the expense of their ontological autonomy. Even the adjective “mad,” which seems to imply exuberance or vitality, is human interpretation, not an admission of the dolphin’s own mode of being. Additional anthropomorphism plays out in the dolphin’s actions: it “boasts” and “turns its back on us.” Such attributions of intention and social performance become domestic in that they also domesticate the animal, through known human affective codes. As Bernaerts et al. argue, this kind of story domestication diminishes the strangeness of life not of the non-human organism by attributing behaviors to non-human beings that are derived from human sociality. In so doing, the poem not only diminishes the animal’s alterity

but also reinscribes the human as the interpretive center of meaning. A similar mechanism governs the representation of the "snow-formed gulls," with their "priceless wings" and "sleepless eyes." These images aestheticize the birds by emphasizing value, vigilance, and visual beauty—qualities that gain significance primarily through human perception. Their "pricelessness" is a projection of human evaluation, while their sleeplessness anthropomorphically aligns them with traits of labor, duty, or watchfulness. Donna Haraway views such asymmetrical representations as an indicator of a human tendency to see animals mostly as mirrors of us, rather than co-constitutive partners in shared worlds. These symbolic "domestication" of marine, in addition to human, environment provide what Morton refers to as the illusion of natural harmony whereby human presence is justified and ecological discord is solved. The picture is one of continuity of technology and nature, with the harmony achieved by erasing the relation between it — domesticated sheep being the replacement for submission and exploitation. But, as Astrida Neimanis shows, such poetic metaphorization can take attention away from the material and ecological realities of human influence: the carbon emissions from shipping, the acoustic assaults created by engine life, the death of marine life through industrial fishing. These phenomena are irrelevant to the utopian, pastoral landscape of the poem, given their replacement by another pastoral aesthetic that enshrines human cohabitation in the middle of the sea. Beneath the lyrical beauty is a gesture of symbolic appropriation — the wild turns to the familiar, the autonomous to the domesticated, the ecological to the cultural. In the end, these accounts of marine life demonstrate a contradiction of anthropocentric imagination: while pursuing the celebration of the non-human in the poem, it also limits this non-human in our understanding of it. *Sea Songs* therefore becomes a great text for considering aesthetic pleasure alongside ecological blindness, and how the language of lyric harmony conceals the violence of symbolic domestication.

THE ABSENCE OF CRISIS AND THE OCCLUSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL REALITY

A key aspect of a third wave ecocritical reading is to discern not just that which the poem 'stands', but also what it fails to say. The seascape in *Sea Songs* fills with serenity—drenched in gentle light and bathed in gentle movement—but is a serenity which verges on erasure. There are no traces of those types of ecological crises in the poem so we cannot feel or perceive today's relationship with the sea. The water glimmers and is undiminished; air is clean, untouched by pollution; and sea creatures are free and undamaged; unsullied by the scouring of man, by technology. These missing parts become conspicuous when compared with the state of the actual ocean. Where are plastic waste settling in gyres and coastal shallows? By considering nature beauty—external (and aestheticizing)—the human subject can distance themselves from the environmental catastrophe it has engendered. Morton's notion of ambient poetics also captures this process: the aesthetic of smoothness and atmosphere that blankets ecological reality with a sensory curtain, rendering environmental awareness aesthetic pleasure. In that sort of poetics the Anthropocene goes unseen, it is represented as softness, not as a severing of splintering shards. In terms of third-wave ecocriticism, this absence of crisis in *Sea Songs* is more than a case of historical moment which predates ecological awareness — it is an attempt to dramatize the cultural appetite to deny rupture, toxicity, decay. As such, the poem's silence is hardly neutral: it is part of what scholars, such as Stacy Alaimo (2010), refer to as environmental transcorporeality, whereby humanity and planetary form are materially entwined, even as discourses seek to separate them. To read *Sea Songs* ecocritically is also to see this silence as a resistance to discomfort — a refusal to confront head on the enmeshed, polluted materiality of this world. Ultimately the poem's lovely calm uncovers an even more unquiet dissonance: it is not so much that crisis is missing, that it should, but only that there is an aesthetic suppression of it. By exposing this occlusion, the third-wave ecocritical lens gives restoration to the text a measure of its lost disquiet, of the unease and confusion that lurk behind the idyllic surface, the chaotic ecology of the Anthropocene.

TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTION AND THE HYBRID NATURE OF THE MARINE LANDSCAPE

The 'little boats' image (*karavákia*) appears as a simpler entry point to what may have been a central concept of third-wave ecocritical studies, hybrid ones. In *Sea Songs*, all of these boats move fluidly between fish, dolphins, seagulls, waves and wind, and their motions contribute to a swirling pattern that blurs the lines between the natural and artificial. By definition, the boats are technological artifacts: human-made vessels that extend movement and agency over the surface of the sea. But the poem depicts them as if they are organic extensions of the marine landscape, unbothered, even lyrical. This poetic fusion is in keeping with Bruno Latour's (1993, pp. 12–13) criticism of modern dualisms in *We Have Never Been Modern*. The boats' perfect seamlessness in the seawater paints a picture of no struggle without conflict. Yet the misleading conceals the asymmetry of the relationship: technology does change nature more than nature changes technology.

THE VOICE OF THE NON-HUMAN AND THE SILENCE OF THE OTHER

As David Abram (1996, pp. 33–35) argues in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, language itself shares in the creation of our world; when poetry allows speech primarily to the human, it continues the linguistic colonization of the non-human realm. This poetic anthropocentrism is also underlined by the title *Sea Songs* itself. Though it promises a polyphony of marine voices, the poem sings instead to the human of the sea, not songs of the sea. The non-human world is in image and rhythm, not enunciation. Donna Haraway (2008) says how in order to engage with other species ethically it requires not merely representing them, but "staying with the trouble" of their alterity—for the way they have been living and communicating may be beyond human understanding. As a result, the silence of the fish and gulls in *Sea Songs* becomes a symbolic instance of an overarching epistemic state: the problem—or perhaps the impossibility—of a complete penetration of non-human realms from the perspective of human cultural structures. As Timothy Morton (2007, pp. 5–6) understands this limitation as part of what he calls "ecology without nature," where human efforts to portray nature inevitably reinscribe humans' dominance. Nevertheless, as Cary Wolfe (2010, xxv–xxvi) suggests, posthumanism requires a deep decentering of the human subject that stretches the boundaries of anthropocentric empathy, and for one to think about what it "means" "to listen" across species. And the poem's measured lyricism, after all, shields an asymmetry: a world that is measured in human terms, sure, but a world in which some are made to be silent as well. Its third-wave ecocriticism insists that readers remain within that silence – not so much that we give it a human meaning, but that we see it as the residue of another kind of life, another life whose meanings don't exist in the language of human experience. To "listen" ecocritically thereby means to admit that the non-human in question can also be a form of inscrutably little unknowable, speaking in idioms beyond the range of our metaphors but equally as real in its agency and presence.

DISCUSSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A THIRD-WAVE READING

This 'aesthetic domestication of the non-human' transforms complicated ecosystems into projections of human emotion. As Timothy Morton (2007, pp. 5–6) points out, "ambient poetics" at once risks upholding an ecology without nature and yet it is a discourse supposedly reverential toward nature but which quietly reinforces mankind's centrality. In the same way, Cary Wolfe (2010, pp. xxv–xxvi) argues that posthumanism requires an ethical repudiation of human exceptionalism and an understanding of the agency of non-human life forms. In rendering wildness as metaphors, however, the poem unwittingly perpetuates an understanding of nature as subordinate to human interpretation. Second, a third-wave ecocritical reading invites us to address the poem's silence and absence. There's no hint of pollution, overfishing, climate degradation, or the broader ecological catastrophe that marks the Anthropocene, in the beautiful seascape (IPCC, 2019, pp. 137–138; Pauly & Zeller, 2016, p. 8; Weilgart, 2007, pp. 11–13). The hymn's idyllic harmony serves as what Morton (2007, pp. 130–131) describes as a kind of aesthetic veil, one that covers up

environmental degradation beneath the surface of lyrical beauty, in *Sea Songs* that is perfect in its purity. But it is not, in fact, the absence that has an impact — because the deeper cultural denial lies in the fact that the human experience is denied a vehicle by which to participate, as art, in an enjoyable fantasy of a state of unfettered, untroubled perfection (this is an unrealized state) and, in this instance, a state of beauty that's unchanging, not broken. These omissions reveal literature's power to mirror and also moderate our ecological awareness — at least partly by hiding as much as letting it know. Third, the interfacing of human technology with the natural world, described in "little boats," evokes Latour's (1993, pp. 47–48) hybridity of natural and cultural and the fact that nature and culture are not independent and apart, but are continuous co-constitutions. Human artifacts, boats envisioned as living agents on the ocean. It's on that poetic crossing itself which calls forth the hybrid ontology on which so much of third-wave ecocriticism rests; ecosystems and sociotechnical systems co-constitutive. However, as Sheller (2020, pp. 4–5) warns to some extent, this imaginary harmony can mask the material consequences of human labor — pollution, habitat alteration, carbon emissions — which is romantic (not particularly what poems are about). The poem's serene hybridity, therefore, provokes us to reevaluate the extent to which aesthetic representation can make technological consequence natural for us. Fourth, this approach to interpretation underlines the non-human's agency and silence. The marine animals of the poem are portrayed through human emotion and perspective, never as autonomous subjects. Third-wave ecocriticism has the effect that it flips that hierarchy, demanding that we imagine the fish, dolphins and gulls as more than passive symbols but as people who are at once active participants in the marine system (Despret, 2013, pp. 42–45; Haraway, 2008, pp. 20–21; Abram, 1996, pp. 33–35). Haraway's notion of "companion species" inspires a relational ethics based on reciprocity in place of domination, and Despret's "responsive attentiveness" requires us to encounter outside humans as co-communicative sentient beings. By engaging what the poem does not permit its animals to claim, readers can learn where the limits of human language are and the ethical implications of speaking in others' interests. Most importantly, by examining that practice, this study also highlights the pedagogical significance of third-wave ecocriticism.

CONCLUSION

From the point of view of third-wave ecocriticism for *Sea Songs*, one can see that even innocent, lyrical, beautiful texts may have important ecological and political dimensions in them. Under close scrutiny, the poem reveals its cultural inheritances of anthropocentrism, hybridity, environmental crisis and suppression of non-human expressions, and argues that its poetics is deeply ingrained inside human perspective (Morton, 2007, pp. 5–6; Latour, 1993, pp. 47–48; Despret, 2013, pp. 42–45). According to the readings the language of the poem—anthropomorphism, affective projection, and allegorical domestication—converts wildlife into form that can be understood by humans, thus robbing non-human men and women of their autonomy and complexity (Abram, 1996, pp. 33–35; Wolfe, 2010, pp. xxv–xxvi). This simultaneous insertion of little boats — human technological artifacts — into what appears to be a natural seascape is an example of Latour's (1993, pp. 47–48) argument for hybrid networks. Since *Sea Songs* is usually taught in schools, its representations of nature will be critical to learning what we value as a school and as practitioners of the environment. By exposing anthropocentric framing, the domesticating of non-human life and the muted aspects buried in poetic imagery, educators can guide students to engage with ecological complexity rather than trivial representational strategies (Haraway, 2008, pp. 20–21; Despret, 2013, pp. 42–45). By promoting reflective reading practices and a critical engagement with how literature facilitates the development of ecological consciousness, this framework provides a guide to integrating ecocriticism into curriculum studies. Importantly, this interpretation does not necessarily detract from the literary importance of the poem. Instead, it contributes to interpretation by locating *Sea Songs* as part of contemporary ecological discourse and showing how even picturesque texts are also included in how we perceive the environment by which we move today. Third-wave ecocriticism is therefore a

strong alternative to an aesthetic theory of the natural world able to dismantle images of nature in texts which are not overtly environmental and to expose the fusion of literature as containing issues of ethics and ecology (Morton, 2007, pp. 5–6; Wolfe, 2010, pp. xxv–xxvi). For future research, comparative studies might turn to other marine poems of the same time to find out if the idealization of nature and the suppression of environmental crises are recurrent motifs. Diachronic analysis could help show how ever-changing environmental sense is revealed in representations of the sea in literary works as time goes by (Sheller, 2020, pp. 4–5). In addition, to this end, experimental ecocritical approaches that work with the goal of amplifying the “voices” of non-human parts could pave the way to explore new ways in which literary works might reveal the experiences, agency, and subjectivity of more-than-human actors (Haraway, 2008, pp. 20–21; Despret, 2013, pp. 42–45). As a result, one finds that reading *Sea Songs* from a third wave-ecocritical perspective clarifies both its poetic complexity and its confluence with anthropocentric perspectives. The ethical and ecological stakes are illuminated by this technique, emphasizing the ethical and ecological stakes found in language and representation, the significance of reading in an attentive and critical manner during the Anthropocene, while the ethical and ecological stakes inherent in language and the representation themselves are brought to light. Thus, this poem functions as a backdrop for consideration of human-non-human relations, the artificial (and constructed) nature of romantic idealized imagery, and the continued vital requirement of fostering a literate attitude of critical reading for a responsible, ethical and adaptive relationship with the world.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the theoretical depth achieved, this study has certain limitations. First, the analysis focuses exclusively on a single poem, “Sea Songs” by Georgios Drossinis, which restricts the possibility of generalizing the findings on the representation of nature to the entire Greek literary curriculum. Furthermore, the qualitative and interpretive methodology, while robust for textual and discourse analysis, is based on specific theoretical frameworks of third-wave ecocriticism and posthumanism, which could exclude other sociopolitical or historical dimensions that were not the main focus of this research. Finally, the study is limited to the analysis of the textbook per se, without considering the reception or practical interpretation by students and teachers in the classroom.

FUTURE STUDIES

For future research, comparative studies including other marine poems from the same period are suggested to determine whether the idealization of nature and the suppression of environmental crises are recurring motifs in the literature of that era. A diachronic analysis showing how representations of the sea in textbooks have evolved as global environmental awareness has changed would also be valuable. Finally, the development of experimental ecocritical approaches is proposed to amplify the “voices” of non-human elements, exploring new ways in which literary works can reveal the agency and subjectivity of more-than-human actors in pedagogical contexts.

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