



‘Greening’ Comparative Literature: Human and More-than-Human World in Zacharias Papantoniou *The High Mountains* and Roderick O’Grady’s *Bigfoot Mountain*

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'Greening' Comparative Literature: Human and More-than-Human World in Zacharias Papantoniou *The High Mountains* and Roderick O'Grady's *Bigfoot Mountain*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the symbiotic relationship between human and more-than-human world through a series of descriptions and representations found in the Modern Greek prose titled *The High Mountains* [*Ta Psila Vouna* in Modern Greek] of Zacharias Papantoniou, and the *Bigfoot Mountain* of Roderick O'Grady, focusing particularly on how humans and nonhumans evolve, live together and communicate. Both authors describe the natural world extensively, focusing on the childish perception and emotions in nature through the beauty and 'purity' of mountain life that is full of indigenous practices, myths and legends of the past. Through the ecocritical outlook we address three different but closely connected to each other layers: the perceptual, the psychological and the phenomenological. These three layers lay the ground to approach the natural as a mode for its re-evaluation. Reconnecting with nature involves fostering a closer relationship with the natural world. Papantoniou's econarratives are exemplary of raising ecological awareness for the protection of nature while O'Grady's econarratives view nature as kin, helping individuals to understand their place within a larger ecological web. Both authors cultivate a sense of belonging in nature, addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable living.

Keywords: *comparative literature, ecocriticism, green humanities, more-than-human world, symbiosis*

INTRODUCTION

The study of species' relationship and the various kinds of them, e.g. parasitic, symbiotic, etc. are apt to the Environmental Humanities scholars' interest in order to further explore the role, mechanics and behavior of life-forms when they are in touch and communicate with each other. The emergence for the study of human and more-than-human world is traced back to ancient times when interplays and boundaries are found through oral storytelling, myths,

legends, etc., strongly confirming the affinities between life-forms historically. The Environmental Humanities' jargon and approaches lay the ground to get through these affinities by focusing on human and more-than-human world's relationships, agencies and materialities as well as their modalities, articulated in terms of body, space, place, landscape and so forth. A way to understand life-forms' interplays is to get through the various embedded assemblages, systems and collaborative networks, such as the study of "Gaia hypothesis,"¹ "actor-network-theory,"² "vital materialities,"³ "intra-actions,"⁴ "compost kinships,"⁵ "contamination"⁶ and "trans-corporeality."⁷ All the aforementioned concepts and approaches lay the ground to conceptualize the symbiotic entanglements of life-forms as a network of flows, energies, and webs. Under these premises, a "symbiotic turn" is an aspiration in order to contribute to the rethinking of human subjectivity and agency in the 21st century.⁸

Ecocriticism, in its consideration of a more-than-human world, moves beyond a solely human-centered view of literature and the environment. It explores the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman entities, acknowledging the agency and influence of the natural world and its diverse inhabitants on human lives and cultures. This perspective challenges traditional anthropocentric (human-centered) approaches to literature and emphasizes the ethical and political implications of our relationships with the environment. In our case we will focus on the natural material world that is both organic and inorganic, found mostly on the mountains of Zacharias Papantoniou's *The High Mountains* and Roderick O'Grady's *the Bigfoot Mountain*, by examining some themes such as the interpretation of mountains' representations (e.g., a

1 James E. Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, "Atmospheric Homeostasis by and for the Biosphere: The Gaia Hypothesis." *Tellus* no. 26, 1-2 (1974): 2-10.

2 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

3 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010).

4 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007).

5 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016).

6 Ann L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

7 Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Indiana University Press, 2010).

8 Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki (eds.). *Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art. Towards Theory and Practice* (Peter Lang, 2023).

wide spatiality, cultural place, or landscape) in the aforementioned texts, the relationship between human and nonhuman life-forms, and also the perception, impact and effectiveness of nature life on narrators' psychology and emotions.

In this article, an interpretative comparative approach to two novels that emphasize comparisons between two authors, Papantoniou and O'Grady, is presented. Although their different literary traditions, periods of time and ways of writing, limiting the scope to only one national literature is not encouraging to understand what happens elsewhere, that is, what is prescribed in a comparative method.

While every author has its own specific character of form, way of writing, images, symbols, etc., having this thing in view, we realize the fact that Modern Greek literature is different from American literature, etc. They are different because the fact that they are written in different languages but because the fact that e.g. Papantoniou and O'Grady's novels have been developed under the influence of different socio-political and historical environments. In spite these differences, a sense of 'unity' is profound, deriving their inspiration from a common issue -that of environmental crisis of their time- source or face more or less some kind of experience, emotional and intellectual.

In the research process, the following methods are used:

- a) The *comparative method in literary criticism*, as one of the methods of the comparative studies, which has been developed in literary studies at the end of the 20th century.
- b) The *method of description*. The description of terms and concepts are useful to approach the nature of the literature presented. As a rule, description of transnational literary phenomena is carried out without reference to the alignment of national literature. On the contrary, it reveals the features of the two authors' identity included in the research circle.
- c) *The method of interpretation (analysis of texts)*. The value of analysis is that it allows a deeper understanding of the authors' identity, way of writing, etc. when exploring e.g. the human and nonhumans' behaviors, relationships, etc. in texts.

Comparing the two authors' way of writing and at the same time their different econarratives, the comparison involves a preservation of uniqueness of each of them, help us better understanding the foreign world, where there is another structure of thought and understand more deeply 'one's own world', e.g. Papantoniou's world, through 'someone else's' one, that of O'Grady on how econarratives of humans and nonhumans, including materialities, etc. are

built and how they also convey an ecocritical message as a response in our precarious time.

Eco-narratives of Ecological Awareness: Zacharias Papantoniou's *The High Mountains*

Papantoniou's *The High Mountains* is divided into a series of short stories that refer to a small group of twenty-five children that spend their holidays on Euratania's mountains (it is a Greek geographical area). This companionship enjoys the extraordinary view of the whole landscape and gains knowledge about human and nonhuman life-forms, praising nature's beauty as well as learning about local histories and myths. Learning from nature to nature is not only an experimental practice, but also an ecopedagogical one as learning in praxis presupposes an in-person presence in nature. An empirical approach in nature is actually the best way to perceive human and more-than-human world's relationships, the energies and flows and also raise a critical ecological awareness about current environmental issues. Moreover, such an empirical approach in nature addresses the ways through which individuals and communities are concerned about environmental issues and collaborate to figure them out.⁹

Papantoniou's references on mountain life and people who live and work there are realistic ones, samples of his deep knowledge of local history and geography respectively, while get himself familiar with the Greek urban life. Mountains' descriptions are varied as Papantoniou's aim is to offer an eco-geo-perspective on this wide spatiality, considering it as a vital natural entity with a great impact on human and nonhuman agencies' welfare as well as focus on the role and mechanics of mountains in the shaping of perception and cognition of human-related issues (e.g. specific works found in mountains, daily life issues, etc.). All these descriptions are representative of Greek ethnography while combining childish memories and real mountain life.¹⁰

Papantoniou's econarrative is varied, zooming on all life-forms, e.g. flora, fauna within the wide nature's space where humans live, move, etc. Human visibility is effective to the perception in order to describe the natural scenery and what is included there, e.g., "The cliffs were planted with holly and

9 Metaxoula Manikarou, "Zacharias Papantoniou (1877-1940). Human, Author, Public Agent. A route from Euratania's high mountains to the Academy of Athens," *Euratania's Chronicles* no. 37 (2011): 17.

10 Haris Sakellariou, *History of Children Literature (Greek and Global). From the Antiquity until Present* (Noese, 2009), 515.

gorse,”¹¹ “Rock upon rock, hill upon hill formed the mountain”¹² and “He crossed mountains and mountains. Forests of firs and pines, chestnuts and beeches.”¹³ The geo-psychological impact on the companionship is not only restricted to a mere reference of what is surrounding them, but it lays the ground for the rise of “biophilia”¹⁴ with nature, a sense of being closely associated with nature. The rich knowledge gained by a close to nature experience is of the companionship’s ‘profit’ to cultivate an ecological perception and respect for all life-forms.

Humans working on mountains are closely affiliated with them as the narrator focuses on the jobs found in mountains (such as a forester, a lumberjack, a potter, etc.), their important role in local economy as well as the ‘dangers’ that are found due to unexpected exploitation of forests:

Lumberjacks only cut the trees we tell them to cut. [...] But if we let whoever wants to fall on the trees and cut whatever they want, the forest will be lost. And if this is missing, we humans will die of thirst. [...]¹⁵

Mountain life is full of contradictions: on the first hand we focus on the importance of work as fundamental for human living and on the other hand, we read about the ‘danger’ of logging the whole space which leads all lifeforms to extinction. This violent practice is disastrous for all life-forms. The narrator’s warning is not a simple warning for the current state of forests, but it functions like a factual ‘prophecy’ for the future of humanity, as well. An eco-mourning / eco-grief is profound here as a wish to ‘avoid’ a forthcoming disaster by warning in an apocalyptic way.

Although we see an apocalyptic tone in Papantoniou’s text, there are also references to other jobs or daily habits that could be of humans’ ‘healing’ through nature or even a remedy to their health: “[...] He is the one who goes down to the city and sells oregano, capers, herbs and venison”¹⁶ and “[...] He collects and sells oregano, lavender, thyme and rare herbs for pharmacies and homes.”¹⁷ Natural botanies are products of ‘healing’ not only for human illnesses, but also bad health habits:

11 Zacharias Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*. [*Ta Psila Vouna*] (Estia, 2011), 19. [The English translation is mine everywhere].

12 Ibid.

13 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 150.

14 Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (Random House, 2006), xv.

15 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 160.

16 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 85.

17 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 90.

[...] Foundoulis, he said, is a very good boy and we all love him, but you know his flaw. He is a glutton. Watch out for him from now and on. He will only drink hot drinks today and tomorrow some sage. [...] ¹⁸

The descriptions of the therapeutic power of the natural elements reinforce an ecopedagogical impact. Eco-therapy and healing practices seek to strengthen human relationship with nature which has been weakened by climate change, etc. The impact of a healthy holistic interaction with nature describes different eco-therapeutic methods recommended by Papantoniou's narrator in the aforementioned passages.

The descriptions for the mountain life are always full of learning and knowledge about the natural phenomena and the respect that humans shall prove to nature. In the next extracts we read about ecosystem's circle and nutrition of life-forms, aiming to the sustainability between life-forms throughout time and space:

From the rains and snows, said the forester, the water slowly drips into the soil and it goes into great pools of stone, which the earth has in it. From there it comes out with the fountains and the rivers. From the fountains and rivers animals, people, spartans, mills take it. But for the water to drip and enter the earth, the place must be planted. If there are no green and dry leaves to hold it, the water goes to dry rivers and is lost to the sea and air. Well, the blessed forest still gives us the taps. If we let the humans cut down the forest, this faucet here would dry up. [...] ¹⁹

Mountains are part of the aforementioned natural phenomena and circular processes, 'assisting' the latter to be operated successfully as mentioned above and in the following passage:

[The trees] unitedly fight the heavy winter and the hot summer. Together they grow, make big trunks and throw strong branches. This is how a large state is formed on the heights of the mountains that we call a forest. Here it is! ²⁰

The mountains are a space and at the same time a place of 'hosting' all life-forms, by proving that biodiversity's *flesh* is alive, continuous and symbiotic within the greater biosphere. Their role in natural processes of nutrition and life is vital and fundamental in a way that humans understand the role of each natural entity to the nutrition process. All entities are closely related to each

18 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 146.

19 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 161-162.

20 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 170.

and live symbiotically. However, the narrator's concern is about humans' bad actions to deforest a place, a disastrous practice for humanity's future, where it is mentioned in another passage that "[...] He knows that trees pain..."²¹ Trees' 'pain' is perceived in three levels: the forester's existing knowledge about deforestation and its consequences to area and human life, the narrator's voice that is 'behind' the forester's knowledge as an alter ego who knows exactly the current state and predicts a dystopian future as well as the real trees' 'pain,' proving that more-than-human world has senses and emotions that cannot others perceive or understand, but only those concerned to environmental issues. This is also a confirmation that the nonhuman world has 'voice' and 'reflects' a dystopian future.

In contradiction to the deforestation caused by humans, the forester focuses on the 'disaster of trees caused by animals:

[...] "You love the goat," said the forester. "And who does not love such a cute animal! But as lively as it is, so much it destroys the plants. [...] If, when these trees were young, a herd of goats had grazed here, we would not have a place to sit now. The forest would be all underbrush."²²

The forester's argument above is to criticize the practice of overgrazing as a disastrous factor for forests, aiming to 'expand' more the human factor of exploitation of forests, assigning the responsibility to humans for the area's low vegetation. Overgrazing leads to an imbalance in the ecosystem and causes shortage of pasturage for the cattle at a time when it is needed. This kind of exploitation is expanded to the Earth's metals and minerals that are found on the soil as mentioned below:

[...] And then he said to them, that in the earth there are many such large stones, which have metal. Some have iron, some copper, some pencil. Even silver and gold. The mountain offers them.²³

The knowledge about the Earth's minerals, e.g., iron, silver, gold, etc., their substances and use are presented within an educational framework that combines knowledge and theory about the metals and minerals, supporting that mountains are a great source.

Exploring more the oral storytelling about the local natural landscape and its 'secrets', the companionship also learns about indigenous local histories about people who disappeared due to a 'ghost's presence' which is affiliated

21 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 163.

22 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 166-167.

23 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 177.

with the forest. The oral local histories about human disappearances ‘ghost’ the relationship of human with the nonhumans while trying to reconnect past with present, and blank forms with reality:

[...] In this sudden the loggers lost them. Where they went, from where, no one understood. They were lost. There was silence in the forest again. [...] As they are left wild and illiterate peasants, their fear magnifies it all. And they believe everything they fear. The old women explained those whistles like old women. They said it was from ghosts. The biggest ghosts, as the old women say, live in the forest.²⁴

Moreover, the references to a magic and powerful pine and fairies are evidence of nature’s secret and super-natural life-forms that cannot be perceived, understood, explained or even seen, but they only heard in storytelling like that titled “John’s story from the yew” and its following poem titled “Pine’s curse” in which a person called John cut off a pine and the pine ‘punishes’ him for his bad by cursing him to die.²⁵ The pine’s ‘punishment’ is an example of how a pine is anthropomorphized in order to protect itself by humans, taking revenge on them and acting similarly to the humans’ initial wish to see a pine ‘dead.’ The folk culture of Euratania’s local community is evident of the collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources, trying to explore more their identity through time and space. This exploration highlights the bonds between human and more-than-human world in this specific area while trying to explore symbiotic relationships with/in the present. Indeed, oral storytelling for mythical creatures, ghosts, and traditions are forms of enlightening more the kind of interplay between human and more-than-human world through time.

In Papantoniou’s *The High Mountains* the econarratives are varied: from the one hand we read about nature’s extraordinary beauty through a series of descriptions of flora, fauna, minerals, beautiful landscapes, etc., people who live, work, move and act there in order to survive, from the other hand, we read about the nature’s exploitation and bad actions such as the deforestation and profit, leading the nonhumans to extinction or even death. The narrator gives ‘voice’ to the more-than-human world equally to humans by investigating their nature and behavior in a radical way when they are threatened by humans. The approach of facing all entities equally was very radically innovative in Papantoniou’s era. Papantoniou’s core message is not only an ecological one for the protection of the environment, but an ecopedagogical one: to be eco-citizens who learn, listen and act against actions that threaten the environment. According to Konstantinos D. Malafantis, Papantoniou’s aim is to

24 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 96.

25 Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, 103-108.

“transmit” to children some of the most important human and social values: love of nature, cooperation, communal solidarity, overcoming of superstitions and love to the more-than-human world.²⁶

Moreover, Papantoniou’s aim is not to provide a series of didactics simply written, but a series of short stories of action to explore nature closely, by focusing on various relationships between humans and nonhumans, propelling at the same time the importance of adopting an ecological identity and eco-citizenship in order to keep our *oikos* alive. According to Popi Chatzistaurinou-Exarchakou, Papantoniou’s narration is not dogmatic or verbalistic²⁷ but a realistic one as his descriptions are enriched by values of biophilic emotions for nature, protecting the environment, understanding the community’s needs and cultivating principles for an *eco-modus vivendi*. This is why we do not trace a kind of verbalism in his writing or even an artificial speech for advice and suggestions on what to keep or avoid when acting.

However, Papantoniou’s *The High Mountains* lays the ground for a new pedagogical perspective, oriented to the ethics and concerns for ecological issues, adopting a critical view on the bad behaviors and actions against nature. This approach differs from the past teachings of didactics of memorization of learning in a passive way, without supporting an active approach of scholars who can make the change. Papantoniou’s approach of learning through experiences in nature is actually the modern Pedagogy’s ethical orientation of how to cultivate values and principles when transmitting knowledge to the scholars in a delighting and self-actualizing way.

More-Than-Human Ecologies: Roderick O’Grady’s the *Bigfoot Mountain*

In the same line with Papantoniou’s work, O’Grady’s the *Bigfoot Mountain* explores the strong boundaries between human and more-than-human world through a series of descriptions and references to them found in nature (forest and mountain life, etc.), starting with Minnie’s initial contact with the fauna and flora, e.g.

She loved the scent from the pine needles and the thin dribbles of sap that wept from the tree and made her hands sticky as she climbed, and she loved meeting the ants and centipedes and spiders and all the other

26 Konstantinos D. Malafantis, “Zacharias Papantoniou’ contribution to the children literature and education.” *Diavazo* no. 285 (1992): 89.

27 Popi Chatzistaurinou-Exarchakou, “Z. Papantoniou’s *The High Mountains* through the linguistic matter.” *Diavazo* no. 285 (1992): 82.

bugs that lived in its lumpy, scaly bark. A fly landed on her freckled nose. [...] ²⁸

and

The birds sang, whistled and chirped, and squirrels chartered and thrilled to each other as they scampered along branches and leapt from tree to tree. Minnie just sat, encircled by the curtain of low-hanging fir branches, and listened to the forest outside her little den, feeling completely at peace. ²⁹

This is actually Minnie's embodied experience with the more-than-human world, focusing on the energies and flows through which species and wide nature ecosystems are structured, aiming to address nonhumans' impact on Minnie's psychology. "Trans-corporeality" ³⁰ found above and also in the following passages, describes the *chiasm* between *ego* -articulated as body-with nature, perceived as spatiality, including partial bodies and energies. All natural bodies are independent within nature while they live symbiotically.

Moving from an outside to an inner natural space, the reference to a garden will explore further the human and more-than-human world's relationship, characterized by symbiosis, balance and harmony:

Minnie spent the rest of the morning in the garden. The small vegetable plot had been her mother's pride and joy. All manner of vegetables and fruit had thrived there under her care, but since she became ill it had grown untidy. The caneberry bushes had spread their spiky canes in to the other beds and grasses and weeds had been allowed to spread and choke the plants. ³¹

Gardening as practice is characterized by "attentiveness to nature and willingness to adapt to and care for it [...]". ³² Minnie's garden is an exercise in our Anthropocene imagination of alternative human/nature relations, possessing positive features which anticipate the sort of interaction with nature. Although it is low maintenance, it renders nature fertile by means of manuring and planting as well as providing a habitat for wildlife. At the same time, the fruits and

28 Roderick O'Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain* (New York: Firefly Press, 2021), 11.

29 O'Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 93.

30 Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.

31 O'Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 40.

32 Alex Goodbody, "Gardening the Planet: Literature and the Reimagining of Human/Nature Relations for the Anthropocene," *Ecozon@* no. 14, 1 (2023): 8, 10.

vegetables may appear “untidy” in the growth, but the “spiky canes” are the products of a thoughtfully cultivated land. Working in the garden also plays a part in Minnie’s plan for education of her own, drawing out the ethical principle inherent in a horticultural lesson of hers, rooted in an ethic of partnership and care, leading to individual wellbeing while increasing the diversity of life.

The paradigm of life-forms’ diversity is apt to action in nature, as opposed to simply being there. The idea that nature and culture is a place only for humans and nonhumans is expanded to the consideration of nonhuman creatures, e.g. super-natural ones which live with humans symbiotically:

Minnie reckoned they probably knew she was there anyway, or they would do by the time she got up to the Aspen Grove and the Giant X in the trees. They would have heard her or smelt her or just would have sensed her presence in the forest by then. The forest was their home they would know every inch of it and its sounds and smells and its animal inhabitants – every single one of them.³³

and

[...] she *knew* Bigfoots existed, she just knew it! She didn’t want to leave this place. She wanted to find out more about the extraordinary beings living on the forested slopes behind her.³⁴ (*italics in the initial*).

Human and nonhumans’ *oikos* is the forest as a space of living, survival and creation. O’Grady’s econarration here is focused on how Minnie’s childish imagination is extended to super-natural creatures, found in past stories (e.g. oral storytelling of indigenous communities). O’Grady’s Minnie seeks additional impulses for understanding the complex nature of humans with the nonhumans through her imagining of ways of humanizing nature by ‘bridging’ the human-nature dichotomy.

Another representative example of learning through embodied experience in nature is nature’s sounds. The polyphonic aspect of nature is described with the concept of “soundscape ecology”³⁵ which studies the sounds and acoustic patterns of nature as well as its bio-phonic layers. Nature’s sounds decode the ecosystems’ dynamics (partial bodies) when studying their impact on humans’ psychology. Natural sounds are not only mere phenomena, perceiving them through senses (bodily), but they manifest nature’s polyphony:

33 O’Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 54.

34 O’Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 113-114.

35 Almo Farina, *Soundscape Ecology. Principles, Patterns, Methods and Applications* (Cham: Springer, 2014), 1-3, 7.

Stopping in a stand of mature pine trees. Kaayii put his ear to the orange-brown bark of a tree. He could hear the water carrying the sugars in the sapwood layer beneath the outer bark. It sounded like whispering and he knew by the sound of it that this was a very healthy tree. [...] ³⁶

and

The howl lasted many seconds then changed in tone until by the end it sounded like an anguished being crying out with anger, yearning and pride all in one giant voice. The howl echoed and faded away. ³⁷

The variety of acoustic patterns is extracted through a series of constant *chiasms* between life-forms that are done and found in nature. These *chiasms* are perceived as the micro- and macro-cosmos of our world around us, so the study of nature's sound presupposes to recognize the sounds in space and then the natural process that are produced. Moreover, we see that these sounds and processes have a psychological or even a phenomenological impact on the subjectivities like Minnie and Kaayii. In this sense, Nature is obviously a 'polyphonic body' where the acoustic patterns vary, defining an evolutionary dynamic in space.

In conclusion, O'Grady's novel is an example of how human and nonhuman world live in nature, an active semiotic material world that is oriented to a 'turn' of raising ecological awareness. Reading the *Bigfoot Mountain* is profound that nature's distinctive feature is ecosemiotic, meaning that all material forms are agents of ecosemiotic processes. The materialities presented by O'Grady are 'inscribed' to the wide framework of the ecosemiotic processes. Like Papantoniou, O'Grady's nature is considered as a constant material dynamic in space and time.

The More-than-Human Around Us: 'Green' Comparisons

Comparative Literature contributes significantly to discussions about the Anthropocene by exploring humanity's role in shaping the planet's future through environmental praxis. It prompts readers and scholars to consider how narratives can reflect the complexities of human-nature relationships in this new era. The implications for literary studies are profound; they encourage an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis with ecological awareness, urging scholars to think critically about how narratives can influence societal perceptions of environmental responsibility.

36 O'Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 64.

37 O'Grady, *Bigfoot Mountain*, 97.

Papantoniou's *The High Mountains* is a 'manifestation' about the protection of environment towards bad actions such as logging, etc., caused by human exploitation and capital. Papantoniou's ecological remark is precious this title is currently studied and taught in Greek educational curricula of primary schools. While it was the first book which introduces ecopedagogies in Greek education system by raising an ecological awareness for environmental, its reading impact is obviously of a high interest until the present. The Greek 'educational renaissance' that was done on early 20s, it is introduced by *The High Mountains* which describes Papantoniou's pedagogical scopes in an era of conservative educational models, struggling to 'transform' the Greek nation's struggles for liberty into praxis. This can be achieved only through an educational system that propels the concept of freedom, ecological identity and critical awareness for a future *eco-modus vivendi*. The latter can be achieved through a "New Pedagogy" which is oriented to critical thought and self-actualization.³⁸

In both Papantoniou and O'Grady's aforementioned works, the ecocritical remark is concluded in some points: knowledge, actions, skills, critical thought, values and collaboration. Ecological perception and awareness of environmental issues are profound where the individuals and groups perceive nature as wide whole and they raise awareness about environmental issues. Knowledge is necessary in order to assist individuals and communities to understand nature as whole, the issues raised by bad actions as well as the humans' role within nature and responsibility for it. Actions and skills are paired together in order to handle environmental issues and prove active participation for the protection and amelioration of it. Individuals and communities' critical thoughts about ecological, political, socio-economic and other factors shape also the cultural factor for considering natural landscapes of the aforementioned authors' titles both a space and at the same time place of all the above parameters in order to explore them more and form a future ecological identity. Furthermore, collaboration is a way to assist individuals and communities to develop a sense of responsibility towards environmental issues and take actions to find solutions for a better and sustainable living in a more-than-human world. Indigenous knowledge found in the aforementioned works contribute to present-day curriculum-making procedures as well as 'decentralize' curricula in respect to the knowledge-making patterns of the natural environment. They also shape a praxis-based eco-centric education system across the globe, trying to think that components like mountains, animals, plants, etc. are agencies of building nature-based teaching and learning systems, considering that natural environment is a pedagogical site.

38 Antonis Benekos, *Sections in our Children Literature's Evolution. The case of Zacharias Papantoniou* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2000), 96-97.

Papantoniou's econarratives are exemplary of raising ecological awareness for the environment's protection while O'Grady's narratives re-evaluate our connection with nature through indigenous practices, myths and legends. By framing environmental challenges in a narrative context such as Papantoniou's one, these stories make complex issues more accessible and relatable, fostering emotional connections and motivating people such as the group of children to take action. Moreover, O'Grady's narratives of reconnection with nature and Indigenous communities highlight the deep, reciprocal relationship between Indigenous cultures and the natural world, emphasizing stewardship, respect, and interconnectedness. These narratives often contrast with Western, exploitative views of nature, offering insights into sustainable practices and the importance of cultural revitalization for environmental well-being.

In conclusion, besides taking steps to ground Comparative Literature in ecocritical concern, this comparative research also serves to 'alert' literary scholars working in Modern Greek and English Literature to ways in which literary texts generate productive new readings when viewed from outside the "rural" of their cultural contexts. Studying Greek and American topographies to identify texts for comparison reveals a new ecocritical frame of analysis and allows new commonalities and differences to become visible. Above all, this research has sought to provoke that environmental ethics shall 'guide' our understanding on species' symbiosis within the environment, aiming to lay the ground for future studies on 'greening' Comparative Literature.

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