NOT AN ABSENT ORDER BUT "AN ORDERED ABSENCE": LIFE CYCLE POEMS IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S ECOPOETRY

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Abstract

Nature abuse is commonly ascribed to man's will to impose order on it. Humanity's anthropocentric violations of Nature, Margaret Atwood believes, stem from their sense of the lack of order in it or their inability to understand this order. So they begin imposing theirs as the poet highlights in "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" (*The Animals in That Country* 36-39, 1968). The poem depicts a European pioneer's disharmony and lack of unity with the wild lands of Canada. To appease his feelings of dislocation on this new land, he begins doing what he excels at: enforcing his order on the land to retain the feelings of security through controlling his unsystematic surroundings. "[D]isgusted" at hearing the random Natural sounds of "the swamp's clamourings and the outbursts / of rocks," he arrogantly declares: "This is not order / but the absence / of order. // He was wrong, the unanswering / forest implied." The "forest" assures that the pioneer is "wrong," and the poet playing with words affirms that: "It was / an ordered absence." The present paper highlights Atwood's presentation of this "ordered absence" which appears clearly in her life cycle poems in the light of Ecocriticism. The poems shed light on the poet's rhapsodic ecopoetry that celebrates a universal Natural discipline.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, life cycles, Ecocriticism, rhapsodic ecopoetry, Natural discipline

Introduction

"It all depends on where you stand in relation to the forest," Margaret Atwood observes, "If you stand very close, you can see the molecules inside the tree. Move back, you see a green thing in the distance" (Geoff Hancock 199, 1990). The present paper introduces such a molecular insight accompanying the postmodern reader into an unprecedented closeness to the order of Nature. For deep ecologists,

> the view of the universe as a great machine put forward by, among others, Francis Bacon (1561–1626), René Descartes (1596–1650) and Isaac Newton (1642–1727) represents the decisive blow to the organic universe.…In place of the Earth as nurturing mother, natural philosophers posited a universe reducible to an assemblage of parts functioning according to regular laws that men could, in principle, know in their entirety….Reason became the means to achieving total mastery over nature, now conceived as an enormous, soulless mechanism that worked according to knowable natural laws. (Greg Garrard 61-62, 2004)

Ecocritics attack this view as "'reductionist,'" claiming that it "substitutes a fragmented, mechanical worldview for a holistic, organic one" (62). One way for restoring holism and deconstructing the stable machine image of Nature is Atwood's insistence on the existence of a higher Natural order that controls life on planet Earth, the life of all creatures on and in it.

Atwood constantly affirms that humans' blind exploitation of Nature is based on their unwillingness to see its independent identity. Her rhapsodic poetics deconstructs this false belief along with the construction of new convictions based on the righteousness of the Natural order and humanity's unavoidable relatedness to it. The poet does not introduce a hollow discussion of Nature's sacredness and invisible discipline. Instead, she heads towards the bush and on the land of reality she proves to her readers the existence of a higher degree of order in the Natural world. To clarify her point, Atwood delves with her readers into deeper strata of understanding in relation to the world they dwell and makes use of the interdependence of ecosystems in complex life cycles amongst all creatures including mankind as an evident of this higher Natural discipline.

I.

James Lovelock's research on global ecology leads him to the Gaia hypothesis (1979), the Greek term that refers to Earth as Mother and treats the planet as a living single organism where ecosystems are based on the principles of cyclicality and interdependence on each other (Eric Laferrière and Peter Stoett 47, 1999). Donald Worster in his 1977 *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* remarks how "'a model of interrelatedness in nature… presents both the biological and non-biological aspects of the environment as one entity, with strong emphasis on measuring the cycling of nutrients and the flow of energy in the system – whether it be a pond, a forest, or the earth as a whole'" (qtd. in Christine Gerhardt 64, 2006).

The next collection of poems is directly related to Lovelock's hypothesis and Worster's conclusion. Atwood refers to the inevitable

interconnectedness between various Natural creatures in the light of the unity between the concepts of death – or to use Kathryn VanSpanckeren words "transformative death" (193, 1988) – and life within Natural life cycles that sustain life in ecosystems. The connection between death and life, or to be more precise, the constant metamorphosis from death to life and vice versa in the world of Nature eliminates the human conception that they are paradoxical phenomena in a chaotic Natural world. In addition, it fossilizes the idea of the existence of a more complex degree of harmony in the Natural world. Atwood's interest in life cycles, she believes, goes back to her scientific, not literary, background. She relates it to her father's continuous study of the life cycles of insects that she was exposed to from an early age (Jim Davidson 93, 1990).

"Late August" from *You are Happy* (1973) (*Eating Fire* 191, 1998) is a typical rhapsodic poem that plunges the readers into what Jerome Rosenberg calls "a Keatsian reverie" in which the persona experiences a joyous immersion in Nature (82, 1984). The poem rejoices in summer season prolificacy and most remarkably planetary life cycles. "This is the plum season," the persona declares, "the season of peaches //… [and] apples." She makes use of her five senses to achieve a harmonious contact with the Natural world and to enjoy the many images of ripeness around her. She hears "the plums // dripping on the lawn outside /… burst / with a sound like a thick syrup / muffled and slow." Although there is no direct mentioning of colours in the poem, the reference to fruits and the focus on the motif of seeing suggest the charm of their colours. Thus, the lines draw a sweet picture of ripe plums with their purple, dark red, or bright yellow colours falling off their trees slowly causing a vivid "burst" as they touch the soil. Their sweet fall off the tree is metaphorically likened to a "dripping" "syrup." The "peaches," on the other hand, in their pinkish-yellow and orange colours are metaphorically compared to precious gems "that glow in the dusk." The persona enjoys watching "their lush lobed bulbs" spangling in the radiant rays of sunset.

For a postmodern urban reader, these are dream-like images. They come in a stark opposition to what Gillen Wood calls the "deteriorated food chain" that most of humans are currently experiencing where they have become accustomed to consuming "a fruit wrapped in artificial 'Velvet' in [their] supermarket, shipped from thousands of miles away to be consumed out of season" (12, 2012). Unlike the poem persona, most humans are committing "the crime of unseasonal consumption and [are vulnerable to] its unpredictable feedbacks" (12).

Like plums and peaches, the "apples" too are now ripe and "drop" from their trees. The ones that "rot," "rot / sweetly." The word "rot" is not used negatively in the lines to refer to decay and withering. In actuality,

rotten plants have their vital role in Natural life cycles. The positive connotations of the word are stressed through preceding it by the adverb "sweetly." The rotten "apples /… brown skins [are as] veined as glands." As a matter of fact, the anatomical shape of glands shows a striking resemblance to the veined skin of rotten apples. Atwood continuously pays an intelligent attention to details, so her metaphoric depictions are always so precise that they are capable of astonishing her readers.

Glands have a great importance for the well-being of the body. They communicate with various organs through the hormones they release; in addition, they are responsible for all the vital processes that occur in the body like growth ("Gland"). Rotten apples share glands not only their shape but also their functional importance as well. They are crucial for the healthy growth of other flora, because decomposed fruits provide the land with nutrients and minerals that add new richness and fertility to the soil. They communicate with plant life around them just like glands. If the phenomenon of decay does not take place, life on earth would be terminated. Thus the image of rotten apples is a portrayal of dynamic growth and rebirth in recurring life cycles. Decay is one of the most vital facts in the Natural order, so Atwood always refers to it in her work in the light of fruitfulness and regeneration.

The persona hears the "sound" of ripe fruits falling from trees. She closely watches their magnificent colors and smells and tastes their sweetness. Her perception of the beauty of Nature is provoked through a sensual involvement in its prolificacy as mentioned earlier. The persona experiences union with Nature to the extent that she becomes capable of understanding its multiple languages. In the scarcity of the winter, she listens to "the shrill voices / that cried *Need Need* / from the cold pond, bladed / and urgent" (emphasis original). "Now," on the contrary, the summer flooded the land with warmth and prolificacy, and the persona hears the "slurred" songs of "the crickets / that say *Ripe Ripe* /… in the darkness" (emphasis original).

The "*Need*" of the severe winter and the "*Ripe*[ness]" of the abundant summer are not paradoxical as they seemingly appear in the poem, because they are inseparable and are complementing each other in minutely calculated seasonal cycles that have their laws. The cyclical occurrence of recurring Natural phenomena is neither repetitive nor meaningless. The ripe fruits and the rotten ones, the sterile winter and the fertile summer are not indicatives of random occurrence and chaos. Rather, they are manifestations of a tightly ordered Natural world that cannot be perceived within the limited human order of the "good" and the "bad." Each element has its function in Nature even if it outwardly looks useless (like rotten fruits) or harmful (like tough winters). All visions of the instrumentality of the world of Nature are

overthrown by the joyful celebration of the wholeness of Nature in the poem.

"Blue Dwarfs" form *True Stories* (1981) (*Eating Fire* 264-65, 1998) reinvestigates the themes of life, death, and their relatedness in endless Natural life cycles. "Each family of living things has its own life cycle. Some organisms, like some fast plants, are born, mature, and die rapidly. Other organisms like pine trees, have life cycles lasting for thousands of years" ("The Circle"). Some life cycles are interdependent on others, and some cycles are highly complicated like forests life cycles. Generally speaking, life cycles are one of the most apparent manifestations that point to the balanced system of the Natural world. If one cycle happens to be broken at any point because of any kind of intervention (Natural or mostly human), life loses its balance and disastrous ecological consequences like species extinction and habitat loss follow. Because of the vital value of the circles of life, Atwood returns again and again to this theme in her ecopoetics.

The poem consists of four stanzas. It is springtime; the persona is engaged in a soliloquy with Nature where she contemplates the circular motion of life and death in it. The first stanza begins with the speaker addressing elements from Nature surrounding her: "Tree burial, you tell me, that's / the way. Not up in but under. / Rootlets & insects, you say." She reflects upon death in Nature with many questions roaming her mind: Is death the doomed end of this abundant life? If not, what is after death? "Rootlets & insects" answer her that out of death sprouts life. A tree dies and falls to the ground, its "burial," to begin another journey of growth "[n]ot up in but under." "[I]insects" feed on its roots, trunk, and branches. Fresh "[r]ootlets" grow out of the fertile ground surrounding the dead tree which gives up its nourishments and minerals back to earth with its disintegration. Death then is miraculously transformed into life that flourishes and multiplies on tombs of fertility.

The persona is listening to the amazing secrets of Nature while others are listening in their drive "along the highway" to the breaking "news" of the "wind thickening with hayfever." Hayfever is an "allergic condition affecting the mucous membranes of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes" ("Hayfever," def.). It occurs during the spring because of the pollens carried in the wind, but it does not mean that one is allergic to hay; it bears this name because it is prevalent during the haying season ("Allergic"). Hayfever can really be annoying, yet it does not mean underestimating the Natural phenomenon of "wind pollination," which not only causes heyfever but also plays a vital role at transferring pollens for enabling the fertilization and reproduction of plants ("Pollination"). Neglecting the essential benefits of this process in the world of Nature and focusing on its negative impact on

humans is a clear sign of mankind's interest only in their well-being regardless of any other creatures.

This spring, the "wind [is] thickening with hayfever. / Last time it was fire," the persona observes. The very selfishness that gives "hayfever" a priority to humans leads to other ecological disasters like global warming that causes most of forest fires now. "The rise in Earth temperature due to global warming since the late 19th century is caused by the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases produced by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation… at all industrialized nations" ("Global"). Associated impacts are numberless and include heat waves which are mostly responsible for forest fires. It is reported also that some of these fires are committed by individuals who have lost their sanity amidst the city mania and have started to inflict destruction upon the world surrounding them.

In spite of the images of disease ("hayfever") and destruction (forest "fire[s]"), symmetrical charm in Nature prevails the poem even if humans neglect or violate it. Humans are ridiculed for their superficiality and silliness through the structure of the poem with its emphasis on the Natural world surrounding the speaker against a very brief reference to the human world only in the second half of the first stanza. Except for those three lines, the whole poem is dedicated to a delightful celebration of the circularity of Nature.

Stanza two begins with the misleading statement: "It's a problem." At first, the reader thinks that the "wind thickening with hayfever" or the heavy smoke of forests in "fire" is the "problem." However, as one goes on reading, it becomes obvious that the persona has left the trivialities of the human world – a world manipulated by self-interest and destructive methodologies – to her first contemplation of the succession of Natural life. The "problem" irritating the speaker is her first death dilemma and its relation to life. Thus, she returns to the trees surrounding her wondering: "what to do / with yourself after you're dead?" It is a question that finds its answer in the following stanza in which the persona with microscopic details informs the readers about what happens when an element in Nature dies.

Being in the middle of plum trees, the persona in stanza 3 could not resist the sweetness of the fruits and attempts to climb up one of the trees to collect some plums. "[A]s I climb" up, she remarks, "wild plums fall from the tree /…, branches & leaves / peeling off under my bootsoles." Like a sharp knife, the bottom of her shoes peels off the outer skin of the tree. Once the fallen "branches & leaves" reach the ground, "[t]hey vanish into the bone-coloured / grass & mauve asters." They reach their "burial" and just like the first line "[t]ree," they set forth in their journey towards disintegration and transformation. In a gradual and organized process, the

energy stored in those dead parts of the plum tree will reach the withering yellowish ("bone-coloured") "grass" and "asters." The "grass" will retain its greenness and "asters" will flourish and be stronger as a result.

Other "branches & leaves" are carried farther by the wind to "lie among the rocks and the stench / of woodchucks" (burrowing rodents). Those ones along with "the stench," another Natural organic fertilizer, add vital nutrients to earth to help other flora grow healthily. The same theory of disintegration is applied to the "plums" that "fall from the tree //… bursting & puckered / and oozing juice & sweet pits & yellow / pulp but still / burning." The life of the plums does not end by their fall. Their fall is full of energetic power ("bursting"), and as they lie on the ground they are seen "burning" like "[b]lue [d]warfs."

A blue dwarf is one phase in a star's life cycle "develop[ing] from a red dwarf that has worn out much of its hydrogen fuel supply" and "when viewed through a telescope the blue dwarf star will be a baby blue colour and very bright" ("What is a blue dwarf?"). Like blue dwarfs in the sky, the "plums" on Earth are also considered one phase of the flora life cycle. They are as "cool and blue / as the cores of the old stars / that shrivel out there in multiples." The plum/star simile is the controlling image that gives the poem its title. The plums, like "old stars," namely blue dwarfs, burn their stored energy through transferring it to the soil and from it to the other flora that grows out of it or to the other creatures that feed upon them like humans who "pick up the good ones / which won't last long either." The rotten plums, like the rotten "apples" in the preceding poem, with "[p]inpoint mouths / burrowing in them" (i.e., worms) and "the good ones" both keep burning in the world of Nature in an endless process of energy transformation.

Atwood likes sharing the pleasant moments of union with the Natural world with others. So in the fourth stanza, the persona returns to her companion, real or imaginary is not clear in the poem, and invites him/her to join her joyful experience of collecting ripe plums. "If there's a tree for you it should be this one," she observes. Then, she handles him/her a "six-quart basket" to collect "windfall[s]": "a ripened fruit that has been blown down by the wind" ("Windfall," def.). The two mates enjoy the fruitful sensual world of Nature surrounding them, yet "[t]ime [interferes and] smears / [their] hands." Time in Atwood's poetry is constantly depicted as a negative force spoiling the moments of harmony with Nature. In "A Boat" (*Interlunar*, 1988), the poet drowns it into the lake. In "One More Garden" (*True Stories*, 1981), she believes that she "should throw [her] gold watch / into the ocean and become / timeless." However, in this poem, the poet resorts to remedying this time dilemma with "light hearted… cynicism" (M. Bendall 248, 1996). "Time smears / our hands," she remarks, "all right, we

lick it off." The poem ends with this metaphorical concretization of time where the two companions manage to defeat the man-made demon that stains the lucent moments of oneness with Nature through "lick[ing] it off," and thus they are left to their joyous "timeless" immersion in Nature.

The poem primarily muses on life and death. Through restless contemplation and continuous observation, the persona finds in them a true conception of perfection. In Nature, opposites are reunited and connected to each other in complex life cycles that guarantee the continuity of life on Earth with each Natural element continuously "burning" like a blue dwarf star in life and in death. Life and death are not contradictory, since they complement each other in a circular motion of "earth returning / itself to itself" as the poet shrewdly observes in "Interlunar" (*Interlunar*).

In "Sundew" (*The Animals in That Country* 62-63), humans join the rest of the Natural creatures their journey towards disintegration and post-death energy transformation. The poem introduces a "continuous, uninterrupted flow of energy in perpetual metamorphosis rendered as kaleidoscopic vision" (Coral Howells 56, 1995). This way, Atwood attempts to "belittle the value of humanness, blending it into an ecological whole stressing global balance" (Laferrière and Stoett 15). The poem is a photographic description of a Natural scene surrounding a drowned body in a bay.

The poet celebrates the Natural forces of life and death where the dead body is represented as an active participant in the Natural cycles at work in the swamp. In addition, the poem suggests the inevitability of oneness with Nature. If humans are detached from their Mother Nature because of their indulgence in their material world, they will be finally united with it when they return to the womb of earth. The poet is not concerned with presenting the details of the persona's death which must have been tragic and painful. Instead, she is interested in the miraculous Natural beauty around the dead woman that puts its magical spill on her and summoned her soul from the world of the dead to enjoy this beauty and relate it to the readers.

The poem is divided into four parts. The first and second sections introduce the poem setting, the place in which the dead corpse lies. Part 3 depicts other Natural life forms surrounding the body. Part four portrays a nearby plant, the sundew, a Natural beautiful creature in which life and death are intertwined. Thematically and structurally, the entire poem is controlled by life/death paradox. Part 2 is so short and brief, while part 3 is long and detailed. The contrast in length between parts 2 and 3 echoes the superficial paradox between life and death, a paradox contained with the balance established by the equal length of the first and last parts of the poem (nine

lines each) that suggests the balanced powers of Nature, the even forces of life and death.

In concise brief lines, the dead persona in the first part states: "Where I was / in the land- / locked bay / was quiet." The location is a "bay" surrounded by land, and what attracts the persona's attention is the "quiet[ness]" of this place. This detail implies that she has not been used to such calmness in her previous noisy civilized world she once lived in. "The trees" that grow on the land surrounding the "bay… // doubled themselves in the water" due to the mirror-like effect of reflection characteristic of water. "[T]rees" are emblematic of greenness, freshness, and renewal. When they are "doubled… in the water," the prolificacy and fertility of the place are; likewise, "doubled." The persona then moves from the land surrounding the "bay" to the Natural creatures in the water. "On half-submerged / branches and floating / trunks," she remarks, "the weeds were growing." Like her, the dead trees are seen "floating" on the water surface towards their inevitable decay. The picture of "floating" dead trees – which will be again referred to in Part 3 ("the trees drifted") – recurs in Atwood's poetry to refer to life cycles in the world of Nature in which disintegrating "trees" play an essential role.

In Part 2, a three-lined stanza followed by a statement, the persona depicts her body "[o]ver the canoe- / side, the shadow / around [her] sinking // head was light." On a half-submerged "canoe," her body rests peacefully under the mild "shadow" of trees, no unbearable heat or burning sun. The resurrection of drowned bodies is not new to Atwood. A similar idea has been used in her 1966 *The Circle Game*'s opener "This Is a Photograph of Me": "(The photograph was taken / the day after I drowned," the dead persona observes, "I am in the lake, in the centre / of the picture, just under the surface." Like "Sundew," this poem tackles the theme of oneness with Nature but in a more symbolic level.

Although the "bay" is surrounded by land as understood from the first part, the reader hears the dead voice in Part 3, a mixture of stanzas and single statements, saying: "There was no shore." There is no contradiction here, since it is a logical conclusion with the face of the "sinking // head" located downwards facing the bay floor where there is literally "no shore." The image of the absence of the "shore" further suggests the nonfiniteness of this place. "In the hot air the small / insects [gathering on the decaying body] were lifted, glowing / for an instant, falling // cinders." The "insects," dynamically moving around the corpse for food, are likened to hot coal. When they move upwards, they glow as if they were burning sparkling coals because of the reflection of the sunshine on their colourful delicate wings. When they fly downwards towards the shade they lose their glow and the hot coal turns into "cinders."

"I didn't want anything," the persona declares. It is a statement of satisfaction finally attained in her temporary resting place where she enjoys real unity with Nature. The word temporary is used in this context, because when the body completely disintegrates, its particles will spread into the whole world of Nature. In the following lines, Atwood introduces what Sandra Djwa cites as "a Canadianized version of Ovidian metamorphosis, that is, the tendency to see the human in terms of landscape and the penchant for evolutionary metaphors that regularly turn the human into landscape or the landscape into the human" (33, 1995). With the persona's "tangled head / rested water- / logged among roots," she becomes immersed in the essence of life, its "roots," just like a log. Near her Natural tomb, "the brown stones" grow "hair / green as algae / stirred with the gentle current." Interchangeability of images between herself as a human being and Nature is evident in this Part where she is likened to a log and the "stones" have "hair." The lines evoke vitality (evident in the "green" colour) accompanied with the tranquility of the "gentle" movement of water. The continuous motion of water that the word "current" suggests is provocative of regeneration, rebirth, change, and circulation which are all relevant characteristics to the thematic evolution of the poem.

The third part is established on the controlling paradox of death surrounded by abundant life and growth ("insects," "roots," "green… algae"). However, this contrast is contained in the image of life in death as Natural creatures (insects) exploit the nutrients of the decaying body. This way, the dead persona moves from a passive observer of beauty to a positive participant in creating and developing it through life cycles that she now shares as she gives up stored energy within her body to other creatures to feed on, and this process is responsible for the flourishment of this beauty. The decomposing corpse becomes a metaphor for the human race whom Atwood believes to be "on fire… glowing, slowly combusting. We burn our food. We consume and are consumed" in both life and death (Val Ross 120, 1995). In seizing one of the deepest and most paradoxical mysteries of Nature, the poem achieves greatness.

The last part consists of a three-lined stanza followed by three couplets – perhaps the poet sticks to number "three" to point to a life triangle with death and life as its base angles, both united in life cycles at its top angle. The focus of this part is sundew: "A genus of carnivorous plants which usually live in wet habitats where the acidic conditions limit the amount of nutrients they can extract from the soil. These plants therefore supplement their diet by catching and digesting small creatures such as insects" ("Sundews"). By taking the reader up back to the poem's title, the poem closes in upon itself in a complete circle that echoes life cycles.

Sundew is "a very beautiful flower that looks like a tube, with tentacles all over it… [making it resemble] fireworks"; it is called sundew because of "the gel-like substance on its tentacles that makes it look as if it has morning dew all day long, especially when it glistens in the sun" ("Sundews- Encompassing"). In the light of their description, sundews are symbolically used in the poem to refer to the integration of beauty and life with death and decay in the Natural world.

Part four reworks the life/death paradox controlling the whole poem through this plant. In a spot near the dead body, a sundew grows. "The sundew closed / on silence and dead energy," namely, the energy of "dead" insects that they originally get from the corpse which is "dead" too. The word "dead," then, can be referring either to the corpse, to the dead insects, or both. The insects are "silence[d]" when they touch the sticky gel substance at the tips of the sundew tentacles to become a delicious meal to the hungry plant. "The sundew" is metaphorically compared to a spider "spinning the web of itself // cell by cell in a region of decay." Both spiders and sundews feed on insects they catch. While spiders spin their string "web[s]," sundews have those "cells" (glands) that produce the lethal gel that lures and paralyzes insects like a spider's venom that paralyzes its victims too. The two live on draining the lives of other creatures that come near their "region of decay." "After" devouring its meal, "the leaves opened again slowly" with their bright beautiful colours to attract other victims for the next meal. The sundew is a Natural miracle in the flora world where a stable helpless plant with no jaws or canines becomes a carnivore that manages to find its way for living by hunting other creatures. The plant turns into an emblem of the systematic order of the world of Nature.

The couplet that concludes both part 4 and the whole poem as well goes: "A calm / green sun burned in the swamp." The "sun" is the source of life and energy on Earth. Its round shape indicates continuity and circularity. Thus the "sun" in the "swamp" becomes a symbol of both the corpse becoming a life source for other creatures around it and an emblem of the dynamic life cycles going on and on in it. These complex life cycles are evident in the insects feeding on the dead body, the sundew hunting and digesting them, and later another Natural enemy of this plant devours it…, etc. The "swamp" "sun" is remarkably "green" and "calm." Attributing such features to it endows it with vitality, fertility, freshness, and growth. It is worth noting that although the poem is based on the interconnectedness between life and death, it optimistically ends with a celebration of the "green sun" of life.

What the poet depicts here is not a Darwinian struggle in which survival is for the fittest, but a "cooperative cycle of biotic enrichment" (Laferrière and Stoett 65) through which a continuous process of energy

transformation through food chains occurs. The poem demonstrates a network of relations "where energy flows in multiple directions, and where the role of human beings as both outside observers and part of the picture is [illustrated]" (Gerhardt 64, 2006). Although humans wrongly place themselves at the top of food chains, their top position is temporary; food chains are circular and by their death they become at the bottom.

The poem introduces the duality of life and death, a duality resolved with harmonious circular life cycles based on the integrated images of life in death and death in life (embodied in the sundew). There is no contradiction in the world of Nature. The contradiction often stems from humans' ignorance or misconception of its laws. There is life, renewal, beauty, purity, and serenity. Simultaneously, there is another face of deceit, ugliness, disintegration, decay, and death. The two aspects are interdependently connected. Because of death and decay, life is born and sustained. Then, the poet's celebration of death is not odd, because it is genuinely a celebration of the source of life. The logical argument of life and death that the poet introduces in this poem reflects that the world of Nature is not random or arbitrary; it is highly ordered within calculated strict Natural laws.

There is no explicit illustration of the recurring contradiction between Nature and civilization, an idea Atwood returns to continuously in her poetics. Indeed, the poem emphasizes the notion that man is a part of Nature. The poem, though guided by Atwood's poetic tradition, also reworks the Romantic conviction of "a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasis on interdependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth" (Abolfazl Ramazani and Elmira Bazregarzadeh 1, 2014).

One final death in life/life in death imagery is cited in the opening stanza of "It's autumn" (*The Door* 55-56, 2007) that celebrates the controlled circularity of life in Nature. The images of withering followed by ripeness then withering and so on speak of the ordered pattern of the seasons and constant regeneration in the Natural world. "It's autumn," the poet states, "[t]he nuts patter down. / Beechnuts, acorns, black walnuts." She is in the middle of a shriveling Natural scene, but those "tree orphans thrown to the ground / in their hard garment" will flourish soon in the spring. Their death guarantees future life and renewal in the flora world. Separated from their mother-trees like "orphans," "nuts"; "[b]eechnuts"; "acorns"; and "walnuts" fall in "hard" husks that preserve life in them till sprouting time. Later, they will in the most appropriate season break through their husks which are figuratively equated to "garment[s]" and complete the Natural cycle of their parent-trees.

The notion of life in death and death in life is complemented in this context to stress the concept of interrelatedness and balance amongst ecosystems that necessarily assures that Nature is alive and is constantly in motion. As a matter of fact, if "tree orphans" do not fall off trees in autumn or if the process occurs earlier or later due to anthropogenic reasons, as the poet suggests in "Frogless" (*Morning in the Burned House*, 1995), it will be a threatening signal of imbalance in Natural life cycles.

Conclusion

The European pioneer of "Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer" fails to impose his human order on Nature's gigantic discipline. His inability to enforce his logic on the land along with his refusal to accept his relatedness to a greater whole lead to his eventual loss of his sanity. By the end of the poem, Nature declares its triumph and humanity's dwarfness is stressed. Nonetheless, Nature's triumph occurs only in poetry books. On the land of reality, Nature is bitterly defeated by means of organized mass destruction methodologies. Though the human race brags about their defeat of Nature, it should be remarked that if Nature is destroyed, they would instantly perish.

Reading Margaret Atwood in the light of Ecocriticism has a great value in relation to eliminating current disregard of the Natural world. The human logic that constantly regards the world of Nature as a pond of resources for the human race to devour should employ this very logic to perceive a minute Natural discipline that is torn apart by a restless violation of it. Shedding light on Atwood's ecopoetry that displays the interconnectedness of all creatures within Natural cycles plays an essential role in eliminating anthropocentric standpoints of the contemporaries. This is the goal of Atwood and this paper as well. Such ideological alterations can never be regarded as some kind of welfare, but they have become urgent necessities in the light of existing ecological degradations that will eventually lead to the death of Nature – as Atwood foresees in "The Green Giant Murder" (*The Animals in That Country*) and "Marsh Languages" (*Morning in the Burned House*) – as well as the elimination of the human race that the poet predicts in her poetry and fiction.

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