

Raising Environmental Awareness via Literature:

**Perceptions of Nature and the City
in Nineteenth-Century and Contemporary British Poetry**

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1. Introduction

1.1. A Literary Tradition to Explore Environmental Attitudes

Our spatial surroundings have always been a subject in literature and, it seems, writers are never getting tired of engaging with both the natural and the man-made world in their works. Likewise, the discourse centering around questions of how the natural and non-natural environment are represented in literature and of how these depictions can reveal attitudes and values is probably one of the oldest in literary studies and has attracted particular attention and participation over the last decades. Nevertheless, what still deserves to be dealt with more intensely is the connection between the various literary representations of our spatial surroundings and their development over time. For example, if one compares literature from around the times of the Industrial Revolution, when people's surroundings changed substantially, and literature that was produced more recently, one will not only notice the prominent duality of nature and the city (being dissolved more and more over time), but also come across many similarities in the authors' ways of portraying these different types of environment. When the speaker in William Wordsworth's famous poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", published in 1807, expresses the oneness of human beings and the natural world by identifying himself with nature (cf. "I wandered lonely as a cloud", l. 1) and anthropomorphizing parts of his surroundings, namely the daffodils (cf. "dancing in the breeze", l. 6; "Tossing their heads", l. 12), is it not striking that he does so in a similar way as we encounter it in more recent poems?¹ For example, in Hughes's poem "River Barrow" from 1983, everything the speaker comments on (sights, sounds, movements, etc.) is related to the river—even the speaker himself slowly feels to have become one with nature ("I lie here, / Half-unearthed, [...] / Happy to moulder. [...] blood easy / As the river", ll. 44-49). And what about the analogies in 'hellish', and 'maddening' portrayals of urban spaces, like in James Thomson's piece "The City of Dreadful Night" from 1874 (cf. "The City is of Night; perchance of Death", p. 124, l. 13; "When Faith and Love and Hope are dead [...] / Can Life still live?", p. 129, ll. 13-14) and John Barnie's prose poem *The City* from 1993 (cf. "what is the difference between life and death", p. 4, ll. 15-16; "There is no faith here, no truth", p. 15, l. 3) that draw our attention to

¹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version that is stated at the beginning of the chapter of this thesis that deals with this poem in more detail (cf. p. 53 in this case). This also applies to the other poems' verses quoted in this introduction.

the city's adverse effects on mental health? Of course, other depictions exist as well, but it is the endurance of certain patterns over time that is very remarkable and especially their connection to current developments in environmental thought and action as well as in attitudes towards urban spaces. The fact that literary works from even more than 200 years ago give proof of an environmental consciousness, a deep ecological thought, and an urban skepticism that is similar to what is gradually rediscovered by our society today, shows that a study of the literary representations of our spatial surroundings over time might be the key to a better understanding of our relationship to and responsibility for the natural and non-natural world. What basically forces us to reflect more on perceptions of our environment in literature and ascribing importance to them is the fact that these depictions make clear, above all, the link between our spatial surroundings and our well-being. Becoming aware of this connection can help us take our behavior towards the environment more seriously and act accordingly. Thus, this dissertation shall contribute to showing that “definition and resolution of environmental problems depend upon clarifying assumptions of value, which [...] people can realize by reading works of imaginative literature” (Grumbling 151). Before presenting the aims of this dissertation and its approach in more detail, it is important to briefly have a closer look at the connection between the environment and our well-being which was just mentioned, since it is one of the central aspects this thesis is based on.

1.2. Perception and Emotion: How Can the Environment Affect Well-Being?

The perception of our spatial surroundings—be this city, town, or countryside—affects our emotions (and thus, our well-being) in a multitude of ways: sometimes positively, sometimes negatively, sometimes with both reactions at the same time, and sometimes we do not even know what to make of our perception. Thinking about how to create comfortable surroundings for oneself and others—often equivalent with preserving the ‘natural’ or untouched side of our environment—has obviously been made difficult by the process of modernization. Why is it that the importance of the environment as an influence on our well-being—especially the positive influence of nature—has been overlooked so long and is only coming back to us now that we are confronted with the awful consequences of the things we have done to our environment? Maybe the dangers of climate change, resource depletion, and discussions about nuclear power plants have triggered this recent rethinking. It is due to this meaningful connection between the perception of our spatial surroundings and well-being that this dissertation aims to look

more deeply into this bond, help to understand it, and draw conclusions from a specific perspective: a literary-critical one.

Before revealing more about how literature can be helpful in this respect, it is necessary to understand in what ways the environment actually has the power to influence our well-being. The effects it can have on our emotions depend, of course, mostly on the kind of environment—on whether the surroundings can be termed city or countryside, for instance (to name one major contrast)—and on people’s psychological disposition. It is certainly right that one cannot say that a certain form of environment will always almost automatically lead to a particular emotional response and attitude, because everyone evaluates his or her surroundings differently, according to their likes and dislikes and a number of other factors. As Lawrence Buell notes,

[o]ne’s sense of place at Thoreau’s Walden Pond or the English Lake Country may differ wildly according to whether he or she is a literary scholar, a restoration ecologist, a small child brought along for a boat ride, a policeman, a tourist from abroad, or a long-term resident (*Writing for an Endangered World* 60).

In addition, one’s attitude towards a certain form of environment may change with time and according to the development of personal or general interests as well as with the changes happening in that environment. Still, considering today’s attitudes towards the environment and tracing how people reacted towards their environment in the past lead to the discovery that there are, at least, some tendencies in how people evaluate their spatial surroundings.² These tendencies are not only revealed in various historical sources and cultural artifacts from different periods in time, but they also seem to match with the results of a range of psychological studies concerned with patterns of how humans react to their sociophysical environment and about how the environment can influence our well-being. For example, in their article “Preference for Nature in Urbanized Societies: Stress, Restoration, and the Pursuit of Sustainability”, Agnes E. van den Berg, Terry Hartig, and Henk Staats point to findings that “speak of the relevance of restorative effects of viewing nature to clinically important health outcomes” (91) by referring to a study by R. S. Ulrich from 1984. This study led to the following insights:

² Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, who were among the first to study people’s reactions to the environment, find it worth mentioning, in *The Experience of Nature*, that, although people are so different and they vary much “in what they like and dislike” (67), it is quite “wondrous to find some strong and pervasive consistencies in the way people interpret the environment and in their preferences” (ibid.).

[P]atients who were assigned to a hospital room with a view of nature after their gallbladder surgery required fewer strong painkillers compared to those who were assigned to a room with a view of a brick wall. Patients with a view of trees also stayed in the hospital for approximately 1 day less than patients with a view of the brick wall, and they received less negative evaluations from the nursing staff (van den Berg, Hartig, and Staats 90-91).

In her brief overview of the effects of the natural environment on people's well-being, Julie Newton also refers to a study by Frances E. Kuo et al. from 1998, which "links availability of communal green spaces in urban areas to higher levels of community cohesion and social interaction among neighbors" (10). Moreover, she notes that a study by Roger Levett and Riki Therivel from 2007 mentioned "improved communication between social groups, increased feelings of self-worth, greater sense of community, relaxation and increased physical health" (ibid.) as well-being benefits of green spaces. On the other hand, the idea that the city (or urbanization in general) influences people in a rather negative way is reflected in the brief summary that V. George Mathew gives in his article titled "Environmental Psychology":

It has been shown that the incidence of mental illness increases with urbanization [and that] [t]he highest incidence of schizophrenia is at the center of cities. Only about one fifth of the population of big cities seems to be relatively free from debilitating symptoms of pathology (n. pag.).

Furthermore, in his article "Sick Cities: Why Urban Living Can Be Bad for Your Mental Health", Leo Benedictus refers to a German study which found that people living in urban areas also have more difficulties with handling stress than people who live in small towns or in the countryside, as signaled by the activity of the amygdala, which is "involved in assessing threats and generating fears" (n. pag.). Again, it is important to keep in mind that the results only reflect tendencies and that such studies need to be extended in order to achieve higher reliability and validity of the results. There will, of course, always be people whose emotional response to natural and urban landscape will deviate from the typical patterns. Nevertheless, generally speaking, nature may, in fact, affect our well-being more positively than urban areas. The tendencies fit, at least, with the recent rise in ecological sensibility, including the wish to preserve unspoiled nature and profit from its 'healing' experience. As van den Berg, Hartig, and Staats state, "[f]reely sought out contact with nature can provide some immediate relief from the demands of city life, by providing opportunities for the renewal of cognitive resources and psychophysical response capabilities" (82-83).

As also illustrated with the literary examples at the beginning of this thesis, these attitudes towards natural and urban environments which are so striking to us today in an era of ongoing modernization and rising environmentalism seem to have been much the

same already long before our time, existing at least since the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Due to these similarities in the perception of people's spatial surroundings then and now, considering the aspect of time (and the changes coming with the passing of time) can offer new insights when trying to understand the relation between the perception of the environment and well-being. Thus, this is what this dissertation will build on.

1.3. Tracing the Attitudes

Realizing that our modern attitudes towards nature and the city already existed in a similar form in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, one feels invited to look deeper into the origins of these attitudes in order to better understand their development over time. Why and how did they come into existence in the first place at a time when people were experiencing a striking change from rural to urban in their surroundings? And could such a study of the perception of nature and the city in the early stages of industrialization not help us to take today's attitudes more seriously and to respond to them with much more immediacy and adequacy? Many people today have probably already experienced a kind of 'urban anxiety', at least to some extent, and will thus agree that something like a 'fear of the city' exists. But what about our feelings in and about nature? How can we realize the positive effects of nature on our well-being these days? Due to the process of modernization and because we, too, have gradually become an integral part of modern urban life, the opportunities of enjoying and realizing nature's positive influence on our well-being and the places that allow for this kind of experience have become more rare. Therefore, it might be difficult for modern societies to get back to that sense of harmony in nature as it was presumably felt by people in earlier times. It is all the more important to find out about the variety of ways nature could influence people's well-being back then, and to explore the reasons for feelings of pleasure, comfort and harmony. Thus, one is able to see the whole spectrum of positive experiences that one can have in nature and it could also be an encouragement to seek for such experiences and to continue taking steps to protect nature. As Susan Clayton and Susan Opatow assert, "[i]f we better understand what makes people passionate about the environment, we can understand the psychological mechanisms capable of fostering protective environmental policies and behavior" (2).

It is, however, not only the roots of these patterns of perception that need to be explored for understanding people's responses to nature and the city today: In order to

study how the experience of nature and the city developed over time, it is, of course, also necessary to examine current trends of reactions to the environment. After having looked into the positively influencing aspects of nature and the negatively influencing aspects of cities in the nineteenth century, it will be very interesting to investigate to which extent these are still decisive in our modern times, in how far they have changed, and which new aspects have emerged with the passing of time that lead to a specifically modern experience of the city. Likewise, since nature has taken on new forms these days—whether this be the natural environment as such or artificially created green spaces in urban areas—it will be shown that there is also a uniquely modern influence nature has on human beings. One of the aims is to show that the general reactions to these two types of surroundings are still more or less the same. It is due to the complementary nature of the results from both eras that the procedure of ‘tracing the attitudes’, by looking at the nineteenth-century and contemporary responses to nature and the city, was chosen as the approach for the following study. The fruitfulness of such a comparison lies in the fact that it will broaden the reader’s horizon regarding reflections on the influence of the environment on our well-being and become a helpful guide in gaining an idea of what to make of the modern urban experience and the experience in nature as well as in learning how to deal with it. This is because examining “the condition of human beings in environments” (Böhme 123) always is “both a critical and a productive task. On the one hand, it serves as a critique of inhuman environmental qualities, and on the other hand provides criteria for the re-cultivation of devastated natural spaces” (ibid.).

As stated right in the beginning, for this thesis, literature was chosen as the source for studying emotions and attitudes people used to have during a certain period in history and the ones that are characteristic of more recent times. It would neither be sufficient to study only political documents or actions from a certain time nor to simply analyze clinical records. There is need for something that is more comprehensive—that focuses not only on one domain of life (like politics or medicine) but many—and which already takes into account, refers to, and reacts to the ‘output’ coming from the various different domains of life. Literature seems to be the right choice, since it allows us to get such a broader and more comprehensive view of the past and the present. It can serve a range of different functions, but one important function is definitely the expression of emotions. By studying literary texts, a reader might get an impression of how people felt and thought about issues during a particular time, because literature is also often a

direct reaction to certain events, discourses, or developments that had an impact on a person's life or on society as a whole. In their approach, many literary texts from the time of the Industrial Revolution "might be characterized as crudely phenomenological" (Schwarzbach 331), and this also applies to more recent literary examples. Furthermore, as Joseph W. Meeker remarks,

[h]uman beings are the earth's only literary creatures. ...If the creation of literature is an important characteristic of the human species, it should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment—to determine what role [...] it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and the world around us (3-4).

One literary genre that is specifically suitable for this purpose is poetry, since the expression of emotions is generally much more immediate and condensed than in a longer literary text. The importance of poetry for the purpose of this thesis can also be well understood from a statement by Angus Fletcher:

Unlike most prose discourse, poetry expresses close personal involvements, and hence pertains to the way we humans respond, on our own, to environmental matters. [...] An art like poetry that enhances the presence of the individual is bound to be central in showing how we should understand our environmental rights and obligations. The issue then is this, what is my own response to my surrounding? (3-4)³

Regarding the aspect of "personal involvements", it has to be noted, though, that the lyrical I in poetry should never be automatically understood as identical with the author. In her work dealing with the subjectivity of poetry, Eva Müller-Zettelmann emphasizes the following with regard to the widely discussed issue in poetic theory: "[D]as lyrische Ich [ist] nicht der erste Ursprung des lyrischen Diskurses, sondern nur dessen Produkt [...], ein Produkt allerdings, das seinerseits vorgibt, die autonome Quelle des Gedichts zu sein" (26). Elaborating on this distinction, she acknowledges, though, that

[d]iese unbedingt vorzunehmende scharfe Trennung zwischen authentischem und fiktionsinternen Ich [...] nicht [bedeutet], daß in einigen Fällen biographische Elemente des einen in der Gestaltung des anderen nicht eine gewisse, zum Teil durchaus gewichtige Rolle spielen können (ibid.).

This would mean, for example, that William Wordsworth's nature poems can probably also be understood as reflecting Wordsworth's own view of and relationship to nature and that this may also be found to apply to other authors and their poems (cf. Müller-Zettelmann 26). In her overview of theories concerned with the subjectivity of poetry, Müller-Zettelmann concludes that there is wide agreement that, in poetry, there is a "Neigung zur Betonung der Aussageinstanz bzw. zur verstärkten Fokussierung

³ This does not apply to all poetry, of course, but at least it is true for the poems that will be introduced at a later point in the introduction and which have been chosen as texts to be studied in the analysis part of this thesis.

einer subjektiven Sicht- und Erlebensweise” (40), which is achieved through the structures of language (cf. *ibid.*). Thus, the speaker in a poem often gives the impression of being “der eigentliche Vermittler des Textes” (Hühn qtd. in Müller-Zettelmann 39), but one needs to keep in mind that—even though there is sometimes evidence of actual connections between a poet and the speaker in his or her poem—this is generally a false conclusion.

For the reasons outlined above, this thesis presents a complementary study of selected poetry from two periods in time: First, there will be a focus on the time when the Industrial Revolution took place in Britain, which means that—seen from a cultural and literary perspective—it deals with the Romantic and the Victorian Period. Following this, the study will look at more recent times, when the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization advanced more until, finally, the digital age was born. Thus, to reveal more recent attitudes as well, this part of the study will be concerned with the Contemporary Period in literature, offering interpretations of British poetic texts that were published after 1960. British poetry has been chosen as the subject of study because it is in Great Britain where the Industrial Revolution had its beginnings.⁴

The aim of the study is thus threefold: Firstly, as a basis and starting point, it aims at comparing descriptions of nature in Romantic poetry to images of cityscapes (including city life) in poems from the Victorian Period with a special focus on the ways people experienced and reacted to these contrasting surroundings. Secondly, building on this work, the aim is to offer an equally comprehensive overview of the depictions of nature and the city in contemporary poetry, which then allows for the third aim of the study, namely offering a comparison that will facilitate the traceability and comprehensibility of the trends in perception through time.

Choosing, on the one hand, poems from the Romantic and Victorian Period is appropriate for the aim of this thesis because they can be seen as “functional representations of the empirical, nontextual reality which constituted the lives and the times” (Vowe 259) of the people back then. This is because

⁴ Moreover, the contrast between nature and a quickly developing urban landscape was probably nowhere experienced as equally shocking as in Britain at that time. Starting with British poetry from the nineteenth century, it is only reasonable to proceed, for the sake of comparison, with contemporary British poetry in a second step. Moreover, with regard to urban poetry, it seems appropriate to look at British texts, since Richard J. Williams suggests that, for example, “England ‘does’ the anxious city very well” (11). One might argue that the selected poems deal with places that some of us might never have been to and thus question the informative content and intended effect of this thesis for the non-local reader, but, after all, we must keep in mind that “[a] poet’s focus on local contexts can ultimately teach us universal, ecological principles” (Jurgis 209).

the Industrial Revolution was a bloody social revolution and one in which [...] the art and the thought of the time was engaged, either directly—in championing the one side or the other—or indirectly—in its attitudes towards the consequences of industrialization (Southall qtd. in Vowe 259).

Of course, this does not mean that the attitudes expressed in these poems (and in all the other poems explored in this thesis) are always representative of the views that existed in society as whole, since people's opinions also often differed from the poets' ways of thinking and depended much on one's position in society. Nevertheless, one can probably say that there must have been a broad consent with the attitudes conveyed in poetry. In her work on poetry and meta-poetry, Müller-Zettelmann looks more deeply into the connection between poems and reality by tracing different theories concerned with this issue: Right at the beginning, she refers to Käte Hamburger's claim regarding poetry's 'special' position when compared to other genres and sums it up as follows:

Epik und Drama gehörten zur 'fiktionalen Gattung' und seien als solche mit der Bildung einer eigenständigen Welt, mit der Kreation des Scheins von Wirklichkeit betraut, während die lyrische Gattung ihren Ort im Aussagesystem der Sprache habe und Gedichte als Mitteilungen zu verstehen seien, die sich selbst in stark subjektiv gefärbten Passagen auf die tatsächliche außersprachliche Realität [...] bezögen (24).

This would support the idea behind the approach chosen for this thesis.

Looking at Romantic and Victorian poetry will show that, overall, there was a shift from a focus on nature to a focus on the city within a relatively short period of time. Nature was one of the main themes of Romantic poetry because it played a very important role for poets at that time—as a place that allowed for the experience of extremely positive feelings and as a great source of inspiration in general. Shortly afterwards, then, in the Victorian Period, there is all of a sudden a shift to less 'natural' and more 'artificial' surroundings because one can notice that the poetry of that period is often concerned with the depiction of the Victorian city. However, it has to be noted that nature was not entirely disregarded in Victorian poetry; it was sometimes still included as a reminder of the pre-industrial past. While, during Romanticism, nature proved to be a place for people that could, in fact, affect their emotions and well-being positively, in the Victorian Period, the image of such a 'spiritually uplifting' and harmonious place often only remained as a vision: The natural world stood for experiences that were generally longed for, but could no longer be so easily attained. One needs to understand in what ways nature and the city mattered to people in this time of radical changes and studying poetry that was written under the influence of industrialization will hopefully lead to new interesting insights.

With the diversity of contemporary poetry, however, the intentions of the texts and the underlying attitudes are generally not always as straightforward and easy to categorize as it can be the case with Romantic poetry that is often immediately associated with nature, or Victorian poetry which often has political issues (including urban life) as its subject matter. Contemporary poets have grown up in a world which was already modernized and were thus not confronted with such a harsh break between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ as their predecessors. From the 1960s onwards, our surroundings have still kept on changing, of course, but maybe not as shockingly abruptly as in the process of industrialization and in ways that differ from the old ones. Therefore, even though spatial surroundings still play a decisive role in contemporary poetry, it is important to keep in mind that nature and the city are just two of the many themes that exist and that their artistic expression can be of a completely different nature than in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. With regard to contemporary nature poetry, Günter Ahrends says the following: “Sie bezieht ihr charakteristisches Gepräge zum Teil aus der Abgrenzung von der romantischen Sicht der Natur, knüpft aber teilweise auch an die romantische Naturdichtung an” (69). In Romantic poetry, for example, nature was mostly described in terms of its beauty and with regard to its beneficial effects on one’s well-being; this still exists in contemporary poetry, but there are also a range of texts which shed light on the ‘ugly’ side of nature and its pollution—a topic that was mostly only addressed in urban poetry before, and even there on a different scale. Contemporary poetry dealing with nature and the city might be ‘new’ in terms of its content, form and direction, but this does not necessarily imply that the claims made in the poems and the attitudes accompanying them differ much from those in older versions of poetry about nature and the city. Both forms of environment have continued to carry a deep significance for people over time and for this reason, the following study will also explore contemporary poetry to reveal in detail what exactly has shaped more recent attitudes towards nature and the city. After all, the study can be said to be based on the following principle formulated by Annette Lucksinger:

[P]lace can do much more than establish setting, create mood, foreshadow, or add to the story’s believability. Through place-based texts, we gain insight into self-identity, our community identities, and those of other regions and cultures. We consider the ways that the physical nature of the land affects cultural values and mind-sets, which in turn inform perceptions and use of the land. We examine the complexity of the human relation to the physical world, the universal connections between people and landscapes, and our moral obligation to act rightly toward the places we inhabit. Becoming aware of the wide-ranging importance of place, we inevitably consider our responsibility to specific locations (359-360).

In a first step, several different pieces of Romantic nature poetry need to be analyzed in order to point out why nature played such an important role during the Industrial Revolution in Britain, how nature was experienced back then, and why it formed such a strong contrast to urban and industrial areas. The last part of this analysis of Romantic poetry will also include some poems that could be termed ‘transition poems’ because they are to be positioned somewhere in between the categories of nature and city poetry. These poems include first signs of fears, or at least, a presentiment of the things that were to come with the advancement of industrialization and show that Romantic poets “were keenly alert to the shifting and permeable boundaries between country and city” (Chandler and Gilmartin 21). Thus, one could say, the ‘transition poems’ express the poets’ worries about the city replacing nature and their anticipation of the negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution—especially the feelings of ‘urban anxiety’—that many (Victorian) poets were going to write about soon afterwards. Thus, these poems, of course, serve nicely as a bridge to the next step of the analysis. In this step, then, poetry from the Victorian period will be analyzed in order to discover society’s perception of the city and the changes in people’s environment that took place back then. It will be shown in how far poems from the Victorian period pick up the negative aspects of industrialization (e.g. overpopulation, air pollution, child labor, slum districts, lack of hygiene, construction of massive and oppressive buildings, inhumane working conditions, etc.). Exploring people’s perception of the developments that were caused by the Industrial Revolution will reveal their difficulties with coming to terms with these changes and show us that living in the metropolis at that time was, indeed, very likely to create a kind of ‘urban anxiety’.

As already becomes apparent in the title of this dissertation, the emphasis of the analysis in this first part of the thesis will be on nineteenth-century poetry with the exception of three poems from the Romantic period that were published shortly before, in the very last years of the eighteenth century. One reason for this concentration on nineteenth-century poetry is that, at this time, the process of industrialization had already been going on in Britain for some years and that, during this period of ‘industrial infancy’, people were able to gradually make up their minds about how they actually thought about this process and all the changes it led to. Thus, it is probably best to mainly discuss nineteenth-century poetry in this first part because literature from this time gives some indication of society’s opinions and feelings about industrialization in the form of more stable attitudes.

The title also already indicates that, following this first contrastive analysis of poetry dealing with nature and the city from the nineteenth century, the thesis will then offer a more ‘modern’ look at these two types of poetry by also exploring contemporary poems; here, texts that were written after 1960. Analogous to the structure of the first part of the study, the analysis of contemporary poetry dealing with nature and the city will happen in three steps: First, the contemporary nature poems are studied with regard to the ways in which natural surroundings have been experienced in more recent times and to point out that there has been an increase in environmental awareness. Following this, there will also be a section dealing with texts similar to those that have been termed ‘transition poems’ before. Here, however, they do not act as ‘transition poems’, signaling a transition from the focus on nature in the Romantic period to the focus on the city in the Victorian period, but as ‘mixed poems’, dealing both with nature and with the city, especially with their intertwining. These poems present what Kenneth Baker has referred to as “*Ambiguous Terrain*—those places which are a borderland” (xxii). One can imagine that, with the passing of time, it has also become more difficult to clearly state what nature is and what can be termed ‘urban’ because the boundaries between these two types of surroundings have become blurred. This is not only the consequence of urbanization, of the city reaching out into natural landscape, but also of urban planning, of nature being integrated into the city, as for instance in the forms of parks for recreation or to offer a natural habitat for animals.⁵ Since we are more and more confronted with such ‘mixed’ places today, it will be interesting to look into how they are perceived. These ‘mixed poems’, then, nicely lead on to the next step, which is the analysis of the contemporary city poems. With these, the aim is to find out about the perception of the city in more recent times and to point out the factors that can be said to contribute to a form of ‘urban anxiety’ which, after all, is a recent concept. As it is the case with the rest of the poems, it is in no way assumed that the messages and opinions expressed in the selected urban poetry are those of the author or a particular person from the time the poem was written—they are simply understood and interpreted as literary expressions of widespread emotional and attitudinal tendencies of the time.

⁵ It should be noted, though, that these forms of ‘urbanature’ are still very much different from ‘real’ nature, which means that they do not affect the human psyche in the way nature does: As psychologist Joachim F. Wohlwill states, “it appears virtually impossible to recreate artificially the intricate inter patterning of inanimate and organic matter in terms of its visual, aural, and olfactory qualities, and of the subtle dynamics of motion created by water and wind, not to mention the diverse forms of animal life” (20-21).

Poetry that was written after 1960 fits the purpose of the second part of the thesis quite well because it mirrors this new spirit of the age: It gives us insights into the negatively assessed side of modernization (including the fear-arousing potential of the city), into the recurring significance of nature and its restorative force, as well as into the problems of coming to terms with the seemingly contradictory aspirations of living a ‘modern’ life, namely the quest for finding a balance between progress and ecological responsibility. The new ecological consciousness can be said to have its origins in the 1960s, during which Rachel Carson published her book *Silent Spring* (1962)—a work that is often said to mark the beginning of the American ecological movement and to have helped it advance globally. At least by the seventies, the new ecological sensibility could no longer be overlooked and became a strong influence not only at a political and social level, but also in literature. By studying poetry that was written since the 1960s, one can hopefully not only better understand and comprehend the developments of people’s attitudes and behavior towards the environment (with their origins in early industrial times), but maybe also learn to cope with the current situation. As Christopher Schliephake concludes, “[u]rban writing and cultural representations and explorations of cities are therefore an integral part of our collective world- and, eventually, place-making” (xxvii) and this, of course, also applies to nature writing. Even if the analysis will not immediately succeed in resulting in anything beyond consciousness-raising in the reader, it would still be of great value because this is where all potential future action begins. To say it in John Felstiner’s words: “First consciousness then conscience” (xiii).

As should have become clear from this explanation why nineteenth-century and contemporary poetry are useful for the aim of this thesis, by making a distinction between ‘the city’ on the one hand and ‘nature’ on the other hand, this dissertation draws on a long-standing and long discussed literary tradition. Accordingly, the terms ‘nature’, ‘natural world’, or ‘natural environment’ are used to refer to “the vast domain of organic and inorganic matter that is not a product of human activity or intervention. [...] [T]he landscape [...] [which] excludes [...] our cities and towns, our houses and factories, along with the diverse implements devised by mankind for transport, recreation, commerce, and other human needs” (Wohlwill 7). The latter is referred to by terms such as ‘city’ or ‘urban sphere’.⁶ However, this does not mean that this thesis

⁶ It should further be noted that the term ‘environment’ is used in this thesis both to refer to our spatial surroundings in general (urban *and* natural) and as a synonym for the natural environment which is also often referred to as ‘nature’ or the ‘natural world’. Thus, whenever the word ‘environment’

follows this dichotomy without questioning it—on the contrary, although it ties in in an established discourse about the contrasting depiction of the ‘natural’ and ‘urban’ environment, it also points to the fluidity of their boundaries. This is especially shown with the aforementioned ‘transition poems’ and ‘mixed poems’, but the whole part of the analysis dealing with contemporary poetry basically stands for a dissolving of dichotomies and an urban-nature continuum. When, at the times of the Industrial Revolution, it was felt already that nature and the city became less and less separable, today, this sentiment is even more present than ever—the natural landscape continues to become more urban, but at the same time, nature also finds its way into cities with the help of habitat conservation, restoration activities, or the ‘greening’ of cities for human appreciation. To also pay attention to this, the term ‘urbanature’ will be found in this thesis to denote “bits of nature [that] have been imported into the built environment” (Wohlwill 10) and to express “the idea that human beings are never cut off from wild nature by human culture” (Nichols, *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism* xv).

1.4. Selected Texts and Previous Research

In the following, a brief overview of the selected poems from the two literary epochs will be given to provide an understanding of their relevance for the aim of the thesis. First of all, there are the nature poems from the Romantic period that include several poems by William Wordsworth, namely “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798” (1798), “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (1807), and “The Tables Turned” (1798).⁷ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Wordsworth belonged to those people who developed a strong ecological consciousness and devoted a great part of their lives to spending time in nature. Nature is a central theme in many of his poems and Wordsworth’s writings about nature are probably what he is most renowned for, which is why interpreting some of his poems is essential with regard to the aims of this thesis. Among critics, there is a general agreement that “Wordsworth’s concern for nature [...] can be considered one of the first few attempts from *littérateurs* to attract the attention of mankind towards the ‘endangered ecosystem’” (Farooq and Chandra 122), so it is not

appears, the context should clarify its meaning.

⁷ From now on, whenever the title of the poem “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798” is mentioned again, it will be shortened to “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”. As it is also shortened in the title of the respective analysis chapter, it will inevitably appear in this form in the table of contents as well.

surprising that his poetry has already been studied much with attention to the aspect of nature. Still, the nature Wordsworth depicted was not always related to other poets' ideas of nature which were expressed during that time or even to concepts that followed years later. Also, by trend, the existing studies have not been successful in linking the attitudes towards nature to the attitudes towards cities which were gradually growing at that time and thus had an important influence on the experience of nature. John Keats is another important nature poet from that time; his poem "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill" (1817) and the "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819) shall serve to explore the importance of nature in the Romantic period and the way people experienced being in nature in further detail. The chosen texts are not just suitable for this study because of their focus on nature's impact on man's feelings, but also because the subject is approached quite differently in each of these texts: Although the general effect of nature on the speaker's emotions is (mostly) a positive one in all these poems, these positive feelings always result from specific experiences. For Keats's poems which have been chosen for the analysis part the research situation is quite similar to the one described for Wordsworth's poems. They have been looked at in terms of their expression of a characteristically Romantic concept of nature in the first place, and less from a literary-historical perspective, showing up links between nineteenth-century and contemporary attitudes. That such readings of Keats's poetry seem even less prevalent than those of Wordsworth's poetry shows, once again, that this dissertation fills a niche in research. William Blake's "London" (1794) and William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" (1807) can, then, be seen as what I labeled 'transition poems' and analyzing them will serve to show that the depiction of the negative consequences of industrialization existed already to some extent during the Romantic Period.⁸ Even more disappointing, but thus all the more encouraging for the aim of this dissertation, is the research situation with regard to readings of these poems that go beyond studying the speakers' perceptions of their surroundings only in the context of the time when the poems were written.

The city poems from the Victorian period, then, have been chosen according to different aspects of the city and urban life which need to be taken into consideration if one attempts to "'read' the Victorian city" (Humpherys 602) and learn in which ways urban environments affected people's emotions during the Industrial Revolution. "The

⁸ From now on, whenever the title of the poem "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" is mentioned again, it will be shortened to "Composed upon Westminster Bridge". As it is also shortened in the title of the respective analysis chapter, it will inevitably appear in this form in the table of contents as well.

Factory Town” (1855) by Ernest Jones and James Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night” (1874) are mainly concerned with the city in spatial and nocturnal terms. They present descriptions of industrial cities at night and the speakers convey an idea of how the city *as a place* could affect one’s emotions back then. Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night” is sometimes even seen as “the most significant urban poem of the age” (P. Fletcher 505) and it is also the most discussed one among those that have been selected. However, only the article “From ‘Web of Life’ to Necropolis: An Ecocritical Perspective on Urban Vitalism in Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Poetry” by Christophe Den Tandt is in some way related to the approach of this dissertation. For “The Factory Town” by Ernest Jones, the situation looks even worse: At present, there is no comprehensive study that deals with this poem. Then, in Robert Buchanan’s “Bexhill, 1866” (1866), the focus will be on the contrast between an industrial city and a rural town. Here, it is the perspective which is so interesting and new because the speaker tells us what he remembers of his stay in a city while being in the countryside. Further, this poem is worth studying because Buchanan is sometimes regarded as a “pioneer of urban poetry” (Thesing, “Robert Buchanan” 59). The rest of the poems chosen for the analysis of the perception of urban environments during the Industrial Revolution is not mainly about the city in spatial terms anymore, but the poems rather draw our attention to the darker and frightening aspects of city life, as for instance, social injustice, terrible housing and working conditions, and the issue of child labor. In order to learn how these aspects of city life have contributed to some kind of ‘urban anxiety’, it is necessary to have a look at Edward Carpenter’s “In a Manufacturing Town” (1885), Thomas Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt” (1843), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children” (1844). Although Barrett Browning and Hood also belong to the better known poets among those whose works will be studied in this dissertation, there are only relatively few studies of the poems that have been selected. It is not surprising that the lesser known city poems from the nineteenth century which will be analyzed in the following have attracted even less critical attention so far. At present, there is no comprehensive study that deals with “The Factory Town” by Ernest Jones, “Bexhill, 1866” by Robert Buchanan, or “In a Manufacturing Town” by Edward Carpenter, which is why studies of any kind with these poems as their subject would be an enrichment for the field of literary studies. Generally, poetry about the city that was written under the influence of the Industrial Revolution still seems to be largely unexplored, because many scholars

have only focused on studying how people felt and thought about the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of cities in other genres of literature, mainly in the industrial or ‘condition-of-England’-novel (cf. Bennett and Teague 4-5).⁹ This is a result of the fact that “[m]ore late-century novelists than poets described the city in their work” (Thesing, *The London Muse* xv).

For the second part of the analysis, the selection of contemporary poems dealing with nature turned out to be leading to less obvious writers and texts than it was the case with the Romantic period. It is virtually impossible to find someone who is equal to Wordsworth or Keats with regard to his or her status as ‘nature poet’, despite the prospering in nature-related poetry recently. Nevertheless, to study the poetic texts of at least one of the well-known contemporary poets who is much concerned with the natural world, several different poems by Ted Hughes have been chosen: “Spring Nature Notes” and “Autumn Nature Notes” (both from *Season Songs*, first published in 1975), “Daffodils” (from *Flowers and Insects: Some Birds and a Pair of Spiders*, first published in 1986), and “River Barrow” and “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’” (both from *River*, first published in 1983). Like Wordsworth, Hughes spent a great part of his life living close to nature: It is said, for example, that, during his childhood, he often went “to the canal where the local children would fish for loach [...] explore the nearby wood, or climb through fields” (Sagar, “Hughes” n. pag.). According to Keith Sagar, “[t]his landscape was imprinted on his soul, and, in a sense, all his poems were to be about it” (*Ted Hughes and Nature* 31-32). As “environmental and ecological concerns came to figure more and more centrally both in his poems and in his life” (Sagar, “Hughes” n. pag.), Hughes started “working for such organizations as the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Farms for City Children, and the Sacred Earth Drama Trust (which he funded)” (Sagar, “Hughes” n. pag.). In addition to that, and to get back to the aforementioned issue of ‘status’, he also shared with Wordsworth his title of poet laureate that he was given in 1984. For the reason that his achievement was also recognized by the government and because nature influenced his poetry to a great extent, interpreting a selection of Hughes’s nature poems is absolutely essential for the aims of this study. The poems have been chosen due to the variety of aspects of nature they address: Some celebrate the beautiful side of nature and “the vision of undesecrated life” (Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature* 147), and others are rather concerned

⁹ Alasdair Clayre refers to the ‘condition-of-England’ question as “[t]he phrase that began to be used in the 1840s for the whole complex of problems created by industrial development, urbanization, poverty, the destruction of communities and of old beliefs” (xxxix).

with people's responsibility towards nature and with how it is treated by human beings, illustrating the harsh reality of environmental pollution and disregard. With an analysis of the descriptions in "Spring Nature Notes", "Autumn Nature Notes", and "River Barrow", it will be clarified what accounts for positive experiences in nature. There is, however, no study that focuses completely on any of these poems and explores it in detail, except for the reading of "River Barrow" in Chaiyon Tongtukkaeng's dissertation *Ecocritical Reading in the Poetry of Ted Hughes*. The poems are mostly mentioned only briefly as part of a larger study concerning Hughes's poetry or are referred to as part of the sequences they appear in, namely *Season Songs* and *River*.¹⁰ Ted Hughes's "Daffodils", was not only chosen because it has the same subject as Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", but also because it reveals much about the influence of memory on one's impression of nature and vice versa. The allusion to Wordsworth is sometimes taken up in studies, like in a publication by István D. Rácz, but with regard to the aspect of memory, this poem has received almost no critical attention so far. For "1984 on 'The Tarka Trail'", again, no publication that examines this poem in its entirety was found. It is mentioned in publications on Hughes's attempts to protect natural water resources, but despite the fact that it is often listed as a poem about environmental pollution in ecopoetry anthologies, it has not yet been fully studied in this respect. Further, it also has to be mentioned that plenty of the publications that are concerned with Hughes's nature poetry focus on his animal poems which tend to add a special spiritual character to nature. Thus, even though they are helpful with regard to background knowledge and learning about Hughes's aesthetic of nature, they show that it is all the more important to also consider those poems that have not yet been the focus of research. Another of the well-known poets among the ones whose writings have been chosen for this thesis is Philip Larkin. From his oeuvre, the government-commissioned poem "Going, Going" (1972) was selected for the research topic. It deals with the vanishing of nature and the issue of pollution, conveying a severe environmental message by which it qualifies for a deeper analysis within this thesis. The method Larkin applies in the poem demonstrates exactly what John Press has said about the poet's technique:

¹⁰ Yvonne Reddick also mentions that *Season Songs* belongs to "Hughes's collections that are not [...] his most famous or poetically successful" (15)—which could explain the lack of research literature—but immediately adds that it deserves to be looked at in terms of ecopoetry, since it "succeed[s] in capturing the environmental preoccupations of his age" (ibid.).

[H]e delineates with considerable force and delicacy the pattern of contemporary sensibility, tracing the way in which we respond to our environment, [...] embodying in his poetry attitudes of heart and mind that seem peculiarly characteristic of our times: doubt, insecurity, boredom, aimlessness, and malaise (131).

Larkin's poem, too, has been left largely unexplored so far. The publication that has paid most attention to this poem up to now is Mark Storey's "Larkin's 'Going, Going'"—apart from that, the poem is sometimes referred to in publications (maybe simply because of the fact that it was commissioned by the government), but it has not aroused the critical attention that it deserves. Especially since it is an important contribution to existing studies, expanding the horizon by also looking at how nature is presented in terms of 'negative' and sad images. It is also worth including the poetry of one of Larkin's acquaintances and protégés, Douglas Dunn, in this analysis because it often deals with nature and does so in a very interesting and unconventional way—namely by questioning our place in the world and leading us to reflect on our identity and the role nature plays in its formation.¹¹ This is especially true for Dunn's poem "Woodnotes" (2000), which will be looked at in detail in the analysis part. Although Dunn is recognized as a major Scottish poet and is often mentioned in books of twentieth-century verse, it appears that there are few publications on single poems he has written and not a single one on "Woodnotes"; critical work rather refers to his oeuvre in general and to his poetic technique. Other poets whose work has been regarded as relevant for the aim of this thesis are Charles Tomlinson and Grevel Lindop—definitely two of the lesser known contemporary poets dealing with nature when compared to the rest. Although Tomlinson is very much interested in international subject matters, there is a great amount of nature poetry written by him, because "from first to last he would also intermittently return in his mind to his native Midlands" (Glover n. pag.). Rainer Lengeler even says the following: "Im Schaffen von Charles Tomlinson [...] kommen die Natur und ihre Erscheinungen häufiger als jeder andere Gegenstand, Menschen, historische Ereignisse, Kunstwerke, Ideen, vor" (124). Tomlinson's "Below Tintern" (1978) is quite interesting already due to the indication of place in its title; as was stated earlier, the analysis of Romantic nature poetry will also cover Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", so this similarity (or at least close association) in terms of place also offers the possibility of comparison. For Tomlinson's poem, research has also proven rather unsatisfactory and

¹¹ Jane Stabler confirms that "the agricultural calendar and a pleasure in landscape are integral parts of his [Dunn's] work, in which he makes frequent use of dialect names for wildlife and displays quasi-mystical respect for trees" (2).

incomplete. In fact, there exists no study concentrating on “Below Tintern” and, even in general publications on Tomlinson and his work, the piece is never critically commented on. There are a range of studies dealing with the way Tomlinson treats the issue of place in his poems, though, which serve as a fair basis for the analysis. “The Beck” (1991) by Grevel Lindop, then, will be analyzed regarding the way nature has an influence on one’s memories, and the other way round, meaning the role one’s memories play during the experience of visiting a place in nature. The issue of memory has been central already in Romantic nature poetry and it continues to be of great importance in contemporary poetry, which is why it is definitely worth studying in this context as well. For what I have labeled ‘mixed poems’ earlier, another poem by Grevel Lindop, “From a Flat City” (1991), has been chosen along with Mark Goodwin’s “I Turned” (2008) because they concentrate on both nature and the city, especially on their intertwining. It should also be noted that Mark Goodwin was “Leicestershire’s landscape poet in residence” (“Mark Goodwin” n. pag.) in 2011. As “a climber, walker, balancer and stroller [...] much of his work reflects his need to engage physically with ‘place’” (ibid.). The fact that Grevel Lindop and Mark Goodwin belong to the lesser known contemporary poets whose works will be analyzed in this dissertation may also account for the limited research that exists on these poets. Both poems by Lindop, “The Beck” and “From a Flat City”, have not been studied as a whole by any critic so far; likewise, Mark Goodwin’s “I Turned” has not attracted the attention of scholars, except for a short mentioning in a review by John Gimblett. In addition to that, general publications on both authors are basically non-existent, but some websites (like the authors’ own or the University of Leicester’s writers’ gallery) provide information on what the authors themselves think about their poetry and reveal their motivations for writing certain poems.

The contemporary poems dealing with the city that will be analyzed in this thesis have been selected according to their function of conveying a picture as complete and diverse as possible of urban surroundings as they have developed in the last half of the century. This means that the poems do not focus on just one aspect of the city, but instead try to grasp it in its fullness and complexity. Recurring themes that are found in urban literature in general and which are also explored by the selected poems “include the threat of the ‘other’; the effects of ethnic, racial, and economic diversity on community within the city; the contrasts of individual opportunity and alienation; the difficulty of knowing or explaining a city; and the relationship between the metropolis

and the hinterland” (Bou 20). Thus, unlike the contemporary nature poems, which often tend to shift the focus to topics such as memory or identity (to name just two examples), the contemporary city poems do not set the direction for the analysis by a singular striking topic and have therefore not been grouped into different categories. As with the Victorian city poems, the aim is to point out which aspects of the city and of city life have influenced people in a negative way and can be seen as causes of a kind of ‘urban anxiety’. This is why, for the choice of poetry to be analyzed, much attention was paid to the degree to which the poems also reflect the psychological level and give insights into people’s attitudes and emotions. It will be shown that the issue of ‘insanity’ has reached a central status in contemporary poetry about the city, justifying the use of the term ‘urban anxiety’ in this context even more. The most well-known among the poets whose writings are included in this part of the study is Edwin Morgan, who “was appointed Glasgow’s first poet laureate in 1999, [...] received the queen’s gold medal for poetry in 2000” (Watson, “Morgan” n. pag.), and held the position of Scotland’s national poet, ‘The Scots Makar’, from 2004 to 2011. His piece *Glasgow Sonnets* (1972), a sequence of sonnets offering a detailed view on the city of Glasgow, includes overt criticism of certain conditions of city life and is thus very suitable for the aim of this thesis.¹² A full interpretation of this sonnet sequence that also relates the depiction of the city to today’s attitudes towards the (urban and natural) environment does not yet exist. Morgan’s sonnets from *Glasgow Sonnets* are mentioned in a few publications and have been interpreted in parts, though—the most comprehensive analyses so far being those by Sławomir Wąciór, Colin Nicholson, and Nerys Williams. The other poems chosen for the analysis were written by contemporary poets who are lesser known and represent non-mainstream contemporary British poetry, but whose writings fit the purpose of this study just as nicely: Roy Fisher, John Barnie, and Bill Griffiths. Fisher’s experience of living in the English Midlands is reflected in most of his work, but his negative impression of the city he grew up in (Birmingham) becomes most apparent in his very first publication, the pamphlet *City* (1961)—his “signature work” (Robinson 96) that is even regarded by certain critics as “the archetypal [...] contemporary urban poem” (Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 16). As an assemblage of verse and prose, it presents a hybrid form of writing and thus differs from the other texts that have been presented so far. Nevertheless, because of its large parts of verse

¹² Although it is usually correct to give titles of poems in quotation marks, the title of Morgan’s text will be given in italics from now, due to the fact that the work is a sonnet sequence rather than a single poem.

and because, after all, it is included in his *Collected Poems*, it will be considered as a form of poetry in this thesis. *City* is one of the texts that have aroused the attention of critics already, but the publications do not conflict with the aim of this dissertation, due to the different focus which, in these cases, is put either on the form, the language, or the European context of the text. A study of Roy Fisher's text which also relates the descriptions of the city to descriptions of nature in contemporary poetry does not exist so far and would be a great enrichment. *The City* (1993) by Welsh writer John Barnie consists of a mixture of poetry and prose as well. Again, though, because the prose parts are not typically prose-like due to "their compressed language and reliance on symbol, metaphor, or image rather than on plot, characterization, or dialogue" (Lloyd 809), the overall impression of reading a poem is maintained. What is special about Barnie's text is that it is an "exploration of the modern city" (ibid.) through lots of different voices, which allows us to look at it from various points of view and to learn about the effects the city has on the individual city dwellers. Moreover, it is strikingly underrepresented in terms of existing research: *The City* is shortly introduced in Peter Barry's *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, but there is no interpretation of the text going further than that. However, a review by David Lloyd exists and there is a publication by Matthew Jarvis that deals with Barnie's poetry in general. The latter, for instance, positions Barnie as a poet who cares a lot about place and thus proves that his poetry bears potential for the aim of this dissertation. Griffiths, too, has put together an unconventional and long poetry sequence: *A Book of Spilt Cities* (1999).¹³ It does not only reveal in what ways the city has an influence on people's psyche, but furthermore presents a "mock psychoanalysis" (Griffiths, "Interview" 192) of the city itself, as the author himself once stated in an interview. Due to the direct link to the psychological level, considering it in this thesis is a must. Through a "pseudo-psychological interrogation of the City as a conscious entity" (Griffiths, "Interview" 188-189), one can learn about "its basic urges and motivations" (Griffiths, "Interview" 192) and ultimately understand what has shaped the city over the years. At present, there is also no interpretation of it, except for a brief introduction in Peter Barry's *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*. That there exists also only little research on the author has

¹³ Although it is usually correct to give titles of poems in quotation marks, the titles of Griffiths's, Barnie's, and Fisher's text will be given in italics from now. This is primarily due to the works' length, and, in the case of the poems by Barnie and Fisher, also due to the hybrid character (mixture of verse and prose).

probably much to do with his status as a ‘non-mainstream’ poet and the opinion by some critics that

his poetry is much more than a non-native English speaker could chew; it is often difficult work, as he himself acknowledges, with a large range of references, found texts, foreign languages and dialect materials, besides a fondness for non-linearity of thought and its visual embodiment in line rupture (Teixeira de Medeiros 125).

Fernanda Teixeira de Medeiros makes clear that “to read Bill Griffiths one needs to be aware of some contextual data” (123) and names first “the fact that non-mainstream poetry is rarely reviewed” (124). The most comprehensive publication dealing with Griffiths’s achievements is certainly *The Salt Companion to Bill Griffiths*, edited by Will Rowe, but *The City* is not the main subject of any of the contributions to the edited volume; it is only in the editor’s interview with Griffiths that we learn a bit about his motives for writing *The City*.

In order to fill a niche in research, this dissertation will not only serve as an addition to the existing publications on the perception of nature and the city in nineteenth-century poetry and contemporary poetry, because of its concentration on authors or pieces of poetry that have not been studied in this context so far or the consideration of British poetry in particular, but it will rather do so due to its literary-historical approach. For the declared aim of this dissertation, it is necessary to also go beyond the literary imagination of nature and include into the analysis thoughts on ‘real’ nature as well, ideally also with a look at recent developments. This dissertation fulfills this goal in so far as it explores the (real and imaginary) perception of nature and the city in poetry, on the one hand, but then also goes further and connects these findings with studies in environmental psychology, geographical ideas, trends in landscape planning, etc. or shows up links with concepts from environmental literary theory that has flourished over the last years. By interpreting these poems, this thesis satisfies Buell’s demand that “[a]ll inquiry into artistic rendition of physical environment must sooner or later reckon with the meta-question of how to construe the relation between the world of a text and the world of historical or lived experience” (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 30).

1.5. Ecopoetry and Theoretical Approaches

Since the poems chosen for this study deal with our spatial surroundings in various ways—focusing on urban and natural environments or places that present a mixture of both—they can be categorized as environmental poetry or ecopoetry. Although such

poetry has existed for a very long time already, the category for this branch of writing is rather young and has only recently gained a more prominent place in the fields of research and criticism. By now, ecopoetry has become an acknowledged subgenre of poetry, which is probably to a great extent the consequence of the introduction of the term in J. Scott Bryson's publication *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* from 2002, the emergence of the influential journal *Ecopoetics*, edited by Jonathan Skinner, and the range of books and anthologies that have appeared shortly afterwards.¹⁴ The term has usually been employed in the context of ecocriticism—a field of literary criticism that came into existence a little earlier and which offers interesting points of view for the subject of this thesis with its theories and concepts.

Leonard M. Scigaj was among the first to use the term ecopoetry in his publication *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Ecopoets* from 1999, which aims at conveying that ecopoetry is not simply 'nature poetry', but rather poetry "that persistently stresses human cooperation with nature conceived as a dynamic, interrelated series of cyclic feedback systems" (Scigaj, *Sustainable Poetry* 37). Soon afterwards, Bryson's *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* was published, in which the author names three main characteristics that, he believes, define ecopoetry: "The first is an emphasis on maintaining an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the interdependent nature of the world", the second is "an imperative toward humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature", and the third is "an intense skepticism concerning hyperrationality [...] that usually leads to an indictment of an overtechnologized modern world and a warning concerning the very real potential for ecological catastrophe" ("Introduction" 5-6). Of course, the attempts at defining ecopoetry are only in the early stages and the concept has been re-evaluated again and again. In terms of content, form, language, and direction, ecopoetry might be very diverse, but Jonathan Bate might be right in what he concludes about the shared characteristic and unique function of all ecopoetry:

¹⁴ Examples of anthologies that provide an overview of what has come to be known as ecopoetry or environmental poetry are, for example, *Earth Songs: A Resurgence Anthology of Contemporary Eco-Poetry*, edited by Peter Abbs, *The Thunder Mutters: 101 Poems for the Planet*, edited by Alice Oswald, *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems*, edited by Neil Astley, *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry*, edited by Harriet Tarlo, and *Entanglements: New Ecopoetry*, edited by David Knowles and Sharon Blackie. These are just some examples; there are also many anthologies covering ecopoetry from specific countries, focusing solely on American poetry for instance, like *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street.

The poet's way of articulating the relationship between humankind and environment, person and place, is peculiar because it is experiential, not descriptive. Whereas the biologist, the geographer and the Green activist have *narratives* of dwelling, a poem may be a *revelation* of dwelling. Such a claim is phenomenological before it is political, and for this reason ecopoetics may properly be regarded as pre-political (266).

It is worth exploring the perception of the environment during the nineteenth century and in more recent times, particularly with the help of ecopoetry, to recognize patterns, make sense of them and learn from them. William Rueckert is also convinced that we must “turn to the poets” (114) for this purpose—they can be said to function as “place-makers offer[ing] new visions of how things have been and, implicitly, how things might be” (Bryson, “All Finite Things” 10). Such poetry was and is maybe not as direct a reaction to changes in the environment as, for instance, environmental protection measures and actions regarding ‘urbanatural’ design are today, but “our interventions as [...] ecological or environmental thinkers [...] may be no less potentially significant [...] conceptually, ethically, and aesthetically” (Buell, “Nature and City” 3).

As it was just pointed out that the poems chosen for the aim of this thesis fall into the category of ecopoetry, which is a subject of study in the field of ecocriticism, it is definitely worth considering some of the concepts and theories from this new branch of literary criticism when dealing with the poems, because they offer interesting viewpoints and new angles for analysis. In order to comprehend why this is so, it is necessary to give a brief overview of ecocriticism and its theories and positions. The definitions of ecocriticism are manifold, but a definition that is almost always referred to is the one by Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader* which describes ecocriticism simply as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). For example, it aims at investigating the meaning of the word ‘nature’, the differences between space and place, the perception of wilderness, the impact of globalization, portrayals of pollution or apocalypse, and the relationship between humans and animals. This definitely makes it one of the most crucial and indispensable literary approaches at present, given the ecological crisis the world is to face. What should become clear already from the definition is that ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary point of view, highly informed by disciplines like environmental psychology, sociology, geography, ethics, philosophy, and many more. Indeed, ecocriticism is believed to be “strongest when it is most *interdisciplinary*” (Warren 771).

Today, it is generally agreed that the term ecocriticism was probably first introduced by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” from 1978, but ecocriticism as a movement can be said to have developed already as early as at the beginning of the 1960s, when Rachel Carson published her work *Silent Spring* and helped environmental ideas to grow in popularity and recognition.¹⁵ Spreading from the United States, the approach has now globally developed into a very diverse one and has broadened its scope in literary criticism: For example, ecocriticism has recently also been applied in the context of gender studies, postcolonial studies, and in other fields of literary studies. As a result, it has gained more and more importance over the last decades and the creation of academic positions and courses in the field has also led to the deserved acknowledgment in the context of university teaching.¹⁶ Promoting ecocriticism in an academic context is so desirable and important because it allows for an outreach to the younger generation—a generation who is growing up in the midst of the environmental crisis and is struggling with thinking about solutions and reacting to it in a responsible way.

While it has often been argued that ecocriticism had been ignorant towards theory for a long time, at least by the twenty-first century, “the initial ecocritical resistance to theory [had] been superseded by an explicit dialogue, and, indeed, a highly productive alliance of ecocriticism with cultural and literary theory” (Zapf, “Introduction” 8). In the following, some of the theories of ecocriticism that are helpful for the analysis part will be presented. One of the most influential theories is that of ‘deep ecology’; Greg Garrard even goes so far as to say that it is the “explicit or implicit perspective of ecocritics” (23). The central concerns of this philosophy were formulated by Arne Naess in the early seventies already, and, generally speaking, this approach promotes the intrinsic value of all life forms and their interconnectedness. What is important here is the view that “[t]hese values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes” (Naess 68). So, it does not matter whether we can profit from these life forms in any way because each life form has its own inherent value which needs to be respected. Therefore, this approach presents a strong opposition to the

¹⁵ First, it propelled the American environmental movement with the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the introduction of Earth Day in 1970, the formation of Greenpeace around the same time, and campaigns against nuclear power. Simultaneously, the environmental wave also found its way to Europe. More strikingly than ever before it became felt in campaigns like the European Nature Conservation Year which launched for the first time in 1970 and was seen as somewhat like the birth date of the European environmental movement.

¹⁶ The first person to hold an academic position of that sort was Cheryll Glotfelty, who became professor of Literature and the Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, in 1990 (cf. Glotfelty xvii).

long-upheld anthropocentrism promoted by Western culture and philosophy, which is here seen as the origin of the environmental crisis (cf. Garrard 24) and human alienation from nature.¹⁷ As a solution, deep ecology asks us to adopt a more holistic view of the world we live in.

Approaches like ‘social ecology’ and ‘eco-Marxism’ are maybe even more “explicitly political, and have their origins in nineteenth-century radical thought” (Garrard 31), especially in the social anarchism of Murray Bookchin and in the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (cf. Garrard 31-32). The general position of social ecology is that most of the world’s problems concerning the environment have their origin in social problems which are the result of certain social structures and hierarchies. Bookchin writes that “we should never forget that the concept of ‘dominating’ nature emerged from the domination of man by man” (19) and offers an elaborate statement on this assertion, clearly linking the alerting state of the environment to capitalism:

But it was not until organic community relation [...] dissolved into market relationships that the planet itself was reduced to a resource for exploitation. This centuries-long tendency finds its most exacerbating development in modern capitalism. Owing to its inherently competitive nature, bourgeois society not only pits humans against each other, it also pits the mass of humanity against the natural world. Just as men are converted into commodities, so every aspect of nature is converted into a commodity, a resource to be manufactured and merchandised wantonly. [...] The plundering of the human spirit by the market place is paralleled by the plundering of the earth by capital (85).

Related to this point of view is the theory and movement of ‘environmental justice’ which basically refers to the minority communities’ aim of being no longer simply overlooked and ignored with regard to environmental thinking and actions, since they often feel “disproportionately burdened with the pollution, toxic waste, occupational, and health hazards of industrial society” (Peritore 285). Thus, the environmental justice movement also takes into account the situation of those who have become victims through first world decisions and is an attempt to defend everyone’s right “to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work” (“Environmental Justice” n. pag.).

Since the dissertation puts at its center the function of literature in the development of environmental awareness, one can also work with Hubert Zapf’s triadic functional model of literature as cultural ecology—an approach that is explicitly linked to literature. Zapf bases his model on the interconnectedness of literature and culture

¹⁷ As Edward Picot says, the problem is that an anthropocentric attitude is already promoted in the first chapter of Genesis, where God “establish[es] human beings as the rulers of the new Earth” (2).

and claims that literature, as a medium, is itself a form of ‘cultural ecology’, explaining this as follows:

Literary texts have staged and explored, in ever new scenarios, the complex feedback relationship of prevailing cultural systems with the needs and manifestations of human and nonhuman ‘nature’, and from this paradoxical act of creative regression have derived their specific power of innovation and cultural self-renewal (“Ecocriticism, Cultural Ecology, and Literary Studies” 138).

He distinguishes between three dynamic processes that play a role in this context: One being the ‘cultural-critical metadiscourse’, a “representation of typical deficits, blind spots, imbalances, deformations, and contradictions within dominant systems of civilizational power” (Zapf, “The State of Ecocriticism” 62), for example through “imagery of death-in-life, waste land, paralyzation, stasis, blindness, uniformity, vicious cycles, and psychic or physical imprisonment” (ibid.), as in the city poems chosen for this study. The second process Zapf mentions is the ‘imaginative counterdiscourse’ which represents “what remains unavailable in the established categories of cultural self-interpretation, but what appears as indispensable for an adequately complex account of the lives of humans and their place in the world” (“The State of Ecocriticism” 63). This function, for example, would apply to the positive nature descriptions in the poems that will be analyzed. As a third and last process, Zapf names the ‘reintegrative interdiscourse’, describing a “reintegration of the excluded with the cultural reality system, through which literature contributes to the constant renewal of the cultural center from its margins” (“The State of Ecocriticism” 64). This often finds expression, for example, in an imagery of “rebirth [and] regeneration” (Zapf, “The State of Ecocriticism” 65) and is also reflected in some of the poems that have been selected for this dissertation. Summarizing his idea of literature as cultural ecology, Zapf says that

[l]iterature is [...] on the one hand, a sensorium for what goes wrong in a society, for the biophobic, life-paralyzing implications of one-sided forms of consciousness and civilizational uniformity, and it is, on the other hand, a medium of constant cultural selfrenewal, in which the neglected biophilic energies can find a symbolic space of expression and of (re-)integration into the larger ecology of cultural discourses (“Ecocriticism, Cultural Ecology, and Literary Studies” 138).

Besides paying attention to these procedures of literature that bear similarities to ecological principles, one can also study in how far the poems are related to the basic principles of ecology at the level of content. Zapf gives a brief overview of the “main assumptions and implications of an ecological discourse” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88) and names the following premises: The idea that “*everything is connected to everything else*” (ibid.), the “acceptance of evolution as a fact of natural

and cultural life” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88), and the “holistic world-view [...] in the sense that [...] ‘*the whole is more than the sum of its parts*’” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88-89). As further principles, Zapf mentions the “recognition of the *diversity* of life and of the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations, which are each seen to have intrinsic value” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89) and the insights that “nature is [...] complex” (ibid.) and “represents an inherently *self-regulating power*” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89). Finally, he also adds the ecological view that “the history of human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten this overall balance of life*” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90)—the integrity of nature.

Connected to the theories mentioned above are certain concepts that have been taken up again and again in ecocritical texts—some of which also play a role in the poems that will be analyzed and thus need to be explained at this point. The first one is that of ‘pastoral’—generally put, “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban” (Gifford, *Pastoral* 2). During the time of the Industrial Revolution, it became one of the main modes of describing nature, as can be seen from the general idealization of the natural world and the depiction of nature as a beneficent retreat from city life. This, however, also has much to do with the criticism of the pastoral tradition, namely that it is “motivated by naïve idyllicism” (Gifford, “Post-Pastoral” 14) and that the “idealisation of rural life [...] obscures the realities of labour and hardship” (Garrard 37-38) in such environments. Although our ‘modern’ idea of nature may be different from that expressed from a pastoral point of view, the ideas associated with the pastoral have definitely shaped our image of nature through time and continue to do so. After all, as Terry Gifford concludes, the pastoral

is the way many of us live in the West as we conduct our lives in the pastoral momentum of retreat and return between nature and the internet, between National Parks and our urbanised workplaces, between leisure and work, between genes and genetics, even as the boundaries between these aspects of our experience are becoming more transparent (“Post-Pastoral” 24).

As another concept, the idea of ‘apocalypse’ should be included here. This is because the development of the environmental crisis over the last centuries has also led to nature being increasingly taken up in images of the apocalypse. According to Buell, it is “the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” (*The Environmental Imagination* 285). Maybe much of its power comes from it being reality; works that draw on the idea of apocalypse “can often be jarring, but that is the point, as they want to draw attention to the worsening

condition of the earth” (Hiltner xvi). However, instead of simply employing such shocking images and leaving the reader with a sinister outlook for the future, one could argue that working with images of the apocalypse or environmental pollution is probably most effective in terms of consciousness raising, if it, simultaneously, also offers signs of a possible way out. Due to the recent increase in images of pollution and apocalypse in literature and because they are also included in some of the contemporary poems that will be analyzed, it is necessary to explore the effects in usage in the analysis part.

Following this introduction, to draw on the central idea of studying developments and give the historical and cultural background for the analyses of the poems in this dissertation, there will be an overview of people’s reactions to their environment in the beginnings of the industrial revolution and in more recent times. Then, in a first step, the selected nature poems from the Romantic Period will be analyzed separately with a special focus on the descriptions of nature and the speakers’ expressions of their attitudes towards the natural world. In a next step, the poems from the Victorian Period will be interpreted with a focus on how they reveal the speakers’ thoughts and feelings about the city. After that, advancing with the same procedure, the contemporary nature poems and city poems will be analyzed one after the other against the backdrop of the formulated research questions presented in this introduction. The results of the separate interpretations of the nature poems and the city poems from the two different periods will be discussed in a subsequent conclusion that provides the reader with outlooks and possible starting points for further research.

2. Reactions to the Environment through Time

In order to better comprehend the development regarding the reactions to the environment through time and as a backdrop for the literature that will later be analyzed in this context, it is useful to have a closer look at how people have actually perceived their surroundings (or to be more precise: nature and the city) from back in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution up until today. When the Industrial Revolution was beginning in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century, landscape—and with it society—changed from being largely rural in character to an overwhelmingly new urban and industrial scene (cf. Stevenson 134; Epstein Nord 510). The first ‘modern’ cities emerged (if we understand ‘modern’ as being related to industrialism) and their populations grew so fast that they soon outnumbered the people who still lived in rural areas. It is said, for instance, that “[i]n 1801 four out of five Britons lived in the countryside [and that] by 1901 four out of five lived in towns” (Perkin 3).¹⁸ Due to the constant population increase in the cities, it soon happened that “London was the great fact of urban life, alternately viewed with pride as the greatest city on earth, or with horror as the modern Babylon, an infernal labyrinth of crime, poverty and vice” (P. Fletcher 504). The image of the city often differed according to whether people saw the city from a working-class point of view or from a middle- or upper-class perspective, meaning that one’s image was largely determined by whether one suffered from the negative consequences of industrialization and urbanization or profited from the changes and saw only their positive outcomes. As Asa Briggs puts it,

[t]he debate about the Victorian city [...] was a debate with [...] the struggle between the defenders of the city, those who in various ways were proud of it, and its critics, particularly those who were afraid of it, ranging widely and probing deep (71).

Although those who were better off were often unaware of what the situation of the poor actually looked like, this was certainly not true for everyone; there were also some who were shocked by the living standards of the poor in the city, the terrible working conditions, and the frightening atmosphere in general, which made them adopt a more skeptical attitude towards the city or even motivated them to take steps to bring about change. John Ruskin, for instance, described London in 1865 as “rattling, growling, smoking, stinking—a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at

¹⁸ John Stevenson also points to the fact that “[b]y 1851 there were sixty-three towns in England and Wales each with over 20,000 inhabitants [while] in 1801 there had been only fifteen such towns” (137).

every pore—a cricket ground without the turf, a huge billiard table without the cloth, and with pockets deep as the bottomless pit” (qtd. in Briggs 75).

First, abandoning the countryside and nature in order to focus on and contribute to the development of urban areas was probably exciting and promising to many, because some might have had “a stern belief in the moral value of hard work” (Forsyth, *The Lost Pattern* 23) and hoped that the changes and innovations would also improve their own individual situations and futures. In reality, however, things often looked different. Living in the city was probably most of the time—at least for the average working-class person—a very difficult, depressing, and disillusioning experience. One reason for that was the very novelty of the surroundings: The city’s overpopulated streets, the factories, and the massive and tall buildings must have appeared very oppressive to the inhabitants and it is not unlikely that they led to feelings of fear, unease, and disorientation. Also, the problem of social injustice, poverty, the critical lack of hygiene in the cities, and the existence of slum districts definitely had a negative effect on people’s emotional and physical well-being and ultimately also determined how people experienced living in the city.¹⁹ In his study of the lives of people from the working class in Victorian England from 1845, Friedrich Engels put into words his impression of the district of the poor in Manchester:

One looks into piles of rubbish, the refuse, filth, and decaying matter of the courts on the steep left bank of the river. Here one house is packed very closely upon another [...]. All of them are blackened with smoke, crumbling, old, with broken window panes and window frames. The background is formed by old factory buildings, which resemble barracks (60).²⁰

Likewise, the social reformer and architect George Godwin was horrified by what he saw in the streets of London: “houses without drainage, without ventilation, without water-supply, except of the worst description, ditches presenting an evaporating surface of the foulest kind, and the roads a mass of mud and filth” (58). Another aspect that should not be disregarded in this context is the factory system as one of the most important components of the industrial city. While today one may argue that the substitution of machinery for hand tools serves the purpose of easing the physical burden of the worker, this was only partly true for factory workers at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Apart from the effect of the introduction of machinery on the

¹⁹ Moreover, well-known works of literature from the era show that poverty and social class were major concerns in urban contexts back then. Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, for example, is set in 1830s London and deals with the misery of poor people, including descriptions of the slums and social injustice.

²⁰ The title of Engels’s study, originally written in German, is “Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England” (which later became “The Condition of the Working Class in England”, when the study was translated into English).

workers' psyche, namely that seeing their work being done by machines undermined their sense of themselves, factory work and machinery also had a much more negative effect on people's physical health than today. One just has to think of the machinery's sound intensity or the rather irresponsible handling of harmful chemicals. Likewise, factory smoke led to air pollution, which was another health risk and, ironically, fit the dark, depressing atmosphere of the industrial cities. Rather than making things easier for workers, the factory system led to very inhumane working conditions, since people had very long working hours in factories and child labor was common. Raymond Aubrey Forsyth further says that

[t]he city [...] became for some the image not only of 'man's inhumanity to man', but was also intimately related to the urgent search for individual values and a sense of identity in a world made increasingly 'alien', partly through materialism and rationalism, but also, and more importantly, because the established incorporation of man in the traditional cosmological trinity with God and his nature had been dislocated (*The Lost Pattern* 29).

Keeping these things in mind, it is quite understandable that the city was mostly experienced in a negative way and did not affect people's well-being positively—rather the other way round. Some critics believe that the situation of people who lived at that time is directly linked to forms of anxiety, based on their understanding that these people were “haunted by fear and worry, by guilt and frustration and loneliness” (Houghton 54). Nature, then, was a counter-image to the city and reminded people of the pre-industrial rural past when they had not yet been suffering from or even anticipating the drawbacks of industrialization and urbanization. Bate is quite right when he says that, generally, the “longing for the imagined health of the past must be a sign of the sickness of the present” (*The Song of the Earth* 2). One could maybe even go so far as to say that nature could offer people much of what the city could not offer them. In contrast to such feelings as fear, despair, alienation, and disillusionment that were often caused by life in the city, spending time in nature was usually thought to influence one's emotions very positively, often making people feel happy, comfortable and content. Being aware of the differences between nature and the city, people “defined the natural primitive impulses of the human heart against the ‘artificiality’, ‘rationalism’, and alleged ‘corruption’ of modern life, which is damned as sordid and commercial” (Viereck, “The Muse and the Machine” 42). Moreover, it should be considered that the many hardships as well as the confrontation with the changes and technological innovations back then—especially the speed with which they were introduced into people's lives—must have been overwhelming. This almost

automatically provoked the desire to, at least now and then, get back to something ‘old’, instead of constantly perceiving something ‘new’, and to experience some kind of “tranquil stability” (Forsyth, *The Lost Pattern* 3) and rest as opposed to ongoing progress. According to Bruce I. Coleman, “[a]t the end of the century the wistfulness occasioned by the problems of rapid urbanization and the decay of rural society was for man’s experience of nature, for the scale and intimacy of rural communities, and for traditional skills and values” (19). People probably longed for the past because it stands for everything that is already known and everything one is used to, which is in strong contrast to the uncertainty and instability that is experienced in a period of radical changes. As Clayre says, “[a]ll centuries can claim to be ‘centuries of change’; but perhaps the hundred years from 1760 have a stronger claim than any other” (xix). These aspects of city life which evoked uncertainty and led to a sense of instability were ultimately felt to be threatening to one’s existence and as a result, nature became a sort of refuge for the anxious city dweller. Nature offered points of orientation and sources of inspiration for those who wanted to escape the alienation and disorientation that so often determined one’s emotions in the city. Thus, the confrontation with the negative consequences of industrial life and the changing and menacing urban scene (tall buildings, air-polluting factory smoke, overcrowded places, slum districts, etc.)—all of them sources of fear, repulsion, and estrangement—have not only caused a nostalgia for pre-industrial rurality and a “back-to-the-land impulse” (Coleman 12), but also a strong interest in nature in general and an awareness of its positive effect on one’s well-being. While the city became more and more threatening, nature was increasingly associated with harmony and spiritual uplifting: A place far away from the depressing monotony of brick buildings, social injustice, and omnipresent misery and poverty, where one could feel happy and (at least temporarily) forget the problems and frightening atmosphere of

the industrial city.²¹ Therefore, Ernst Cassirer comes to the following conclusion about the modern man's escape to nature:

Nicht um ihrer selbst willen wird sie gesucht und dargestellt: sondern ihr Wert liegt darin, daß der moderne Mensch in ihr ein neues Ausdrucksmittel für sich selbst, für die Lebendigkeit und die unendliche Vielgestaltigkeit seines Innern gefunden hat (152).

It might not be surprising that today's attitudes towards nature and the city are not much different from people's attitudes back then. More than two hundred years ago, industrialization was only in its beginnings and it has developed further ever since (and later paved the way for the age of technology), so it is likely that these attitudes have not changed much or have even become more firm over time. Industrialization and urbanization have definitely had a great impact on our attitudes towards the city and nature from the beginnings, in the second half of the eighteenth century, up until today. As mentioned before, ever since the first wave of industrialization and the development of urban areas, nature came to be seen as the counter-image to the city and spending time in nature was experienced as having positive effects on one's well-being. One could say that "nostalgia for a lost unity with nature reflects the attitude best described as modernity—the sense that our world is utterly different from the world of the past, the sense that we have been alienated from the 'state of nature'" (Smith 31). There are some slight differences between today's attitudes and those of earlier times, though: Back then, people might have adopted such a positive attitude towards nature mainly because of the awful and frightening experiences they had in the city and because some of them simply could not deal with the rapid changes—they were not (yet) used to city

²¹ Although this was certainly a widespread view of nature at the time of the Industrial Revolution, one has to keep in mind that the contrast between nature and the city was probably more striking for middle-class people than for people from the working class. Nature was probably less idyllic for working-class people "if country work before the industrial revolution was generally as hard as Crabbe in *The Village* implies, or as even the descriptive engravings of Pyne may suggest to a modern eye" (Plate qtd. in Clayre xxi). William G. Bebbington also makes clear that "[t]he lot of the peasant had, of course, never been as 'merry' as the pastoral dream had fancied it" (46). The common attitude towards the city back then can definitely be related to the idea of 'urban anxiety'; it may be a rather recent concept, but the phenomenon has been known for quite a long time already. The following definition of anxiety shows why the term 'urban anxiety' fits so well with the way people responded to urban environments at the time of the Industrial Revolution (and today) and may explain why it is so often taken up in this thesis: "Die *aktuelle Angstemotion* (state) ist ein mit bestimmten Situationsveränderungen intraindividuell variierender affektiver Zustand des Organismus, der durch erhöhte Aktivität des autonomen Nervensystems sowie durch die Selbstwahrnehmung von Erregung, das Gefühl des Angespantenseins, ein Erlebnis des Bedrohtwerdens und verstärkte Besorgnis gekennzeichnet ist" (Krohne 17). Williams further states that, "in Freudian terms, anxiety is an affective state, a condition of unpleasurably tense excitation, which one is not able to control by discharging. Its cause, in the main, is a failure by the ego to master the external world, morality or the unconscious" ("The Anxious City" 8). However, he does not only regard it as "a label for a psychological condition" (R. J. Williams 12), but rather as "a helpful vocabulary to describe urban experience" (ibid.), just as it is understood in this thesis.

life. In our modern times, however, many of us grow up in urban areas (we are familiar with the city) and some people will argue that most cities in Western countries are no longer as ‘frightening’, as dangerous, or as likely to drive one to despair as it may have been the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is because there are also attempts to make the city more pleasing and agreeable (e.g. with the help of museums, cultural centers, public parks, leisure facilities, etc.). In a way, some people might even be “dazzled by an imposing array of gleaming towers, which overlook a kaleidoscopic geography of corporate glamour, conspicuous consumerism, café culture and street-life chic” (MacLeod, Raco, and Ward 1660). Coleman is convinced that “cities no longer alarm us by their number, their size and their divergence from an older ideal of social organization” (19), but this is certainly not true for everyone. Things still change very rapidly in cities these days and there is a great number of aspects or developments which “prefigure a future that we find unnerving and whose security and reliability we may have good reason to doubt” (Sparks, Girling, and Loader 886). Therefore, one can also claim that ‘urban anxiety’ has increased with the advancement of industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and modernization in general.²² At least, Phil Hubbard is convinced that “anti-urban sentiments pervade contemporary culture” (59). The modern city may still have similar negative effects on people’s psychological and physical health as in earlier times—air pollution, slums, crime, crowded places, etc. are still issues today—but it is, of course, also possible that progress has led to new sources of fear in the city. One just has to think of the problem of sensory overload in large cities (as, for instance, caused by the hundreds of screens and billboards on New York City’s Times Square) or the fact that there is a ‘race’ to build bigger buildings and mega-skyscrapers which can have a quite confusing and even menacing effect on people. Also, more recently, there has been the fear of terrorist attacks. It is the great changes over years, but also the small everyday changes that might lead to ‘urban anxiety’ because “[t]he psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli” (Simmel 103). In some cases, constant urban development and the permanent construction of buildings is also very likely to

²² In his work *Landscapes of Fear*, Yi-Fu Tuan notes that it is actually “deeply ironic that the city can often seem a frightening place. Built to rectify the apparent confusion and chaos of nature, the city itself becomes a disorienting physical environment in which tenement houses collapse on their inhabitants, fires break out, and heavy traffic threatens life and limb. Although every street and building—and indeed all the bricks and stone blocks in them—are clearly the products of planning and thought, the final result may be a vast, disorderly labyrinth” (146-147).

lead to feelings of constriction or even more serious forms of fear like claustrophobia, mostly experienced in such parts of the city where the building density is so great that it almost feels like ‘imprisonment’. Both, spatial and social density, as common in urban places, have been found to lead to aversive psychological consequences in a variety of dimensions: Paul A. Bell et al. state that “high density leads to negative affect (especially in males) and to higher physiological arousal” (313). They further inform about the “result in less liking for others (especially in males) [...], withdrawal from interaction [...], aggression and [...] lower incidence of prosocial behavior” (ibid.). People might not only feel ‘imprisoned’ due to the building density or crowdedness, but also because the city restricts them in their self-development and independence. According to Georg Simmel,

[t]he deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life (103).

In addition to that, urbanites are probably also often overwhelmed and unable to cope with the seemingly unlimited offerings of the city as well as with its dimensions and expansiveness, which “makes it almost impossible to attain a coherent, totalizing view of it” (Schwarzbach 326) and could make people feel ‘lost’ in the urban jungle.²³ This feeling of being ‘lost’ can further be seen as a consequence of the atmosphere of anonymity in big cities: Ironically, although living in the city usually requires that people live in close contact (for example in different apartments of the same building), actual social interaction can often be missing. One might only rarely find such familiarity or solidarity there as it exists in rural areas, where “all are intimately acquainted with each other, and everyone feels concerned by his neighbour’s lot” (Hulin 18). David Seed states that “[t]he physical proximity with countless others actually increase[s] the individual’s isolation” (90), Simmel holds the opinion that “one never feels as lonely and deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons” (108), and Jane Jacobs believes that “cities are, by definition, full of strangers” (30). This goes well with the opinion of stress researcher Mazda Adli who believes that “if social density and social isolation come at the same time and hit high-risk individuals ... then city stress related mental illness can be the consequence” (qtd. in Benedictus n. pag.). Further aspects contributing to feelings of fear in today’s cities include the increase in traffic,

²³ Tuan also uses the word ‘jungle’ to describe the city, however, not only as a metaphor for “the city’s physical environment of tangled streets” (156), but also “to refer to the streets’ deviant and dangerous population” (ibid.).

smog, and noise, since these conditions hinder people from feeling comfortable in the city and make them worry about their health. These ideas of ‘urban anxiety’ are clearly linked to the definition of fear by Adri Van der Wurff and Peter Stringer who claim that fear is “the perception of a threat to some aspect of well-being, concurrent with the feeling of inability to meet the challenge” (137).

Whether today’s cities are perceived as *more* or as *less* frightening than the cities that emerged in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution varies, of course, from person to person and is thus a highly subjective matter. What can be said with certainty, however, is that, in the course of time, we have been made to deal with a new, much greater, and much more unsettling form of fear, which is not simply a fear of the city, but rather another result of that: The fear that the city replaces nature more and more due to man’s continuing and relentless ambition to become more ‘modern’. Therefore, another aspect that has shaped today’s attitudes towards the city and nature to a high degree is the confrontation with the consequences of environmental pollution as caused by industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and modernization in general. At the time when industrialization was only in its beginnings, people were not immediately confronted with the whole range of negative consequences the industrial spirit had on the natural world. They may have noticed some negative effects and may even have tried to protect nature, but such attempts remained largely ignored and, instead, industrialization continued unabatedly. It is only today that we are made to feel the disastrous long-term effects of the process that began back then and that we are starting to take adequate action. For years, we have brought about changes—positive and negative ones—to our natural surroundings on land, at sea, and in the air, and it was only recently that we have broken out into a new direction with regard to our ideas about progress. Therefore, today’s attitude towards nature is not simply the consequence of a black and white thinking about city and nature and the realization that nature can have a positive effect on our well-being, but also very much a result of us understanding that the aims of modernization have to be changed for good, in order to protect nature and to ensure that it will also continue to influence our well-being positively in the future. We should not forget that “we have a moral commitment to preserve the earth for the benefit of future generations” (Kohler 207) and what guides us the way is the attention to the “vielfältigen Verknüpfungen [der] scheinbar dichotomen Begriffe” (Chilla 179) ‘nature’ and ‘city’. Although today’s attitude towards nature is still similar to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attitude—because we still see the connection

between the city and anxiety and because we still regard nature as soothing and beneficent—it is at least more forward-looking and calling for action. Nevertheless, as Buell contends, even though, now, “[e]nvironmental concern is normal[,] [...] *vehement* concern still looks queer” (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 24). A more economic use of resources and the concepts of recycling and reusability are the basic ideas behind all environmental protection measures. Taking such measures is certainly evidence of people’s awareness that putting one’s efforts into protecting nature is equally important—or today even more important—than putting effort and work into the development of urban environments. Climate change, resource depletion, and the dismay that arose in the nuclear age have definitely contributed to the worldwide emergence of green parties and NGOs, the Fridays for Future movement, or the agreements within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We even notice the consequences in our everyday lives, as, for instance, the change to energy saving lamps, the popping up of solar and wind power plants, and the popularization of organic products. Gradually, people are understanding that “to preserve our humanness we must preserve as much as possible the natural world” (Kroeber 132). However, this is only the beginning and there is still a long and arduous way ahead if we want to save the environment on a permanent basis. Greg Wrenn is probably right when he says that, to achieve this, “[h]uman nature itself has to change. Compassionate choices that delay gratification need to provide more of a dopamine hit than compulsive, convenient consumption and pleasure-seeking” (41).

Comparing today’s attitudes towards natural and urban surroundings to how people felt and thought about nature and the city in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution has shown that these two different parts of our environment have always mattered much to us because they contrast so strongly. From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the first industrial cities emerged (and maybe already before), up until now, there have always been relatively similar reactions towards the city and nature: A feeling of unease and fear in the city—an emotional reaction that could be termed ‘urban anxiety’—and a feeling of pleasure, comfort, and harmony in nature. Sometimes these reactions were more extreme, sometimes less extreme, but the general pattern has existed ever since man’s aim to become more ‘modern’ started to manifest itself in the transformation of landscape which was characterized by rapid urban development and a gradual loss of nature.

3. The Depiction of Nature in Romantic Poetry

As explained in detail in the introduction, looking at poetry from the Romantic period is indispensable when it comes to exploring the environmental perception with the help of poetical texts: Romantic poetry is known for its strong focus on nature and many poets who wrote during that period, like Wordsworth and Keats, have gone down in literary history as ‘nature poets’—and unquestionably as some of the most popular poets of this kind. The transformations that started to take place in Britain’s landscape and society at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century have played a great part in contributing to this status of Romantic poetry as ‘nature poetry’, since the advance of industrialization led to nature disappearing more and more or even being destroyed in favor of progress and modernization. Thus, Romantic poems were often attempts to hold on to nature and to point out why it is important to do so. What is maybe most interesting is that the attitudes towards nature expressed by the Romantics can be regarded as the origins of a ‘modern’ environmental attitude that has been conveyed in poetry ever since the age of industrialization. Romantic poetry is central to the literary exploration of environmental attitudes not only because the views expressed in the poems show similarities to various different concepts and theories from the field of environmental literary studies (that were introduced more than a century later), but also because the poems were born out of a similar spirit of the times as today. Dealing with poetry from the Romantic period therefore presents a first step to exploring the sources of an environmentally conscious mindset and to understanding that the views do not seem ‘outmoded’ at all, but actually rather ‘up-to-date’ and more relevant than ever.

3.1. William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”

The first poem from the Romantic period that will be analyzed with regard to the description of nature and its impact on one’s emotions is William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”—a text that could be taken as “a straightforward piece of literary pictorialism” (J. R. Watson 84), but just as much as “a typical ecocritical work which strives to promote a relationship between Nature and human being” (Britto 725). As the full title already suggests, Wordsworth composed this poem in 1798 after revisiting some place on the banks of the River Wye that was already known to him from earlier times. The poem was published in the same year of its composition and its main themes are the perception of nature over time—especially

its perpetually recurring positive effect on one's emotions—and the role of memory with respect to the experiences in nature. In “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, the speaker tells how he feels about being in a place where he had already been at an earlier point in time, about his connection to nature—past and present—and about the effects such an act of revisiting and remembering has on himself and on his attitude towards nature. Interpreting this poem will help to understand why nature mattered so much to people in the Romantic Period because it reveals many sources of such feelings as happiness, harmony, contentment, and comfort. Furthermore, it might also be just another proof that nature's positive influence on one's well-being is not subject to change with time, since our natural surroundings will always inspire in us a sense of pleasure, no matter how much time will pass and no matter how much other things around us will change.

Right at the beginning of the poem, the speaker informs us about the time that has passed since he had last been to the place in nature that he is now visiting again, by stating that “[f]ive years have past; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters” (ll. 1-2).²⁴ It is quite interesting that, after mentioning the “five years”, which would be enough for the reader to understand how much time has passed, he still feels the need to be more precise by specifying the “five years” as “five summers, with the length / Of five long winters”. The first striking thing about this is that the speaker does not only think about the lapse of time in years, but also in seasonal terms. The fact that he feels that it is not sufficient to mention only the “five years”, because he immediately adds the “five summers, with the length / Of five long winters” in the same line, might be seen as a first hint at the speaker's connection to nature and shows that nature has a strong influence on the way he thinks and acts. In contrast to the speaker's first attempt of mentioning the time that has passed with the help of the rather technical time unit ‘year’, his second attempt, the counting in seasons, is more based on sensations or atmospheres and on a sensitivity to the perceivable changes in nature. Furthermore, it is striking that the speaker says that the “five summers” were as long as “five long winters”. Why does the speaker link two different seasons here? Maybe he brings in the winter because he wants to compare the long time of absence from this place in nature to a time of ‘coldness’ in which he was not able to experience such positive emotions (or, at least, not exactly the same) as he knows he can make them in the place he is now

²⁴ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Ed. Ernest de Selincourt. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965 (Reprint). 259-263.

visiting again. Also, if one refers to the winter season as “long”, one usually has the impression that winter is longer than usual—very persistent—and that a change in seasons is long overdue. In the poem, the speaker probably mentions the “five summers, with the length / Of five long winters” because he wants to express that the period of time that has passed since his last visit has seemed to him even longer than it has actually been. The speaker’s attempt to stress the lapse of time between his last and his present visit is also reflected stylistically in the repetition of the word “five” and in the polyptoton formed by “length” and “long” (ll. 1-2), both means of drawing the reader’s attention to the long duration of his phase of absence from that place. After all, these very first lines of the poem already show that the speaker has a very strong connection to that place in nature and the reader becomes interested in learning more about the reasons for why exactly this place is so important to him.

Surprisingly, the speaker does not start right away with describing what the place looks like, but the first detail we get to know about the way the speaker reacts to the place is a reference to the sounds he perceives in nature: He says that “again [he] hear[s] / These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs / With a soft inland murmur” (ll. 2-4). Since the sound of the water is the first thing that the speaker mentions when he describes the place, this sound obviously has a great effect on him. From the addition “with a soft inland murmur”, the reader can deduce that the effect must be a soothing and calming one because of the adjective “soft”. With the “soft inland murmur”, the speaker also personifies the water, possibly as a means of making clear to the reader that there is some kind of connection between him (a human being) and nature. Maybe he would like to express that human beings are part of nature and that nature is a part of us—this interrelatedness being one of the most important claims in the theory of deep ecology. Amir Abbasi and Bahaman Zarrinjooee also agree that Wordsworth, in “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, puts special “emphasis on the close band between man and nature that is the only way for human’s healthy life and mind” (204). Following the description of the sound of the water, a dash makes the reader pause for a moment and is probably used here to give the reader a feeling of how the speaker feels after hearing the sound, because he, too, probably pauses, reflects on the sound and the experience, and then thinks about how to describe it. The words “[o]nce again” (l. 4) function as a means of highlighting that the speaker is visiting a place he visited before, some years ago, and that he probably had similar experiences in that place back then. In fact, the wording “once again” is repeated two times at the beginning of the poem (cf.

l. 4; l. 14), and a third time as “I again” (l. 9), always linked to a certain experience the speaker has in nature that is impressive and highly important to him, and which he experienced in a similar way already in the past. Thus, it becomes clear that “[o]ne of the characteristic elements in the total rhythm of the poem is the shuttling to and fro in time, the poet looking back to his own past [...] and searching his past evolution and his present thoughts and experiences for the seeds of the future” (Gérard 26).

After the description of the sound, the second detail we get to know about the place, then, is a visual one. The speaker “contemplates the landscape from [...] a picturesque ‘station’” (Hess 87) or from a “standpoint of aesthetic distance” (ibid.), from where he is able to “behold these steep and lofty cliffs, / That on a wild secluded scene impress / Thoughts of more deep seclusion” (ll. 5-7). Obviously, he is able to see cliffs and when he looks at them, the feeling of seclusion that he experiences when he is in nature is even reinforced. As the cliffs are described as “steep and lofty”, one can imagine them as ‘wall-like’ and, thus, it is quite understandable that they create an atmosphere of seclusion. Nature was certainly one of the few places that allowed for feelings of seclusion at the time when the poem was written—when more and more people were living in crowded cities where the population was growing steadily. Having in mind this image of the early industrial city, the experience of seclusion must have been all the more special to the speaker. The poem is a perfect example of a Romantic pastoral view: The speaker deliberately describes nature as “a separate sphere, explicitly set apart from normal social and economic life” and “[i]n contrast to the idealizing vision of nature, the poem repeatedly defines ordinary life as wearying and degrading, something the poet must transcend or escape” (Hess 91). It is also added that the cliffs “connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky” (ll. 7-8). There is nothing which could ruin the beautiful and impressive view of the cliffs—no tall buildings or factory chimneys—but the cliffs are so steep that it seems as if they connect to the sky. Everything the speaker beholds belongs to nature and the fact that the “landscape [connects] with the [...] sky” could be taken as a symbol of the harmonious atmosphere in nature that people can be part of: Things are ‘brought in line’ there and man, too, can be led to a feeling of being in harmony with nature. Moreover, one could say that “the consistent use of run-on lines” in this part of the poem adds to the impression of “organic unity” (cf. Gérard 29) and also of the unity of man and nature. Thus, this passage can be taken as a reference to the ecological principle that “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88) and as a

means to put emphasis on the complexity of ecosystems. The use of the adjective “quiet” in line 8 may further support the interpretation of the place as calming, secluded, and harmonious; it is certainly only due to this characteristic of quietness that the speaker is actually able to have these experiences and to reflect on them. Richard Gravil is quite right in saying that certain descriptions in the poem establish “a bridge between landscape and psyche, while the landscape itself becomes the perfect image of a tranquil mind” (36). With the help of the words “I again” (l. 9), the speaker then leads on to the next experience by saying that he “repose[s] / Here, under this dark sycamore” (ll. 9-10) and that he “view[s] / These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts” (ll. 10-11). By using the verb “repose” in this context, the speaker nicely draws on the atmosphere of calmness and seclusion that determined his first experiences that he just presented. Being in nature does not demand any kind of action, effort, or work from him (as it was maybe the case in the industrial city), but it allows for rest, relaxation, and recovery from bustling city life.

The next experience the speaker mentions is another one resulting from his visual perception. He sees “plots of cottage-ground” and “orchard-tufts” (l. 11) and it is also added that there are “unripe fruits, / [...] clad in one green hue” (ll. 12-13). Due to the time of year (July), certain fruits are still unripe and green—seemingly unspectacular to the eye—but the fact that these aspects are nevertheless included in the poem shows that they must have made some impression on the speaker, maybe even because of the greenish “unripe fruits”. Green is the color that we immediately associate with nature and, if one draws on color symbolism, one could also say that it stands for life, freshness, and hope. In a way, the green unripe fruits are like the speaker: In nature, with some time passing, they will soon ripen; likewise, the speaker will profit from his retreat to nature by revival and he will also grow mentally because his experiences will make him adopt a positive attitude towards nature (maybe even one aiming at environmental protection). The hope symbolized by the green color of the unripe fruits matches with his own hope that, in nature, he will always be able to have such positive experiences and that nature will not be too badly affected by industrialization and urbanization. With the third appearance of the word “again” (l. 14), the speaker still continues to reveal more about his visual perception by saying that he “see[s] / These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines / Of sportive wood run wild” (ll. 14-16). The attributes of the wood, namely its being “sportive” and “run wild”, can probably also have a more general meaning here because the image hints at the possibility of ‘letting

loose' or letting go of one's thoughts in nature and of simply enjoying life without any restrictions, rules, or duties in mind.

After that, the speaker refers to the "pastoral farms, / Green to the very door" (ll. 16-17), and he is probably so fascinated by them and finds them worth mentioning because rural landscape constituted such a strong contrast to the emerging industrial scene at that time. A picturesque landscape element like a green farm was certainly one of the counter images to the industrial town which was generally a less pleasant scene to watch: Compared to the freshness and colorfulness of nature, the city may often have appeared rather dark and gloomy, probably not least because the air was indeed filled with blackish factory smoke. There is, however, also mention of a kind of smoke in the poem that the speaker has included for the sake of its picturesque nature and for the thoughts it produces in him. At one point, he tells about the "wreaths of smoke" that are "[s]ent up, in silence, from among the trees" (ll. 17-18) coming from "vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods" (l. 20) or from "some Hermit's cave, where by his fire / The Hermit sits alone" (ll. 21-22). Here, the smoke is not perceived in negative terms (as maybe in the city), but it is associated with the silence and calmness that, so far, has been reflected in every part of the place the speaker describes. Eudo C. Mason is quite right in posing the following question with regard to the description of the smoke in the poem:

Wie kommt es aber dazu, daß der sonst [...] von einem übertriebenen Wahrheitsfanatismus beseelte Wordsworth die naheliegende Möglichkeit, es könnte sich bei diesen Rauchschwaden im Wald um Kohlenmeiler handeln, gar nicht streift, sondern sich nur mit viel unwahrscheinlicheren – und nebenbei bemerkt auch viel "romantischeren" – Vermutungen abgibt? Will er hier einfach sein Modell "verschönern", nach einem Ideal der "schönen Natur" eine zwar großartige, aber leider schon weitgehend industrialisierte Kulturlandschaft zu einer bukolisch-patriarchalischen Urlandschaft umstilisieren und verklären? (133).

It is exactly the fact that there are no crowds of people in that place and that there are only slight indications of the presence of other people which makes the speaker enjoy that place so much. It almost seems like he appreciates nature most for being able to feel some kind of solitude there. Even when he imagines the presence of other people, the overall image remains one of solitude in nature, which is also emphasized by him saying that the "Hermit sits alone" (l. 22) and that the woods are "houseless" (l. 20). As Carl Woodring concludes, the features of the place (e.g. the trees) "almost conceal all human activity" (92) and they give no notice of busy lives (cf. *ibid.*). For the most part, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" can certainly serve "as a model for contemporary environmentalism" (Hess 83), but with the idea of solitude in nature,

“however attractive an idea or however attractively presented, [it] leads us in exactly the wrong direction in ecological terms if it defines nature through isolated individual consciousness and aesthetic experience alone” (Hess 98).

In the rest of the poem, the speaker focuses less on “the description of the scene and turns to an expression of the moral and mystical effect of the landscape” (J. R. Watson 84). After having outlined how he experiences revisiting the place in nature where he had already been at an earlier point in time—what it looks like to him now and how it feels to be there again—the speaker next explains why he felt the need to come back in the first place and what effect his first visit had on him during the five years of absence from nature that have passed. He starts by saying that, during his time of absence from nature, “[t]hese beauteous forms [...] have not been to [him] / As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye” (ll. 23-24). Maybe the intention behind the comparison to a blind person is to express that he had been lacking something important (maybe even vital) for too long: contact with nature. Like a blind person, who has lost the ability to see, the speaker has maybe felt ‘impaired’ in a similar way because he could not have these experiences in nature that he regards as crucial for his well-being. However, it is quite interesting that, even during his time of absence from nature, he was sometimes still filled with “sensations sweet” (l. 27) and put in a positive mood by his memories of the “beauteous forms” (l. 23) of nature, especially “in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din / Of towns and cities [...] In hours of weariness” (ll. 25-27). This shows that the positive effect of the experiences in nature can last quite long and that it can still have an impact on the way a person feels after some time has passed. What is described here fits well with Wordsworth’s idea of ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’, which he explains as follows:

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on (qtd. in Sucksmith, “Orchestra” 150).

Being able to remember the emotions again at a later point thus enables a person to experience feelings similar to the ones experienced in nature (despite the change in location), makes one aware of how important the experience in nature has actually been, and was certainly often the first step to the production of nature poetry in the Romantic Period. It might be surprising that the speaker was even able to recollect the emotions in places and moments one would least expect it, namely in the city (cf. l. 26) and in

“hours of weariness” (l. 27). However, the reason for that may lie exactly in the fact that the atmosphere in the city contrasted dramatically with the atmosphere in nature that the recollected emotions were felt by the speaker in an even more extreme way and made him long for a new retreat to nature even more. The absence from nature brings on “[d]epression and meaninglessness” (Waldoff 149)²⁵, but through memory, the positive emotions come back to the speaker “[w]ith tranquil restoration” (l. 30): He feels the “sweet sensations [...] in the blood [...] along the heart” (ll. 27-28) and they are “passing even into [his] purer mind” (l. 29). The experience of ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’ seems to be both physical and spiritual; nature has thus affected the speaker in his whole being. By emphasizing the effect nature has on the speaker, this passage stresses, once again, the holistic world view and the fact that all living beings are part of an ecosystem, where “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88).

A little later, he mentions another function of the memories of nature that he refers to as a “gift / Of aspect more sublime” (l. 36-37). We learn that the recollected emotions put the speaker in a “blessed mood” (l. 37) which enables him to endure the harsh reality of everyday life because “the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world, / Is lightened” (ll. 39-41). The speaker probably includes this detail to make people understand that it is absolutely important, especially for city dwellers, to spend some time in nature here and then because it offers a new perspective on everyday life and influences one’s emotions very positively. This is particularly true for people who lived at the time when the poem was written, during the Industrial Revolution, since cityscapes were often marked by misery and poverty and because many aspects of city life back then led to fear, depression, dismay, and discomfort. According to the speaker, in the end, “with an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony, and the deep power of joy”, one will “see into the life of things” (ll. 48-49), which means that there will even be some sort of enlightening moment: People will be able to see that there is more to life than what they know from the city and they should be led to an awareness of the importance of nature for their well-being. It is also worth noting here that “[t]he quietness of the eye contrasts markedly with the restless active working of the visual sense in the first paragraph” (J. R. Watson 84). So, the important

²⁵ In his essay “Wordsworth’s Healing Power: Basic Trust in ‘Tintern Abbey’”, Leon Waldoff claims that the importance of nature and the fact that an absence from it can lead to “[d]epression and meaninglessness” (149) is a result of its “maternal” (ibid.) function, which probably also explains why the term “Mother Nature” is used several times in the essay (e.g. on page 149).

insights about nature will only come once “the body is laid asleep, and the soul becomes alive” (J. R. Watson 84). The speaker further tries to convince the reader that the effect of ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’ is not just “a vain belief” (l. 50), by referring to his own experience and stating that remembering nature and its beauties has always had the described effect on him—not just one time, but over and over again:

how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of the heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro’ the woods (ll. 50-56)

It is quite striking that the speaker even addresses the River Wye as if talking to a person. He refers to the river as a “wanderer thro’ the woods” (l. 56) not just because the image fits the way the river traverses the landscape, but it is also a means of personifying the river and to convey the idea of an interconnectedness between human beings and nature as already observed at an earlier point in the poem (cf. l. 4).

In the next passage of the poem, it becomes clear, though, that these memories of the experiences in nature are not exactly the same as the actual experiences. In the course of time, they will turn into “recognitions dim and faint” (l. 59) and there will only remain “gleams of half-extinguished thought” (l. 58). For this reason, the speaker finds it important to always go back to nature at some point in order to make the “picture of the mind [revive] again” (l. 61). What he really likes most about being in nature is not just “the sense / Of present pleasure” (ll. 62-63), but rather the “pleasing thoughts / That in this moment there is life and food / For future years” (ll. 63-65), even if he will have to come back to his place in nature at some point in time to refresh his memories. However, the speaker also points to the fact that the experiences one has in nature (and how one sees nature) will change in the course of time because we, too, change with time. He demonstrates this by making use of first-hand experience again and tries to make the reader understand how he felt and thought about nature when he visited the place for the first time (at a young age) and how he sees nature now when he is revisiting the place. With regard to his first visit, the speaker says that “nature then [...] To [him] was all in all” (ll. 72-75), that “[t]he sounding cataract / Haunted [him] like a passion” (ll. 76-77), and that “the deep and gloomy wood, / Their colours and their forms, were then to [him] / An appetite; a feeling of love” (ll. 78-80). However, he also adds that he cannot remember everything completely—that he “cannot paint / What then [he] was” (ll. 75-76)—but that he knows at least that “like a roe / [He] bounded

o'er the mountains [...] more like a man / Flying from something that he dreads than one / Who sought the thing he loved" (ll. 67-72). His first visit in nature had been different because "[a]t this stage, he had only the sense perception of the scenic beauty of Nature" (Britto 723): Even though there was the same "feeling and a love" (l. 80) for nature as today, it "had no need of a remoter charm, / By thought supplied" (ll. 81-82). M. John Britto contends that "[f]rom an ecocritical perspective, the childhood stage [...] is a stage of avidya or ignorance" (723). Scott Hess's view blends in with that:

The poem's central theme [...] becomes the growth from an earlier sense of full embodied participation in environment [...] to a current aesthetic and spiritual detachment in which the body seems to fade away almost entirely into purified contemplative vision (88).

Only during his second visit is the speaker able to really appreciate nature to the fullest because he has learned that it is not all about the momentary joy of being in nature, but that it is rather more important to keep nature in one's mind all the time, to add reflection to one's emotions, and to remember one's experiences in nature after some time has passed. Only then, after having been away from nature for a while and after having thought about the experiences one had there, will one become aware of how much nature really matters. Woodring comes to the same conclusion and says that "[i]t is not the immediate sense of terror, awe, or pleasure that is most important [...] but what one does with the experience [...] in later moments of quiet reflection. And what one does *after* reflection" (97). The speaker claims that, through reflection, he "learned / To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth" (ll. 88-90). His new way of looking at nature leads to him being overcome by an "ample power / To chasten and subdue" (ll. 92-93) and by a "joy / Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused" (ll. 94-96). Because nature can evoke such feelings in the speaker, he regards it as "[t]he anchor of [his] purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of [his] heart, and soul / of all [his] moral being" (ll. 109-111). Gravit thus claims that the speaker has an understanding of nature as "both supportively human and instructively superhuman" (49). The fact that the speaker refers to nature as a "guide" and "guardian" here shows how essential it is for him to have experiences in nature and that it can, indeed, influence him in everything he does, in making certain decisions, or in adopting certain attitudes towards different aspects of life. All in all, the depiction of the speaker's development in nature is reminiscent of another ecological principle, namely of the "acceptance of evolution as a fact of natural and cultural life, and the view of reality as a constantly changing and self-transformative *process*" (Zapf,

“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88). Just as nature changes with time (even though the speaker can still remember many aspects of how nature appeared to him in the past), the speaker—as part of the larger whole—changes as well.

Almost at the end of the poem, we suddenly learn that the speaker owes much of his new insights about nature to the presence of his sister who accompanies him during his visit. Thus, as Hess also states in his essay, “[t]he end of the poem breaks from [the] pattern of isolation” (92) that was so striking at the beginning of the poem. The speaker addresses his sister as “[his] dearest friend” (l. 115) and he claims that “in [her] voice [he] [catches] / The language of [his] former heart, and [that he] [reads] / [His] former pleasures in the shooting lights / Of [her] wild eyes” (ll. 116-119). For some reason the presence of his sister helps him to remember how he thought and felt about nature during his first visit. It is not clear whether she was with him back then, though, but if she was, it would certainly explain why he introduces her now. The memories of his first visit have had a positive effect on him ever since and because he has been able to have a similar experience in nature as he had some years ago, he now also knows “that Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her” (ll. 122-123). For those who have learned to appreciate nature, it will never lose its significance and will always have a positive influence—no matter where he or she is or how bad the situation is. The speaker is convinced that, if one has once been able to see that nature “[i]s full of blessings” (l. 134), it will help to avoid that the “dreary intercourse of daily life” will “e’er prevail against us” (ll. 131-132). At the end of the poem, then, the speaker tries to give back to his sister what she gave to him: He, too, wants to help his sister experience nature in the way she has allowed him to. Therefore, he wants “the moon [to] / Shine on [her]” (ll. 134-135) and the “misty mountain-winds [to] be free / To blow against [her]” (ll. 136-137), so that “in after years, / [...] these ecstasies shall be matured / Into a sober pleasure” (ll. 137-139). Later, then, his sister will “[o]f tender joy [...] remember [him]” (l. 145) and “[t]hat on the banks of this delightful stream / [They] stood together” (ll. 150-151). He further claims that she will not only remember his presence, but also the fact that “after many years / Of absence” (ll. 156-157) the place had become “more dear” (l. 159) to him. It seems that it is absolutely important to the speaker that, some day, his sister will see that his feelings about nature have changed with time—that he has come back to the place with “warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal / Of holier love” (ll. 154-155). He clearly wishes that his sister, too, will be able to experience nature more thoroughly over time and “imagines that his sister’s sentimental

development will mirror his own” (Kohler 211). This goes well with Waldoff’s finding that the speaker develops in the poem from a “receiver”, who “returns to Nature to take in her presence”, to a “giver, offering ‘healing thoughts’ and ‘exhortations’ to his sister whom he now identifies with his ‘former heart’—that is, with his receiving self” (160).

The interpretation of William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” has allowed for a first insight into a person’s feelings about nature and has helped to understand why spending time in nature was experienced so positively back then in the Romantic Period. In a Romantic pastoral way, the speaker has revealed that he enjoys the calming solitude in nature and that he feels very comfortable there, since nature differs so much from his usual surroundings and because it offers a change to the rather depressing atmosphere of the city. It is for this reason that the poem can be said to develop the dynamics of imaginative counter-discourse, as defined by Zapf in his theory of literature as cultural ecology. It should have become clear, though, that the speaker is partly in an “exclusively visual interaction with the scene” (Hess 87); therefore, the poem differs from other texts that will be interpreted in this thesis: It “invokes a sense of silence and stillness more appropriate to solitary reading or viewing a painting in an art museum than to multi-sensual, bodily immersion in an actual outdoor environment” (Hess 87-88). Although the speaker’s experience in nature is certainly a very positive one, the fact that he is only in a “visual interaction” (Hess 87) with nature (at least most of the time, except for the very beginning), shows, in Hess’s view, that the poem is not yet a description of an “ecological ideal” (95), of a person being in a *deeper* interaction with nature. Still, it was also shown that nature continued to influence the speaker positively once he was back in the city, since the memory of his experience in nature could make him feel “sensations sweet” (l. 27) even if he was no longer there. So, we have come to see that ‘man-made’ space can help to really understand how much nature matters to us because, in nature, we are sometimes so overwhelmed by our emotions that we do not immediately realize the actual significance of the experience. When the speaker returns to nature, he experiences the place even more positively and deeply because he now knows that the joy is not temporary. His delight in nature grows and, in the end, it almost takes on religious forms, as can be seen from the speaker’s reference to himself as a “worshipper of nature” (l. 152) and the description of his emotions as ‘holy’ (cf. l. 155). Mason’s view is similar because she claims that the speaker’s experience is characterized by a progress “vom ästhetisch-therapeutischen Eudämonismus über das Ethische zum

Metaphysisch-Religiösen” (137). Finally, it becomes clear that the speaker would like to inspire others to have similar experiences and to come to similar insights, which is why Michael Kohler claims that “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” still “reads plausibly as an allegory of a developing environmental ethic” (211). Against the impression one might get from reading only the beginning of the poem, it proves that Wordsworth “is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestations [...] than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations” (Farooq and Chandra 119). One of the main intentions behind the poem is probably to make people aware of the fact that nature will *always* have a positive impact on us—leading “from joy to joy” (l. 125)—no matter how much time will pass and how much things will change. Further, with its environmental message, it “advises every reader to look back and see how human beings have behaved towards Nature in the past, and what the consequences of their anthropocentric attitudes towards Nature are” (Britto 725).

3.2. William Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”

William Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, composed in 1804 and published in 1807, is another famous poem from the Romantic Period which will help in gaining an understanding of the role nature played for many people at that time.²⁶ The fact that it is concerned with daffodils and that it has also become widely known by that name amongst Wordsworth scholars and readers renders it very suitable for an interpretation in terms of nature. In fact, the poem does not only contain pure descriptions of observations made in nature, but, like “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, it is also about recurring memories and man’s response and relation to nature. It will become clear, however, that “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” focuses less on the aspect of memory and much more on the actual experience in nature, especially on the effect nature can have on one’s imagination. Therefore, on the one hand, analyzing the poem may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’, but on the other hand, it will also lead to new insights with respect to the ways nature could have an impact on people’s thinking, feeling, and behavior.

²⁶ As already noted in the introduction, Wordsworth’s view of nature was probably not shared by society as a whole (because the perception of nature also differed depending on one’s social class), but it gives an idea of the general significance of nature at a time when the British landscape was changing due to the Industrial Revolution.

The poem begins with the lyrical I describing the sudden discovery of daffodils while wandering across the countryside. Wandering, of course, is what allows us to explore and experience our natural surroundings—it is the act of wandering that stands for a person’s deliberate decision to go out and *enter* nature. At the beginning of the first stanza, the speaker compares himself to a cloud when saying “I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o’er vales and hills” (ll. 1-2).²⁷ First off, it is rather striking that the speaker compares himself metaphorically to a cloud, a natural object. It seems, after having gone out into nature, he already feels himself to be ‘a part of it’. By comparing himself to the cloud, he clearly states that he understands human beings and nature to be closely connected, just as in the sense of the theory of deep ecology. Roger Bell, too, is convinced that the speaker’s comparison to a cloud reflects the Romanticists’ “assertion of the ‘oneness’ of Man and Nature and the denial of the apparent differences between life-forms and between the ‘animate’ and the ‘inanimate’” (141). The *tertium comparationis* between the speaker and the cloud probably lies in the fact that both are somehow driven by nature, for it is the wind that makes the clouds move and it is the speaker’s interest in exploring nature that makes him wander around. Moreover, while one has duties and responsibilities in everyday life when one is kept from nature, a retreat into the natural world may evoke feelings of freedom, ease and insouciance in a person. One should also not overlook the choice of the word “lonely” (l. 1), which may refer to the solitude and calmness one can experience in nature—an aspect that has also been praised by the speaker in “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”. Many people—especially those who did not have to work and make a living in the countryside—probably made the experience that, while one is constantly surrounded by people in towns, especially in bustling industrial areas, nature can offer a place of peaceful solitude.

By adding that the cloud “floats on high o’er vales and hills” (l. 2), “a relative clause giving further information about ‘a cloud’ in line 1” (Steen 517), the speaker emphasizes his position as a wanderer in nature from which he is able to view an overwhelming panorama. Just as a cloud moving high above in the sky, he feels that he has a vast overview of nature that surrounds him for he is standing in the middle of it. Since the words “high” and “hills” (l. 2) form an alliteration, this aspect is stressed even

²⁷ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Ed. Ernest de Selincourt. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965 (Reprint). 216-217.

more and it conveys to the reader the speaker's feeling of being confronted with an impressive landscape as if standing on the top of a mountain.

It is then that the speaker goes on with telling the reader about the sudden discovery of a field of daffodils. Since the speaker describes the daffodils as "golden" (l. 4), one might say that the sight of the daffodils means a lot to him and is highly appreciated. In the speaker's opinion, these daffodils share a certain feature with gold, namely its value and preciousness. Thus, the daffodils are not only similar to gold in color, but the speaker also compares the daffodils to gold in terms of worth. Being confronted with plenty of bright yellow daffodils has obviously been a very fascinating experience for the lyrical I, since the sight of the daffodils means just as much to him as gold means to others. Furthermore, in the next line, he refers to his surroundings again by saying that the daffodils are "beside the lake, beneath the trees" (l. 5). The speaker is certainly overwhelmed by the natural surroundings as a whole and has an idea of nature's complexity—"a basic insight of ecology" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89). Lakes and trees are noticed and present one origin of his fascination, but it is the field of daffodils which raises his spirits in particular.

What is even more interesting is the fact that the speaker anthropomorphizes the daffodils when he refers to them as "[f]luttering and dancing in the breeze" (l. 6). His attributing of human actions to the daffodils also corresponds nicely with the beginning of the stanza, where the speaker likens himself to a cloud. While the speaker personifies the daffodils, he makes himself an object of nature and this complementary process implies a unity between nature and man. The speaker is presented as someone who has gained an understanding of the "most important principle of ecology" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 88), namely that "*everything is connected to everything else*" (ibid.). Through the speaker's descriptions, "[i]nstead of isolated phenomena, the potentially infinite network of their interrelationships moves into focus" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 88). In fact, it is this unity between nature and man that Wordsworth has so often tried to convey to the reader which is so cleverly demonstrated here in only one stanza. Wohlwill's psychological interpretation is that this experienced unity between man and nature might have much to do with the difference between urban and natural surroundings: While in an urban environment, social interactions play a central role, in nature, "the individual experiences so little reaction to or acknowledgement of his or her own presence that the boundaries between the self and the environment become muted and lose definition" (25).

In the second stanza, the speaker continues with describing the daffodils by comparing them to the Milky Way. He says that the daffodils “stretched in never-ending line / Along the margin of the bay” (ll. 9-10) are as “[c]ontinuous as the stars that shine / And twinkle on the milky way” (ll. 7-8). It is actually quite understandable that the sight of the daffodils stretching along the shore of the lake reminds the speaker of twinkling stars on the Milky Way. Just as before, when he described the daffodils as “golden” (l. 4) in the first stanza, the speaker’s reason for this comparison is due to the color of the daffodils—their bright or golden yellow, which reminds him of shining stars in the sky. The speaker’s observation of the bright yellow daffodils that stretch along the bay is really similar to the Milky Way with all its glowing stars in the night sky. Just as the Milky Way seems like a glowing ‘band’ in the sky in which it is hard to make out individual stars, the daffodils are so large in number that they form a yellow field which is impressive in its totality. That the speaker is confronted with a vast number of daffodils is further highlighted by him saying that they are “stretched in never-ending line” (l. 9) and that he saw “[t]en thousand [...] at a glance” (l. 11). Both aspects can be said to present a hyperbole, since they are highly exaggerated. The daffodils are not stretched in a line that is “never-ending” (l. 9) and there are probably not “[t]en thousand[s]” (l. 11) of them. The fact that the speaker tends to exaggerate, however, may be just another proof of him being enormously impressed by the sight of these daffodils. The sight is so fascinating and overwhelming to him that his imagination is immediately heightened. Since the speaker is showing such strong emotions of cheerfulness and fascination, he is no longer able to offer realistic descriptions of or judgments about his surroundings. This reaction of the speaker goes hand in hand with the Romanticist’s idea of nature and emotions being strongly linked. Physical and moral health could be achieved by going out into nature and the experiences one had there were not only believed to lead to positive emotions, but also to inspire one’s imagination. Thus, immersing oneself into nature often meant to forget the reality of everyday life and to open up to new and different experiences that this sphere allows for.

Again, another example of the speaker’s imagination in this stanza is his continuous personifying of the daffodils. The speaker watches the daffodils “[t]ossing their heads in sprightly dance” (l. 12); here, he does not only take up the image of the dancing daffodils that he has come up with in the first stanza already (cf. l. 6), but by mentioning the “heads”, he further attributes human parts of the body to the daffodils.

One could go so far as to say that the daffodils become some kind of natural companion he feels himself to be in communion with. While he is wandering “lonely” (l. 1) around in nature, without any fellow humans close by, he regards natural objects as his mates and “lends [nature] a soul” (Beach 47).

The third stanza in the poem is the last in which the speaker describes the sight of the daffodils. Here, the “description of [the] initial perception or experience of the daffodils, which occupies the whole of the first section, is accompanied by a strong ‘feeling tone’ of pleasure erupting steadily into a powerful emotional state for which joy, even elation at times, is not too extreme a word” (Sucksmith, “Orchestra” 151-152.). The speaker begins with a comparison of the nearby lake and its waves to the daffodils by saying “[t]he waves beside them danced; but they / Out-did the sparkling waves in glee” (ll. 13-14). First of all, it can be said that the comparison is, at the same time, an intensification or climax. The speaker is taken by the sight of the nearby lake and its “dancing” waves already, but he immediately adds an even more fascinating image, namely that of the daffodils stretching along the shore of the lake. The speaker gives proof of his interest in the beauty of the lake by referring to its “waves [which] danced” (l. 13). It is quite interesting that he applies the same image to the lake as the one he used before when giving a description of the daffodils. To him, there seems to be a similarity between the daffodils and the waves of the lake in terms of motion, since he imagines both to be “dancing” (cf. l. 6, l. 12, and l. 13)—another implication of the ecological principle that everything is interconnected in a vast ecosystem. Harvey Peter Sucksmith tries to explain the meaning of the dancing motif by saying that

the dance combines spontaneous with ordered movement, vitality with design, and that it expresses that same paradoxical association of spontaneity and direction which Wordsworth has identified as interacting together within the poetic process (“Orchestra” 153).

However, one could also explain the movement with the help of the fact that nature is “the animating or activating principle of all things in the universe” (Beach 47; cf. Stallknecht 843).

Another similarity between the daffodils and the lake lies in their common feature of sparkling. The daffodils have been described as “golden” (l. 4) and “twinkling” (l. 8) like stars before and the speaker now also discovers this feature in the waves, which is probably caused by reflections of the sun in the water. Obviously, the lake and the daffodils share some features that impress and fascinate the speaker. Still, he admits that the view of the daffodils is superior to that of the lake, which he makes clear by saying

that they “[o]ut-did the sparkling waves in glee” (l. 14). One could say that the speaker adopts a clever strategy here—he only uses the image of the lake to contrast it with that of the daffodils in order to emphasize their unsurpassable singularity. The daffodils are so unique in the speaker’s opinion because they express a certain “glee” (ibid.) and it is exactly this feature that causes his enthusiasm and excitement. But why do the daffodils radiate “glee”? Since the speaker described the daffodils as “dancing” several times before, one might take this as one of the reasons, as dancing is usually an expression of joy and happiness. Furthermore, one could also trace the “glee” back to their being yellow. In terms of color symbolism, yellow usually stands for warmth, pleasure, and happiness, since it is such a bright color. In the next lines, the speaker proceeds by telling the reader that the “glee” of the daffodils is contagious because it leads to sudden feelings of gaiety in their observers. He states that “[a] poet could not but be gay, / In such a jocund company” (ll. 15-16) and it is here where he explicitly presents himself as having experienced this ‘contagion’ of happiness. According to Charles Hartshorne, it is this pleasure throughout nature which is an “identifiable feature” of Wordsworth’s view of nature (cf. 81). Again, as could be seen from the first stanza, the fact that the daffodils and the speaker share a certain “glee” establishes a unity between them. In the first stanza, this unity was achieved by the processes of personification and ‘(self-)depersonalization’; here, the unity results from a mutual “glee”.

It becomes clear from the next lines that the speaker is still so overwhelmed by the daffodils that he is not able to do anything but gaze (cf. l. 17). The speaker says that “[he] gazed—and gazed—but little thought / What wealth the show to [him] had brought” (ll. 17-18). In line 17, the connection between structure and content is quite striking because the repetition of the word “gazed” even stresses the fact that he gazed in amazement as a response to the view of the daffodils. Also, the dashes convey to the reader that it took the speaker a moment to think about the daffodils before he could go on with his description—likewise, the reader is invited to make pauses in this line in order to comprehend the speaker’s emotional state. Since the speaker is still in amazement and overwhelmed by the whole scene as well as by his emotions in response to it, he cannot yet realize what a worthwhile experience he has just had (cf. l. 18). Ulrike Schwab comes to the conclusion that the speaker’s amazement is probably so strong because it is so profound and far-reaching:

Die Natur beeindruckt den Sprecher mit ihren Charakteristika der Stabilität ('continuous', 'never-ending'), Fülle ('host', 'crowd', 'ten thousand'), Bewegung ('floating', 'fluttering', 'tossing', 'dancing', 'breeze') und Pracht ('golden', 'stars... twinkle', 'sparkling waves') (145).

As stated at an earlier point already, the way the speaker thinks and feels about nature is strongly linked to the awareness of nature's complexity, which shows that his idea of nature is in line with one of ecology's "crucial concepts" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89).

Just like in "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", it is not until a substantial amount of time has passed that the speaker understands how valuable this experience has been and that he is able to reflect on his emotions. The last stanza thus presents another example of Wordsworth's concept of 'emotion recollected in tranquility': The speaker says that the situation comes back to him as a flashback "when on [his] couch [he] lie[s] / In vacant or in pensive mood" (ll. 19-20). It is only then, when he has turned back to his familiar and accustomed environment and when he is not completely taken by strong emotions, that he is able to call the experience back into his mind and to rejoice at it. The memory is described as a "bliss of solitude" (l. 22) which comforts him and pleases him. The mentioning of solitude fits the "lonely" wandering from the beginning, but here, in the end, the "solitariness has become a purposeful one in which an intensely inner communion with the daffodils is realized" (Sucksmith, "Orchestra" 156). Again, as in the first Wordsworth poem that was analyzed, it is remarkable that even though some time has passed and the speaker finds himself in a completely different environment, his memories can still arouse the same emotions in him that he has felt back then outside in nature. The speaker adds that "[his] heart with pleasure fills / And dances with the daffodils" (ll. 23-24). Although he does not see the 'real' daffodils, the mere memory leads the speaker to happiness and a feeling of closeness to nature through the imagination of dancing with the daffodils.

In a last step, it is important to have a look at the poem's structure, since it can be said to present a response to what is described content-wise. The poem is structured into four stanzas of six lines each, in which the first four lines present a cross-rhyme that is followed by a rhyming couplet. As far as meter is concerned, all lines in the poem are in iambic tetrameter. Since there are no alternations in meter or exceptions in structure and rhyme, the poem can be said to form a structural unity. This unity in form corresponds nicely with the unity between mankind and nature—the holistic world view—that is highlighted in the poem.

Taking everything into account, one can say that Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" provides, once more, an idea of the positive impact nature can have on the individual, with the new finding that such strong emotions evoked by nature (as joy and happiness) may also further stimulate one's imagination. Moreover, an aspect that has been stressed in this poem much more than in the first one is that a retreat into nature reminds human beings of their closeness to nature and that this feeling may lead to an identification with natural objects and surroundings—probably a consequence of the heightened imagination. It can thus be said that, on the one hand, the presentation of nature in the poem follows the pastoral tradition, while on the other hand, it echoes the main premises of ecological discourse and claims of the theory of deep ecology; above all, the text serves as what Zapf calls imaginative counter-discourse in his concept of literature as cultural ecology, since nature is depicted as a peaceful, happy, and spiritually-inspiring place. Although the poem focuses mainly on the visual impacts—containing many descriptions of colors and motions—these experiences are shown to be so impressive that they will last in one's mind for a long time, still being able to overwhelm one by simple remembrance. Thus, the poem is similar to the first Wordsworth poem that was analyzed in this thesis with respect to the 'emotion recollected in tranquility'. However, because the speaker no longer simply observes or watches the scene but interacts with the environment more strongly (since nature also has an effect on the workings of the mind and the imagination), the poem also differs greatly from "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey".

3.3. William Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned"

The next poem that will be analyzed with respect to the perception of nature is William Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned", which was published in 1798. The interpretations of the first two poems, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", have already shown that people do not only seek to visit nature for its splendor and beauty—for the sake of nature only—but that they also desire to experience nature because they are highly aware of the effects it can have on them. The main effects discovered so far included the awareness that one's memories of the experiences in nature will affect one's emotions in a similar way as the actual experience, that nature will never stop to influence one's well being positively, and that spending time in nature can lead to a feeling of being in harmony or communion with it. In "The Tables Turned", now, we are reminded of another effect, namely the way nature

can function as a kind of ‘teacher’ to its visitors and the way it can lead them to a form of ‘wisdom’.²⁸ Thus, the effects mentioned so far, which were largely dependent on one’s ability to feel, are now complemented by an effect that is described as one of knowing. Even though this form of ‘knowing’ is still very much a consequence of the feelings resulting from being in nature, this aspect is probably included to make clear to the reader that going out into nature does not only affect one’s emotions, but that it also leads to knowledge: gaining a deep understanding of nature, realizing its importance and what it is good for, and maybe also learning more about oneself.

In the first stanza of “The Tables Turned”, the speaker addresses a friend (cf. “my Friend”, l. 1 and l. 3) to convince him of going out into nature to have a desirable experience.²⁹ To be more precise, the friend is addressed two times: First, the speaker says “[u]p! up! my Friend, and quit your books; / Or surely you’ll grow double” (ll. 1-2) and immediately afterwards, he turns to the friend again by saying “[u]p! up! my Friend, and clear your looks; / Why all this toil and trouble?” (ll. 3-4). The imperatives in the address show how strongly the speaker wants his friend to leave his usual surroundings and to visit nature; he is really prompting him to do so. The repetition of the phrase “[u]p! up! my Friend” further adds to the immediacy and shows that the speaker expects him to act instantaneously. Obviously, it is very important to the speaker that his friend, too, enjoys being in nature here and then, since he has the impression that he is too often busy with reading books (cf. l. 1) and because he can tell from his friend’s looks that he is not in a good mood (cf. ll. 3-4). By telling his friend to “quit [his] books” (l. 1), the speaker tries to make him (and readers of the poem) understand that reading books is not the only way of gaining knowledge and that it is equally important and enlightening to spend time in nature. Moreover, the question “Why all this toil and trouble?” (l. 4) shows that the speaker thinks that it is absolutely unnecessary for his friend to be in a bad mood and to endure “toil and trouble” any longer because visiting nature would do away with these negative feelings and “clear [his] looks” (l. 3) by affecting his emotions in a very positive way.

²⁸ Quite interestingly, John N. Serio notes that “The Tables Turned” is not the only poem by Wordsworth that conveys the idea of nature leading to knowledge. He claims that “Wordsworth’s early poetry [...] is filled with allusions to nature’s informing of the mind” (63) and mentions that “Expostulation and Reply” and “To My Sister” also “place the book of nature above schoolbooks” (ibid.).

²⁹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. Vol. 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966 (Reprint). 57.

It is then that the speaker begins with adducing reasons for why going out into nature is such a positive experience and to further convince his friend (and the reader). First, he mentions “[t]he sun, above the mountain’s head” (l. 5) for its “freshening lustre mellow” (l. 6). The words brought into connection with the sun here carry very positive connotations and, moreover, it seems that they do not simply describe the sun, but also the way the speaker feels when seeing it. Thus, the choice of words is apparently very much determined by the speaker’s reaction to the sun when he is in nature: the expression “freshening lustre mellow” may come from the speaker’s feeling that visiting nature and being able to see “[t]he sun, above the mountain’s head” (l. 5) is refreshing and calming. In addition to that, he states that the sun spreads “[t]hrough all the long green fields [...] / His first sweet evening yellow” (ll. 7-8) and the fact that each of these two lines contains a color reference proves, once again, that colors influence people’s perception of their surroundings to a great extent. On the one hand, the fields certainly cause pleasure in the speaker because of their vastness (“long”, l. 7) —they are so long that it seems like there is only nature far and wide because there is nothing that disturbs the landscape and the cities are well out of sight. On the other hand, however, it is definitely also the green color of the fields that is so pleasant to the speaker, since it conveys to him an atmosphere of freshness, life, and bloom which builds a very strong contrast to the perception of colors indoors or in the industrial city. By mentioning the greenness, he probably wants to make his friend become aware of how ‘full of life’ nature is and that it is exactly for this reason that people should not simply ignore it and close their eyes to the many positive experiences that one can have there, but open up to it and become filled with liveliness and vitality. Likewise, the speaker finds the “sweet evening yellow” (l. 8) of the sun worth mentioning, since it has also contributed to his pleasure in nature. It is actually quite comprehensible that the speaker is so positively affected by the yellow color because yellow is generally said to symbolize warmth and happiness (due to its brightness) and it was shown before that the speaker in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” was led to similar feelings when he beheld the yellow daffodils. After all, with his decision to put emphasis on the different colors one can see in nature, the speaker can be said to promote one of the main ecological principles, namely that of nature’s diversity (cf. Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89).

In the next stanza, the speaker refers again to his friend and his books and it becomes clear that he would like people to realize that it is not by reading books that

they will understand nature and find out more about it, but only by going there. He says that trying to learn about nature by reading is “a dull and endless strife” (l. 9) and wants his friend to “[c]ome [and] hear the woodland linnet” (l. 10) because “[t]here’s more of wisdom in it” (l. 12). The strong adjectives “dull” and “endless” are used here by the speaker to express how vain he believes it is to attempt grasping nature via books—the important insights are only gained from nature itself. The speaker is convinced that “there is more of wisdom” in the song of the linnet that he can hear in nature because the bird is a part of it, and so he ascribes to every aspect of nature (whether flora or fauna) an educating function more significant than that of books or human knowledge. In stanza 4, the speaker draws his friend’s attention to another songbird by saying “hark! How blithe the throstle sings” (l. 13). He then adds that “he [the bird], too, is no mean preacher” (l. 14) and that his friend should therefore “[c]ome forth into the light of things, / [and] [l]et Nature be [his] Teacher” (ll. 15-16). Listening to the singing birds’ twittering is, of course, just one way of learning more about nature and gaining a deeper understanding of it—above all, what is decisive here is the speaker’s willingness to give up anthropocentric thinking for a holistic world view. Encountering the different bird species does not only lead him, once more, to a “recognition of the *diversity* of life” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89) in nature, but also makes him understand that he, too, is a part of it. He seems to know that

to encounter ‘the light of things’ themselves, one must shed the notion of light as emerging from a separate source. Indeed, one must relinquish the idea of separateness itself. To come into the light of things, one must become the things themselves, must see through things as things (Rudy 109).

It is line 16 which contains the most important message of the poem because, here, nature (in its totality) is explicitly compared to a teacher for the first time; by saying “[l]et Nature be your Teacher” (l. 16), the speaker simultaneously personifies nature. He tried to express that nature is ‘full of life’ before, but here, he emphasizes even more that it is not inanimate (like a book) and thus maybe more meaningful and powerful in its function to educate. It is probably wrong to argue that a teacher—a human being—will always lead to better education than books, but, at least, a teacher’s way of educating does also include interaction (e.g. the possibility to ask questions and get answers) or more illustrative examples. Thus, maybe it is exactly this aspect of ‘interaction’ which has led the speaker to see nature as a teacher: By going out into the natural world, people will also feel that there is some kind of ‘interaction’ when they realize that nature can have an effect on their emotions and when they begin to look at

themselves (and their lives) in relation to nature. This also proves that the speaker's view of nature is in line with the ecological principle that "nature is not simple but complex" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89). In accordance with the premises of ecology, the speaker denies "the validity of the conventional notion that 'nature' is simple and 'culture' is complex" (ibid.), by bringing together both 'spheres' and even ascribing to nature a complex 'cultural' function (education). In fact, visiting nature and being in 'interaction' with it is an enlightening act; according to the speaker it allows people to "[c]ome forth into the light of things" (l. 15). It now seems likely that the speaker included the description of the sunlight in the beginning to further stress the idea of nature as a place of knowledge and wisdom. At this point, one should note that Thomas McFarland interprets Wordsworth's understanding of what nature can do for human beings in a similar way. He, too, is convinced that one of Wordsworth's main aims was to make his readers see that the interaction between man and nature is a decisive factor in coming to certain insights or 'knowledge'. He further concludes that

in most understandings the relation of person to land is conceived as economic: one farms in order to gain the sustenance for living. A second possibility is aesthetic: one likes to live amid pleasant surroundings. A third possibility is utilitarian: one may use the land to construct a building. But in all these possibilities the person has the land. In Wordsworth's vision, however, the person can hardly be said to have the land to any greater extent than the land has the person. The mutual interpenetration does not necessarily bring happiness, as it does not necessarily bring wealth. What it brings is meaning (McFarland 42-43).

Again, the accumulation of imperatives in stanzas 3 and 4 (e.g. "[c]ome", l. 10; "hark", l. 13; "[c]ome forth", l. 15; "let", l. 16) and in the rest of the poem (cf. "[c]lose up", l. 30; "[c]ome forth, and bring", l. 31) implies the urgency with which the speaker approaches his friend. He addresses him several times throughout the poem, hoping that his friend will follow the instructions, have similar experiences, and come to the same conclusions about nature.

In the following, the speaker elaborates on an earlier claim, namely that nature will affect both the emotions *and* the mind: "She [nature] has a world of ready wealth, / Our minds and hearts to bless" (ll. 17-18). As he states shortly afterwards, "[s]pontaneous wisdom" will spring from feelings of "health" (l. 19), and "[t]ruth" arises from "cheerfulness" (l. 20). Thus, the speaker points out that there is a connection between one's feelings and the processes in "the mind", and that feeling is basically a prerequisite for knowing, since it is through emotions that people will be led to knowledge and wisdom. Describing the natural world as a "world of [...] wealth" (l. 17), the speaker clarifies, once again, how important and valuable the experiences in

nature are to him. He explained before that one source of knowledge in nature is listening to the songbirds (cf. ll. 10-16), but now he declares that such sources of wisdom are not restricted to the fauna, since the flora, too, can educate: “One impulse from a vernal wood / May teach you more of man, / Of moral evil and of good, / Than all the sages can” (ll. 21-24). Here, the speaker claims that nature also “imparts moral lessons to her devotee and admirer” (Narzary 66), which shows that one’s experiences in nature do not lead to ‘useless’ knowledge that will be forgotten at some point, but that they rather provide the individual with life’s essentials: the ability to behave in a moral manner and to decide what is right and what is wrong. At the end of the poem, the speaker addresses his friend for a last time, wanting him to realize that he has now had “[e]nough of Science and of Art” (l. 29) and to “[c]lose up those barren leaves” (l. 30) and stop reading. The fact that he refers to the book pages as “barren” supports, once more, the speaker’s view that reading will not help his friend (or anyone) to gain the kind of knowledge and wisdom that he would be led to through experiences in nature. The only precondition is that his friend will “bring with [him] a heart / That watches and receives” (ll. 31-32) and then his heart (and his emotional response to nature) will enable him to gain the kind of knowledge and wisdom that he looks for in vain in his books.³⁰ Looking back at what has been stated before, one could say that the expression of the “heart / That watches and receives” means that one should approach nature with the same open-mindedness and attitude as the speaker, namely one that is compatible with the main ecological principles, like a holistic world view and the understanding of nature’s diversity and complexity.

As the title “The Tables Turned” already suggests, the main aim of the speaker in the poem is to improve his friend’s situation by offering him to ‘take his place’, so that he will be able to have similar experiences in nature and find knowledge and wisdom there (that one cannot gain from reading books). For this reason, it should also have become clear that “The Tables Turned” differs greatly from the first two poems that were analyzed, since it is not exclusively about individual experiences and exact and detailed descriptions of how a person feels and thinks about visiting nature, but rather about a more general effect nature can have on people. The speaker’s attempts to address and to convince his friend (and the reader) that he, too, should go out into nature

³⁰ In her article “Wordsworth Has a Lesson to Teach Us: Simple Facts and Phenomena of the World with Glory and Grandeur”, Reetamoni Narzary also points to the ‘precondition’ the speaker mentions. She says that one must “[submit] [oneself] to Nature in the right frame of mind” (66) in order to be able to “gain more moral energy and spiritual insight than [one] can ever get from all the philosophies, or all the teachings of the saints and sages” (ibid.).

imply that everyone can actually have the experiences described in the poem. This is also why one can ascribe to this poem, again, the dynamics of Zapf's imaginative counter-discourse. Also, in this poem, for the first time, the speaker places strong emphasis on the fact that nature affects both the emotions *and* the mind. Even though the first two poems have illustrated that past nature visits or 'emotion recollected in tranquility' can also, in a way, affect one's mind (and the imagination), because they determine how one thinks about nature, "The Tables Turned" is still very distinct in its approach: It stresses that the feelings resulting from the experiences in nature will lead to knowledge and wisdom—a form of enlightenment that does not only allow for a deeper understanding of nature, but also influences people in their whole being, even in their moral behavior.³¹ The poem thus underlines Jo Barton's and Jules Pretty's belief in the idea that nature, both green spaces and urbanature, "provide 'outdoor classrooms' to facilitate learning and enhance knowledge of the natural world" (210), which is also reflected in "the emergence of the forest school movement" (ibid.) or in the concept of Montessori education.

3.4. John Keats's "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill"

In John Keats's poem "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill", published in 1817 and also known as "Endymion", the speaker gives a great number of very detailed descriptions of the aspects of nature that have a positive effect on him—even more so than in the other poems that were analyzed so far.³² In fact, the following analysis will show that he is carrying the expression of his joy about being in nature to the excess, which explains why the poem is often seen as a "celebration of [...] enthusiastic love for the beauty of nature" (Leyda 111). This is also why the poem can be regarded as a very straightforward, prominent, and strong example of imaginative counter-discourse, as one of the dynamic functions of literature named in Zapf's theory of literature as

³¹ In his essay "Wordsworth and the City: 'Social Reason's Inner Sense'", R. F. Storch comes to the conclusion that nature can also 'educate' us with regard to the way we perceive and respond to urban surroundings: "Nature's education of man is no wishful thinking: it has precise psychological contents. The unaided, untrained mind, sees the city as confusion and turmoil, a mass of trivial and insignificant objects, or mere spectacle where everything has been reduced to the same shallowness. The experience is oppressive because it is unmanageable. Without some hope of order the mind despairs. But hope revives, if the ordering faculties had been practiced in early, impressionable years, so that one carries into later life 'an undersense of greatness' [...] and the ability to arrange parts into wholes" (117).

³² The title "Endymion" alludes to the speaker's focus on the moon in the second half of the poem. Without wanting to go into much detail about the meaning of the moon in the poem, one can say that it is possible that "Keats seizes the phenomenon of light, as a part of the natural world, as an experienced entity to illumine and bring a world into being for him, so that he can re-create it in his poetry" (Norris 54).

cultural ecology. Walter Jackson Bate is definitely right in saying that the poem “relapses into one description after another, a sort of breathless catalogue of rural sights” (123). Since the beginning of the poem tells most about the speaker’s view of nature and because the rest of the poem does not lead to any particularly noteworthy findings with regard to the aim of this thesis, only the first half of the poem will be studied. Even though the poem is not radically different from the other ones that were chosen for the purpose of this thesis, it should be included because it contains so many examples of nature being praised: The speaker does not simply mention the main pleasant aspects of nature, but the account of his experience rather conveys the impression that he enjoys every bit of it—right down to the last detail. The speakers in Wordsworth’s poems have certainly also enjoyed nature as a whole (not just the sun, the water, the cliffs, the daffodils, etc.), but it is in this poem by Keats that the idea of nature being pleasant in its totality is stressed so distinctly. Having a look at the great variety of the examples of the speaker’s pleasure in nature will thus allow us to find out about more parallels to the other nature poems (in order to make clear statements about the perception of nature in the Romantic Period) and might also lead to some new insights.

In the very first line of the poem, the speaker states that he “stood tip-toe upon a little hill”, immediately making clear to the reader his perspective of looking at and experiencing nature. Moreover, the use of past tense in the verb indicates that his visit to nature lay in the past and that his account presents a collection of memories, which renders it similar to Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, and partly also to “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”. From his position of standing on “tip-toe upon a little hill”, we can tell that he must have had a vast overview of the place in nature, which might explain why there are so many aspects he finds worth mentioning in the poem. The fact that he raised himself on tiptoe, although he already stood on a hill, shows that he still tried to be a bit taller to see even more of the landscape. Thus, the speaker’s intention was surely to grasp as much as possible of the natural world. The first thing he reveals about his experience in nature is that “[t]he air was cooling, and so very still” (l. 2), which might not only be a simple description of the air, but could further be taken as an expression of how he felt about being on top of the hill in the midst of nature.³³ It was shown several times before in the other poems that visiting nature was often experienced as ‘refreshing’ and calming, and that the speakers mixed descriptions of nature with descriptions of their feelings, so it would

³³ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of John Keats*. Ed. Heathcote William Garrod. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958. 3-11.

probably not be too far-fetched to construe this line in that way. The mentioning of the “cooling” and “still” air, however, also functions as a link to (or precondition of) the next image, “the sweet buds” (l. 3), which “[h]ad not yet lost those starry diadems / Caught from the early sobbing of the morn” (ll. 6-7). Since the speaker compares the morning dew on the buds to a “starry diadem”, he was surely very impressed by the sight and uses the metaphor to convey how precious it was to him. Thus, he could again be compared to the speaker in Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” who also captures in words what a luxury the sight of daffodils was to him with the help of the adjective “golden”.

In a next step, he mentions that “[t]he clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn” (l. 8) and that they “sweetly [...] slept / On the blue fields of heaven” (ll. 9-10). The speaker probably enjoyed the “pure and white” clouds and the “blue fields of heaven” so much because the air in the industrial cities at that time was often full of factory smoke. Nature is thus perceived by the speaker as a positive contrast because everything appears to be more “pure” and unspoiled. Furthermore, by comparing the clouds to “flocks” and personifying them through the word “slept”, the speaker clarifies that nature seemed very much ‘alive’ to him, even though the atmosphere was a calming one. Experiences in nature that he will elaborate on in the course of the poem, such as seeing flowers in bloom or watching animals, might have made him realize that nature is ‘full of life’ and that it can also have an invigorating and vitalizing effect on him. Such an effect is even more meaningful if one keeps in mind that the atmosphere in the industrial cities was exactly the opposite: While in nature the atmosphere was very much determined by carefreeness, liveliness, and *joie de vivre*, the city was conducive to creating a climate of anxiety, depression, poverty, illness, and death. A further reason for people to turn to nature was definitely the wish to escape from the noise of bustling city life and to experience calmness. Like the speakers in the previous poems, the speaker in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill” finds it important to mention that he enjoyed the calmness and tranquility in nature. At one point, he heard a “little noiseless noise” (l. 11), but since the “noise” was “noiseless”, it did not feel like real noise to the speaker. Through the use of the oxymoron “noiseless noise”, which makes the reader pause and think about it for a moment, the speaker wants to emphasize that even the slightest noise in nature seemed noiseless to him and that there existed no such (annoying) noise as, for example, in the city. That the combination of the adjective “noiseless” and the noun “noise” stands for the absence of noise is further clarified in

the next line, when the speaker adds that the “noiseless noise” was “[b]orn of the very sigh that silence heaves” (l. 12). The constant implicit and explicit contrasting of the urban atmosphere and the atmosphere in nature, with an idealization of the latter, accounts for the pastoral character of the text.

Another parallel to the other nature poems is the speaker’s reference to the vastness of nature. He mentions, for instance, the “fresh woodland alley, never ending” (l. 20) and enjoyed the vastness because it allowed him to see such a great variety of things in nature: “There was wide wand’ring for the greediest eye, / To peer about upon variety” (ll. 15-16). Being in one’s usual surroundings, one has a certain daily routine and is confronted with more or less the same view day in and day out; therefore, what the speaker likes about going out into nature is probably the fact that it allows for breaking out of the routine and that it offers a change, since there are always new places to discover and new experiences one can have. The feeling that nature is so noiselessly ‘alive’, the experience of calmness in nature, and the perception of its vastness led the speaker to a state of light-heartedness: “I was light-hearted, / And many pleasures to my vision started” (ll. 25-26). Through the great variety of “pleasures” that nature offers, the speaker was able to (at least temporarily) forget the problems of the city and the negative consequences of industrialization that people were confronted with. In nature, he is, in fact, easy in his mind because there is nothing to worry about. In addition to this feeling of light-heartedness, being in nature also made the speaker feel “free” (l. 23); in nature, he is alone, unobserved, and there is no one who passes judgments upon him. Furthermore, one does not have any duties in nature and the ground one walks on often appears as if it did not belong to anyone in particular. In contrast to urban environments, in nature there are no monumental buildings, no walls, but rather a ‘boundlessness’ that has made the speaker feel “free”. That the atmosphere in nature is generally one of ease (and not of pressure) is also emphasized a little later by the speaker’s mentioning of the “soft wind” (l. 36) because it hints at the ‘gentleness’ with which nature affected him (cf., e.g. “Nature’s gentle doings”, l. 63). The speaker did not feel a severe boisterous wind, but only the slightest breath of wind. One will later see that the ‘gentleness’ associated with nature is an aspect that is also mentioned often in the contemporary nature poems, which is why one could say that, in parts, the Romantic attitudes towards nature serve as a template for the ‘modern’ views.

When he goes on telling about the things he saw in nature, the speaker continues giving proof of his awareness of nature’s diversity and complexity, which forms a core

belief of ecological discourse (cf. Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89). This begins with him displaying attention to detail by referring to a “bush of May flowers with [...] bees about them” (l. 29). Indeed, viewing the flowers brought so much joy to him that he hoped that “long grass [would] grow round the roots to keep them / Moist, cool and green” (ll. 32-33). As it was shown before in Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, it is often the colorfulness of flowers that makes them so striking to people who go out into nature. Here, however, we learn that the speaker also associated with the flowers a certain ‘freshness’ as indicated by the words “[m]oist, cool and green” (l. 33), just as he did before with the “cooling” air (l. 2) and the “fresh woodland alley” (l. 20). Moreover, by mentioning the bees which “[suggest] pollination and fruitful activity” (Norris 48), the speaker emphasizes “the rich fertility of nature” (ibid.). Marjorie Norris is also right in saying that the passage about the flowers is further concerned with the “unity of nature” (48). In her essay, she points out that “Keats’s mode of perception here places the ‘May flowers’ in the center of perception and relates the other objects to them. The bees, the pea bush, the grass all are seen in conjunction with the flowers” (Norris 48). This shows that the speaker is aware of nature as a complex network of life where “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 48), which is one of the main principles of ecological thinking. The next thing the speaker mentions is that he “heard a spring-head of clear waters / Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters / The spreading blue bells” (ll. 41-43). He might find the water worth mentioning because it can help the reader, once more, to comprehend how ‘full of life’ nature seemed to him—water being the source of all life. But then, what do we make of the fact that he refers to the “blue bells” as the water’s “daughters”? Of course, the blue bells depend on water, since they would wither without it, but maybe the speaker also wants to convey, once more, the idea that everything is connected in nature and that all aspects of nature build a large ‘family’. He may want to illustrate that nature stands for community and that human beings can be part of it if they like, especially when they lack a sense of community in urban environments. This echoes the idea of deep ecology—the philosophy that all separate life forms of the ecosystem are interconnected and function as a whole, which forms the basis of environmental ethics.

Because the speaker really appreciates nature’s beauty and because he does not want anyone to destroy it (and the feelings it arouses in him), he declares that “it may haply mourn / That such fair clusters should be rudely torn / From their fresh beds, and

scattered thoughtlessly / By infant hands, left on the path to die” (ll. 43-46). The adverb “thoughtlessly” in line 45 fits perfectly, since it reflects the speaker’s thinking that people who pluck flowers have obviously not felt about them as he did, and have probably also not felt the sense of community in nature. One could thus say that the speaker agrees with another ecological principle, namely with the view that “the history of human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to threaten *th[e] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature. Here, it becomes clear that the experience in nature has made the speaker reflect on it and that reflection has led to the conclusion that nature and its beauty must be protected. In addition to the blue bells, he also praises the “ardent marigolds” (l. 48) which are described as “golden” (l. 49), just as the daffodils in Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” and surely for the same reason.

One way of letting the impressions of nature sink in and reflecting on them is certainly in a state of relaxation: “Linger awhile upon some bending planks / That lean against a streamlet’s rushy banks, / And watch intently Nature’s gentle doings” (ll. 61-63). The whole passage, again, underlines the speaker’s feeling of light-heartedness and the atmosphere of calmness in nature, since he claims that “Nature’s gentle doings [...] will be found softer than ring-dove’s cooings” (ll. 63-64) and that the water was so “silent” (l. 65) that one could not hear “the minutest whisper” (l. 66). But again, even if the atmosphere was one of calmness, it was one of ‘lively’ calmness: Once more, the speaker points to nature’s diversity and mentions that he saw animals in nature, namely “swarms of minnows” (l. 72) in the water and “goldfinches” (l. 87) that came to sip from it (cf. l. 89). The speaker’s reference to the “waving of the mountain pine” (l. 128) at a later point in the poem also hints at the fact that there is life and movement in nature. Like the “waving [...] mountain pine”, the speaker, too, was somehow ‘moved’ by nature—at least inwardly—because the surroundings affected his emotions. Seeing how beautiful nature is sometimes made him feel like “the soul is lost in pleasant smotherings” (l. 132) and he claims that certain aspects even have the power to “[charm] us at once away from all our troubles: / So that we feel uplifted from the world, / Walking upon the white clouds wreath’d and curl’d” (ll. 138-140). These exaggerated images give an impression of how positively nature affected the speaker, and the fact that there are fewer occurrences of the personal pronoun “I” in the course of the poem and more inclusive pronouns (such as “we”, “us”, or “our”), shows that he believes that other people can have these positive experiences in nature as well.

The analysis of John Keats's "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill" has partly led to similar results as the interpretations of the three Wordsworth poems. Since it offers such a great variety of examples of pleasure in nature, it is not surprising that some of them remind us of what was found out about the perception of nature with the help of the other poems already. For instance, it was shown that, as in some of the other poems, the speaker in "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill" enjoys being in nature because it feels calming and 'refreshing' to him. Another parallel to the Wordsworth poems lies in the fact that the speaker in Keats's poem perceives nature with different senses (except for smell); he switches several times between telling about what he saw and heard in nature, which shows his intention to grasp as much as possible of his surroundings. Furthermore, even though the speaker constantly experienced nature as calming, he also realized how 'full of life' it is, for instance when he observed animals, perceived movements, or looked at the water. Likewise, the speaker in "The Tables Turned" expressed the idea of nature being 'alive' by references to its greenness or by means of personification. There are, however, also a range of new insights about the reasons for pleasure in nature that could be gained from the analysis: The speaker mentions, for example, that he felt that nature has a certain purity about it and he also expresses the wish to maintain this purity by protecting nature. Moreover, he also emphasizes the 'gentleness' with which nature affected him and says that he enjoyed its vastness, since it offered such a great variety of things to see. By looking at "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill", it became clear that visiting nature cannot only lead to knowledge (cf. "The Tables Turned"), soothing memories (cf. "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"), and feelings of happiness, comfort, and contentment. According to the speaker in Keats's poem, sometimes the sense of being 'free' and the experience of light-heartedness suffice to make one realize the benefits of spending time in nature, especially if one is attentive to nature's variety and "gentle doings". With its seemingly endless praises of the different atmospheres in nature, the variety of life forms that can be found there as well as the unity they build, the poem is certainly striking in its references to the main ecological principles, like the view of nature's diversity and complexity (cf. Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89) or the idea of the interconnectedness of all life forms (cf. Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 88).

3.5. John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"

Finally, John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", published in 1819, will be interpreted with regard to the perception of the natural world because the speaker's descriptions of his feelings in nature differ in certain respects from those in the poems that were analyzed so far. In "Ode to a Nightingale", nature is still seen as a place that can affect one's emotions very positively, but it should become clear from the following analysis that, at times, the speaker is haunted by troubling thoughts of human life (maybe in the city) which interfere with his positive feelings or make him long for them even more. The poem's title already points to the important role the nightingale plays in leading to these positive feelings: The bird signifies to the speaker what it means to be 'a part of nature' and it is the nightingale's song, in particular, that is felt by him to be an expression of utmost happiness. Since the speaker wants to feel just as happy as the nightingale and to become 'a part of nature', too, he imagines flying away with it. One could say that by going out into nature and imagining himself as flying away with the nightingale, he attempts to escape from his everyday life and surroundings—from 'the world of human beings'—especially from all the problems and misery. One of the poem's main functions is to make the reader see the option of 'escape' and of experiencing nature as a retreat, which is why it shares the dynamics of Zapf's idea of imaginative counter-discourse with the other nature poems analyzed so far, but further, in parts (about life in the city), also functions like cultural-critical metadiscourse. According to psychologist Joachim F. Wohlwill, the view of nature as a refuge also "receives support from studies of the motivation for the visitation of natural recreational areas, which typically list this kind of benefit near or at the top of the list [...], as well as from the general finding that residents of urban areas are overrepresented among the visitors to such areas [...]" (23).

In the first stanza of the poem, there is no description of the place in nature that the speaker is visiting, but he rather immediately refers to his emotions by pointing out to the reader how he feels about being in that place. He says, for instance, that his "heart aches" (l. 1) and that "[a] drowsy numbness pains / [his] sense" (ll. 1-2).³⁴ By reading these first lines, one has the impression that the speaker does not feel very well in nature and that it does not arouse in him feelings of happiness, light-heartedness, or anything comparable. Especially the verbs "aches" and "pains" (l. 1) have a very negative

³⁴ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of John Keats*. Ed. Heathcote William Garrod. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958. 257-260.

connotation and they rather lead to the assumption that the speaker feels some kind of ‘pain’ in nature, which would be the absolute opposite of the positive feelings communicated in the other poems so far. He also claims that the pain is caused by a certain “numbness” (l. 1); this numbness is obviously not so strong that he cannot feel anything anymore because, then, he would not say that it “pains”, but it makes him feel a little bit ‘dizzy’, at least. This “numbness” or dizziness is further elaborated on when the speaker states that he feels “as though of hemlock [he] had drunk, / Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains / One minute past” (ll. 2-4). It seems that, in nature, the speaker feels as if he had been poisoned or taken some kind of drug.³⁵ The reference to the poison fits the use of the negative verbs “aches” and “pains” in line 1, but the mentioning of the “opiate” might also be a first indication that the speaker’s emotional condition is probably not as bad as it seemed so far: Since the speaker says that he feels like having taken some kind of drug, the experience he has in nature may, in a way, also be ‘soothing’—many drugs, at least, work in this way. Shortly afterwards, this interpretation seems to be confirmed, since the speaker now makes clear that his “numbness” is actually a result of him having listened to a nightingale’s “sing[ing] of summer in full-throated ease” (l. 10) and having felt “too happy in [the nightingale’s] happiness” (l. 6). The nightingale’s song has been understood by the speaker as an expression of happiness and it has enabled him to feel just as happy in nature as the nightingale. The speaker “is happy in an [...] excruciating way” (Nichols, “The Loves of Plants” n. pag.)—the happiness is so strong that it ‘hurts’ because listening to the nightingale’s song has somehow deeply affected the speaker. He probably only uses the verbs “aches” and “pains” (l. 1) with regard to the “numbness”, since he rarely experiences such positive feelings (as he does now in nature) and because he is not used to it: he may simply be overwhelmed by the intensity of the pleasure. The “numbness” the speaker describes at the beginning of the poem is thus not a negative one (although it may seem so at first), but the result of a very strong feeling of happiness. He further refers to the nightingale as a “light-winged Dryad of the trees”, which shows that he has become aware that the nightingale is a ‘part of nature’ (in contrast to him, who belongs to ‘the world of human beings’ and who is used to different surroundings), and that there is a strong connection between the bird and the natural world. Thus, the speaker’s

³⁵ Epifanio San Juan also points out that “the speaker’s mood and temper are both established by the meditative movement of the lines” (346). Arno Esch expresses the same idea: “Mit an Spenser erinnernder Klangwirkung suggerieren die Verse mit ihrem reihenden, müden Gang, den starken Zäsuren und der variierenden Wiederholung von Schlüsselwörtern der Betäubung eindrucksvoll den Zustand der Trance” (369).

impression of the bird's relatedness to nature reflects the ecological principle that "individual phenomena must be seen as embedded within larger ecosystems" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 88-89), but he has obviously not yet come to the understanding of a holistic world view in the sense of denying the boundary between the human and the non-human world and regarding humans, too, as part of this larger whole. Like dryads, which are regarded as spirits of trees in Greek mythology (cf. Kappel 272; Esch 369), the nightingale in its tree somehow conveys to the speaker a sense of what it means and feels like to belong to nature. Therefore, the pain he feels while being in nature is not just a result of a very intense pleasure, but probably also a consequence of the speaker's insight that he is not as much a 'part of nature' as the nightingale: The "excessive happiness occasioned by the bird's song arouses in turn a feeling of [...] frustration—the central problem or paradox of the poem" (San Juan 346). Or, as Esch puts it: "eine übergroße Freude paart sich mit Schmerz, weil der Sprecher sich des Abstands von der Sphäre reiner Schönheit bewusst ist und sich nach voller Erfüllung sehnt" (369).

It is quite surprising that, after listening to the nightingale singing and pointing out to the reader how intoxicated he feels, the speaker now wishes for an even deeper oblivion, similar to that caused by alcohol: "a draught of vintage" (l. 11) that would heighten his imagination and allow him to grasp nature even more thoroughly—a kind of 'magic potion' that stands for the totality of sensory experiences one can have in nature. In order to be able to sink more into nature, he longs for an imaginary drink "[t]asting of Flora and the country green, / Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth" (ll. 13-14). Listening to the nightingale has already been a very positive experience, but it seems that he wants to explore nature even more and discover new positive influences. The taste of the drink stands for all the aspects of nature that he expects to have a positive effect on him: Like the speakers in the other poems, he would probably enjoy "the country green" because it would make him see how 'refreshing' and 'full of life' nature is and what beautiful sights it can offer as a contrast to urban surroundings. The capitalization of "Flora" indicates that the speaker has in mind images of nature in full bloom, since "Flora" is the Greek goddess of fertility, flowers, and spring. Furthermore, by mentioning "the blushful Hippocrene" (l. 16), the Greek fountain "sacred to the Muses" ("Hippocrene" n. pag.), he reveals that he seeks for inspiration in nature. The inclusion of "[d]ance, and Provençal song" might be taken as an expression of the speaker's hope that nature will continue to influence him positively

because both the dance and the song stand for joy, happiness, and vitality. San Juan also points to the fact that the word “‘vintage’ connotes the value of excellence attributed to old age with respect to wine and to past historical periods” (346). He adds that “[p]ursuing the escape-motif, the reference to the epoch of the troubadours gives an atmosphere of reverence and archaic romance which is alien to the practical concerns of the present” (ibid.). The speaker believes that if he were able to have a sip from a drink as described by him, he could “leave the world unseen, / And [...] fade away into the forest dim” (ll. 19-20) with the nightingale.

Although the speaker is in nature and feels happy there, he is still reminded of the world of human beings (as contrasted to the natural world) and the problems of everyday life. These thoughts about urban reality hinder him from feeling perfectly happy in nature. Therefore, he wants to “fade far away” (l. 21) with the nightingale because it would allow him to “forget / What [the nightingale] among the leaves has never known” (ll. 21-22): In nature, “the weariness, the fever, and the fret” (l. 23) of the world of human beings have never reached the nightingale. Although the speaker makes clear that he experiences nature as free from human harm, he might have in mind the idea of “human civilisation [...] *threaten[ing] this overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature, which would be another analogy to ecological discourse. At this point in the poem, the speaker clearly “informs us of what he wishes to unknow or forget: mortal fatigue, anxiety, and even the physical agony in watching the misery of others” (San Juan 347). The wish to be able to forget certain things in nature was already hinted at by the speaker’s reference to “the river of forgetfulness” (Little 44) or oblivion (cf. “Lethe-wards had sunk”, l. 4) in the description of his feelings in stanza 1. As San Juan rightly notes, through the reference to Lethe “we perceive that tendency in his [the speaker’s] mind to forsake physical existence, a tendency which later becomes obsessional and forms the dominant escape-motif in the poem’s thematic development” (345-346). Also, the fact that the words “fade away” from the last line in stanza 2 are repeated in the form of a climax (cf. “fade far away”, l. 21) in stanza 3 shows how strongly he wishes for oblivion. The natural world seems perfectly harmonious to him and the experiences one can have there are very different from the speaker’s usual experiences that he has in other places than nature (probably in the city): “where men sit and hear each other groan; / Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last, gray hairs, / Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and

dies; / Where but to think is to be full of sorrow” (ll. 24-27).³⁶ These aspects certainly refer to the world of human beings and human life in general, but one could probably also see them as being related to city life, since they fit in perfectly with the atmosphere in industrial cities at the time when the poem was published. By repeating the word “where” in each line, the speaker probably tries to make these aspects appear more striking and alarming to the reader; one has the impression that the list is endless and that the speaker could go on like this. This list describing the negative experience of urban life is just the opposite of the list in stanza 2 which describes the positive experiences that the speaker can potentially have in nature.³⁷ Moreover, through his presentation of “the pitiful and degraded state of man in this world, the speaker apprehends life’s meaninglessness vis-à-vis the freedom and immortality symbolized by the nightingale and its song” (San Juan 347-348). Maybe, it is exactly the absence of misery and the harmony in nature—the contrast—which makes the speaker become aware of how sad he should actually be, since his daily life (in the city) is characterized by unhappiness, forlornness, and hardship. Listening to the nightingale certainly makes him happy in a way, but the constant confrontation with the bird’s ‘happiness’ and the realization of the ‘perfection’ of nature also remind him of his own unhappy lot because he sees how different nature is from his usual surroundings (the city). In nature, he could forget the misery of his daily life (like the speakers in the other poems) because there is none. However, the experience in nature does not always help him to take his mind off such things, but often calls these aspects back into his mind.

Thus, by expressing his wish to “fade far away” (l. 21) into the forest with the nightingale, the speaker may want to become a ‘part of nature’ and to leave ‘the world of human beings’ behind, so that he will no longer have to think of the troubles of everyday life and feel perfectly happy. Since “[t]he ontological difference between the nightingale and the poet is the difference between a purely natural being and a human being” (Kappel 272), one can say that “[t]o desire union with the nightingale [...] is to seek an ontological change” (Kappel 273). In many Romantic poems, *visiting* nature suffices for the speaker to (at least temporarily) forget the troubles of everyday (urban) life, but simply *being* in nature is not enough for the speaker in Keats’s “Ode to a

³⁶ It is also important to mention that A. W. Crawford points to a biographical detail which adds to the concreteness of these images: “Keats at this time was in great sorrow over the death of his brother Tom, who had died on December the first, only a few weeks before. He had seen Tom suffer, and had nursed him through the horrors of a consumptive’s lingering sickness and death” (479).

³⁷ Richard Harter Fogle notes that the two lists (in stanza 2 and in stanza 3) differ in yet another way: He first states that “[t]he theme of stanza 2 is plentitude [and] [that] [t]he ideal lies in fullness” (212) and then points out to the reader that “[t]his fullness contrasts with the sad satiety of stanza 3” (ibid.).

Nightingale”: Since he cannot completely let go of his thoughts and worries connected with everyday life there, he believes that he will only feel perfectly happy by imagining himself as *belonging to* nature and being ‘a part of it’—just as the nightingale. That the speaker now considers the possibility of being ‘a part of nature’ as well shows that, by spending time in nature, he gradually develops a holistic world view in the sense of the theory of deep ecology.

He now no longer aims for a state of oblivion, as caused by alcohol (“Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards”, l. 32), to “fly to [the nightingale]” (l. 30), but he rather likes to do it “on the viewless wings of Poesy” (l. 32). Obviously, he now knows that he does no longer need alcohol or any other drug (or a general numbness) to feel closer to the natural world, but that he can achieve this feeling of being in communion with nature by imagination, namely through identification with the nightingale. The nightingale’s song symbolizes creativity to the speaker and poetry allows him to be creative as well and to have more in common with the bird.³⁸ Thus, he also points to the fact that being in nature can boost one’s creativity and imagination and that such a boost of the imagination can feel as if one is ‘lifted up’ by “viewless wings” (ibid.). In nature, the speaker can make use of his creativity and it helps him to imagine being with the nightingale (cf. l. 35) and being a ‘part of nature’ as well. As San Juan observes, “[t]hrough a sacramental negation of the self, as the beholder sublimates himself in the objects of his natural environment, he achieves a kind of poetic immortality” (358). First, reality seems to catch up with him again when he says that “the dull brain perplexes and retards” (l. 34), but then he says that he is with the nightingale (cf. l. 35) and describes how he experiences nature from this new perspective. John P. Fruit finds that the speaker’s exclamation “tender is the night” (l. 35) fits perfectly for expressing “the first new feeling in its contrast with the old” (195). Although “there is no light” (l. 38) the speaker can “guess” (l. 43) what is there: In accordance with one of the main ecological principles, that is nature’s diversity (cf. Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89), he names “[t]he grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; / White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine; / [...] violets cover’d up in leaves [...] [and] [t]he coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine” (ll. 45-49). In this state of “non-self-consciousness” (San Juan 350), the speaker does no longer perceive the

³⁸ Esch refers to an interesting finding with regard to the connection between the nightingale and creativity (or poetry): “In H. W. Garrods Abhandlung ‘The Nightingale in Poetry’ findet sich der interessante Hinweis, daß schon der homerische Name für die Nachtigall [...] im Griechischen synonym ist mit ‘Dichter’ und ‘Dichtung’” (370).

natural world with his senses, but with the imagination.³⁹ The finding that the “loss of the visual sense [...] enhances imagination” (Sperry qtd. in Olshansky 31) is further supported by the instances of synesthesia in this passage:

The synesthesia occurs in four places: ‘soft incense’ (l. 42) uses tactile and olfactory senses. ‘Embalmed darkness’ (l. 43) is tactile and visual, although darkness indicates the lack of vision. ‘Dewy wine’ (l. 49) is both gustatory and tactile, especially if one has walked barefoot across a moist lawn. Finally ‘guess each sweet’ (l. 43) evokes gustatory and olfactory senses because sweet is synonymous with aromatic and tasty (Olshansky 32).

When he listens in the dark to the nightingale again in stanza 6, he feels so close to nature and to the nightingale that he wants to leave the world of human beings for ever and never return to it: “Now more than ever seems it rich to die [...] [w]hile thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad / In such an ecstasy” (ll. 55-58). The speaker feels that the natural world has affected him so positively that he even thinks the experience is worth dying for (probably because he knows that he will never be able to have similar experiences in other places than nature). One could say that he regards it as “a way of making the transformation irreversible” (Kappel 276). In fact, the speaker describes death in very positive, almost romantic terms, here: Death is “easeful” (l. 51) and we also learn that he has often “[c]all’d him soft names” (l. 53). To the speaker, dying is a very intense experience (like love) and it is the most extreme form of escape.

The aspect of dying, however, also acts as a reminder of how much the nightingale actually differs from him: He states that it “was not born for death” (l. 61) and even refers to the nightingale as an “immortal bird” (ibid.) because its voice has always been heard throughout “ancient times” (l. 64) by people from all social classes (cf. “by emperor and clown”, ibid.); indeed, from “the most powerful (emperor) [...] to the most ridiculous and naïve (clown)” (San Juan 352). In the end, this thought “toll[s] [him] back [...] to [his] sole self” (l. 72); he realizes that everything was just an illusion and that “the fancy can not cheat so well” (l. 73). Thus, Olshansky is quite right in saying that “[t]he nightingale’s song represents the ‘sensory encounter’ which both binds Keats to reality and permits him to temporarily escape it” (29). After some time, the “plaintive anthem fades” (l. 75) and the speaker is no longer able to identify himself with the nightingale and to imagine being a ‘part of nature’. When the speaker suddenly

³⁹ David Olshansky makes the same point in his analysis of Keats’s poem: “Although the narrator uses the auditory sensation to initially perceive the nightingale’s song, he uses imagination [...] to paint a world of ‘soft incense’ and ‘dewy wine’” (27). Likewise, F. Matthey states that “darkness is the proper medium for the full realization of what the senses bring to the imagination” (315). Yet another time, the idea is expressed by Esch: “Die Dunkelheit schaltet das früher so entscheidende Organ der Schau, das Auge, ebenso aus wie die Ratio; an die Stelle des diskursiven Denkens tritt die Intuition” (373).

no longer hears the nightingale singing, he does not even know whether the experience was real or whether it was just a “waking dream” (l. 79). Thus, the speaker has to find out in the end that, although nature can help him to feel happy, such a feeling of happiness is only of a temporary nature because he will always be reminded of the sad reality of everyday life. Even going one step further than simply *being* in nature and imagining *belonging* to nature (being a ‘part of it’), through identification with the nightingale, does not make it easier for the speaker to feel constantly happy because, in the end, reality catches up with him—“the poem is a circle” (Fruit 392). He realizes that “there can be no escape from the deprivations of life, no escape from himself” (San Juan 360-361) and “returns to earth, to imprisonment in his own individuality” (Spens 236). Maybe the poem differs so much from the other nature poems that have been analyzed so far because it is the latest one from the Romantic period that has been chosen for this study: One could argue that the speaker cannot completely forget the problems and misery of everyday (urban) life in nature (like the speakers in the other poems) because industrialization was no longer in its beginnings but already in full swing in 1819 when the poem was written, which could have made it more difficult to block out the harsh reality.

Thus, in “Ode to a Nightingale”, nature is basically still a harmonious place allowing for positive experiences, but the poem also expresses the idea that the pursuit of happiness can be difficult if one cannot completely let go of one’s thoughts and worries connected to everyday life. This is because the overwhelming beauty of nature also acts as a reminder of the strong contrast with everyday surroundings. One could maybe also go so far as to say that it tries to show that it is impossible to simply leave one place in order to feel better in another one. There will always be memories of the place one has left behind and the knowledge that the situation is probably still the same, even if there are no signs of it in the chosen place of refuge. Thus, the poem could be meant to make people think about more effective ways of doing away with the problems and the misery in urban areas, by prompting political changes and making the atmosphere in the city more agreeable.

Looking at the Romantic nature poems in sum, one can say that they all praise the beautiful aspects of nature and the positive effect nature has on people’s well-being. In

fact, by dealing with the passing of time between visits to places in nature or between an actual visit and a memory of this visit (as in Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"), the poems stress the idea of nature's continuing positive influence—no matter how much time passes or how strikingly the world changes. Further, they emphasize that nature's beauty and its positive effect on one's well-being can indeed be experienced in all the different manifestations of nature (from the most impressive to the most subtle, including flora and fauna) and not just when visiting specific scenic places (like the ones mentioned in the poems). Keats's "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill", with its list-like description of the numerous pleasant aspects of nature, was found to emphasize this idea most distinctly. Further, the Romantic nature poems highlight that nature's positive effect on people is not just of importance for the people themselves (as a source of joy, comfort, and contentment that secures well-being), but also for nature, since it simultaneously leads to the development of a moral and ethical behavior towards the environment. For example, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" was found to express this idea through the speaker's spiritual development and in "The Tables Turned", the speaker constantly refers to nature's educative function that helps humans grasp the inherent worth of nature. That the poems function as ecopoetry can be seen from the ways certain passages and the central messages just mentioned relate to theories or concepts from the field of ecocriticism. For example, in the way the texts present nature's beauties and emphasize nature's positive influences on people's well-being, all the poems function as imaginative counter-discourse, as defined by Zapf in his theory of literature as cultural ecology. Further, some insights by the speakers and experiences made by them can be compared to the main principles of ecology: One just has to think of the holistic world view, connected to the theory of deep ecology, which is expressed at several points in the poems by clarifying that all living beings are part of a large ecosystem. The impression of this unity is often achieved through the stylistic devices of personification (of nature) and depictions of humans gaining (spiritual) access to nature. Connected to this thought, the poems also highlight the ecological principle that "*everything is connected to everything else*" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology 88). Another ecological principle that can be found in all the poems analyzed is the view that nature is diverse and complex (cf. Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology 89), as proven by the references to the different manifestations of nature and its manifold beauties. In Keats's poems, there are also indications of the ecological view

that “human civilisation has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature. In his poems in particular, it becomes clear that, despite the overwhelming positive effect of visiting nature, it must sometimes have been difficult to forget about the worries regarding life in the cities and the atmosphere of industrialization and modernization in general. Thus, when addressing urban issues, the poems also function as what Zapf has named cultural-critical metadiscourse. The next category of poems that will be explored shows that, with the advancement of industrialization and urbanization, it became indeed more and more difficult to blank out such thoughts.

4. ‘Transition’ Poems: Growing City Sensibility among Romantic Poets

The interpretation of Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” has already shown that the positive experiences one could have in nature did not always allow people to completely forget the worries and problems connected to everyday (urban) life, but that, even in harmonious and idyllic places, the harsh reality of life could catch up with them. We can see from the speaker in Keats’s poem how much people were actually haunted by agonizing thoughts during the age of the Industrial Revolution, and, in the course of time, these worrying thoughts have gradually led to an increased interest among poets in writing about the city. Therefore, it is now just the right time to have a look at those texts that were referred to as ‘transition poems’ before, because they show that Romantic poetry already was sometimes concerned with the city. The fact that poets in the Romantic Period have not exclusively written about nature and its positive influence, but also referred to their negative experiences in the city shows that they were very sensitive to change and that they found it important to also include in their poems descriptions of the changes and aspects of urban life which caused worries. This change in perspective was probably an attempt by Romantic poets to make their descriptions act as a kind of ‘warning’ to society and to raise people’s consciousness for the negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution. After all, it also reveals the disillusionment that people presumably experienced in the phase of the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian Period, since they slowly became aware that the idea of nature as an ‘escape’ was maybe just an illusion, or at least, that ‘escaping’ was only partly possible and became more and more difficult with the advancement of industrialization.

4.1. William Blake’s “London”

In William Blake’s poem “London” from 1794, for instance, the speaker gives an account of his experience in the largest city of England during the Industrial Revolution. His description of London is extremely negative throughout the whole poem, which is not simply an effect of the images—of the scenes he describes—but also very much a result of his choice of words and structural devices. In its totality, it therefore takes on the form of what Zapf refers to as cultural-critical metadiscourse.

One can already feel the negative tone of the poem in the very first lines, where the speaker begins his account by saying that he “wander[s] thro’ each charter’d street, /

Near where the charter'd Thames does flow" (ll. 1-2).⁴⁰ At first, one could have the impression that nature is still somewhere in the back of the speaker's mind when he describes his experience in the city, since he immediately refers to the Thames—probably one of the most 'natural' aspects of London. Moreover, he uses the verb "wander", like the speaker in Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", which was interpreted as revealing much of the wish to really explore and experience one's surroundings instead of simply *walking* or *going* through some place without really noticing anything. However, since the speaker describes the Thames and the streets as "charter'd", it becomes clear that his impression of London is a very negative one—even the seemingly positive aspects of the city (like the river, for example) obviously appear strikingly negative to him. The speaker's use of the word "charter'd" has generally been interpreted as referring to "the system of commercial management, or charters, that existed in the city" (Paulin n. pag.) and as a means of criticizing how much everything was 'controlled' in London. Since he describes both the streets and the Thames as "charter'd", the speaker must have felt that the "system [of control] extends into nature" because "even the ancient and unencumbered river is managed for profit" (ibid.). Therefore, one could also say that "[t]he first line of the poem contrasts the aimlessness of the speaker with the organization that surrounds him" (Kocot 199). In the following, the speaker mentions that he "mark[s] in every face [he] meet[s] / Marks of weakness, marks of woe" (ll. 3-4). The speaker here tries to express that he sees misery everywhere while he is wandering through the city and this is achieved by "the repetitions of 'mark' [which] create a sense of inescapability" (Paulin n. pag.). In addition to that, the alliteration formed by the words "weakness" and "woe" makes the misery appear even more striking to the reader. Because "[t]he first 'mark' means 'observe' and the second means 'signs'", Tom Paulin argues that "by linking himself grammatically with what he's observing, [the speaker] makes us feel that he's intimately involved in the suffering he sees" (n. pag.). With the help of alliteration and repetition, the speaker tries to convey in this stanza that misery is basically in every corner of the city and that one will be automatically affected by it if one is there and seeing it—one cannot escape or avoid the suffering.

The pattern of repetition is continued in the second stanza, where the speaker no longer describes what he sees, but tells about "[t]he mind-forg'd manacles [he] hear[s]" (l. 8). Like the "[m]arks of weakness" and the "marks of woe" (l. 4) that he sees around

⁴⁰ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of William Blake*. Ed. John Sampson. London: Oxford University Press, 1961 (Reprint). 102.

him, he hears “[t]he mind-forg’d manacles” everywhere: “In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant’s cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban” (ll. 5-7). So, here again, the speaker aims at conveying an atmosphere of omnipresent suffering. He cannot only see it, but he also thinks that he can hear it in the voices of the people living in the city. Also, the speaker apparently has the impression that every single person is suffering—from young (cf. “Infant’s cry”) to old. Through the repetitive use of the word ‘every’, the speaker “has established [a] comprehensive scale of the misery” (Cash 149). Furthermore, as Peter Cash states, “by means of iambic tetrameter, repeatedly placing stress on the first syllable of the word, he [the speaker] has conveyed a dynamic sense of the ubiquitous wretchedness, a condition engulfing and oppressing an entire community of city-dwellers” (ibid.). Since he states that he is able to hear “mind-forg’d manacles” in the suffering, he probably wants to express his belief that the misery is a result of the fact that people are not ‘free’ in the city (as they could be in nature). They are in “manacles”—‘slaves’ of the city so to say—and as a part of the urban society, they have probably given up a lot of their freedom.

In stanza 3, then, the speaker becomes more precise and gives examples for people in the city who are not free: the “chimney-sweeper” (l. 9) and the “soldier” (l. 11). Paulin states that “[t]he lines about the chimney-sweeper and the soldier are technically fascinating, as Blake is using a completely original effect of pictorial compression. In the space of ten words he makes the meaning skip from one sense to another, so that a noise becomes a color” (n. pag.). Since this synesthesia-like effect makes the reader stop for a moment and think about the meaning of the lines, it can be seen as just another means of highlighting the people’s misery. Likewise, the stylistic device of inversion in the lines in which the speaker refers to the “chimney-sweeper”, again, serves as a means of emphasis. By saying that “[t]he shout of the chimney-sweeper turns into the church walls [...] and the dying soldier turns into the crimson of the palace walls” (Paulin n. pag.), one could say that the speaker wants to put his idea of the “chimney-sweeper’s” and the “soldier’s” ‘enslavement’ and ‘dependence’ into images that show how much these people were actually involuntarily ‘bound’ to the city. Or, as Gifford puts it, “the roles [...] become representative of the city that is the capital of British culture” (“Post-Pastoral” 19). In contrast to the feeling of being in communion with nature and ‘belonging’ to it, which was probably one of the most positive experiences many people wished for at that time, the feeling of being a ‘part of’ the city was rather negative and depressing. How negative and depressing this

feeling must have been is further reflected in the color references the speaker uses in these lines: The “black’ning church” (l. 10) might hint at the pollution in the city and it could also be seen as an allusion to “the commercial system that force[d] innocent children to sweep chimneys” (Paulin n. pag.). The “blood” on the “palace walls” (l. 12) could stand for an execution and the palace itself for tyranny (cf. *ibid.*). Michael Gassenmeier and Jens Martin Gurr also regard this passage as an “axe-swinging assault on the Church and the King as [...] institutions of oppression” (308). In the last stanza, the speaker brings in another character he associates with the misery and lack of freedom in the city, namely the prostitute or ‘Fallen Woman’. He states that “most thro’ midnight streets [he] hear[s] / How the youthful harlot’s curse / Blasts the new born infant’s tear, / And blights with plagues the marriage hearse” (ll. 13-16). On the one hand, the speaker might find it important to include the prostitute in his account because he wants to make the reader understand that there were only relatively few and badly paid jobs for women in the city and that this is why many of them were forced to earn their money as prostitutes.⁴¹ However, in these lines, he also addresses the issue of venereal disease. The increase in sexually transmitted diseases was a great problem at the time and even led to a series of legislation, the Contagious Diseases Acts. With the passing of these acts, women lost even more of their freedom, because those prostitutes who were found to be diseased could now simply be locked away in special hospitals. Horst Meller comments on the general effect of the speaker’s presentation of the people in the city as follows: “Die Bilder sind schonungslos, direkt und konkret: Ruß, Blut, Geschlechtskrankheit. Aber ihre stärkste Wirkung kommt ihnen aus ihrer abrupten Montage zu” (120-121).

To sum up, one can say that the speaker in William Blake’s “London” tries to convey an image of the city being full of misery and despair, which is exactly the opposite of the very positive descriptions of the natural world in the nature poems from the Romantic Period. Moreover, it might now be more comprehensible why the speaker in Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” was so eager to escape from his usual surroundings and why he could not really let go of his thoughts of city life. The speaker does not only convey “his devastating sense impressions” (Gassenmeier and Gurr 308), but it is shown that he also “inscribe[s] his understanding of the causes of the urban misery into his poem” (*ibid.*).

⁴¹ According to Geoffrey Eley “around the 1870-80 period of Victoria’s reign it was thought that there were anything up to 80,000 prostitutes in London alone—when the total London population was only three million” (8).

4.2. William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge"

In William Wordsworth's poem "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", published in 1807, the speaker gives a description of London in the morning. The descriptions are very positive—one almost has the impression the speaker describes a scene in nature—but one will realize that these very positive descriptions only serve to highlight how contrary (how frightening and full of despair) the atmosphere in the city is later in the day. The speaker describes the city in the morning in such overly positive terms because he tries to make the reader understand that it is *only* in the early morning hours that the city can be experienced in that way. The poem implies that, as soon as the city 'awakes', when there's an atmosphere of bustle and misery again, one will no longer be able to feel happy and comfortable there and the positive descriptions the speaker gives will no longer apply to the city.

In the very first line of the poem, the speaker claims, for example, that "[e]arth has not anything to show more fair", and immediately afterwards, he states that those "who could pass by / A sight so touching in its majesty" would indeed be "[d]ull" (ll. 2-3).⁴² He seems to be absolutely overwhelmed by the 'beauty' of the city in the early morning. Since he realizes that the sight of the city in the morning is so different from what it looks like later in the day, he finds it important to stress that he really enjoys the urban scene at this time. The speaker's fascination with the city in the morning can certainly be seen as a reaction to the phenomenon described by Jean-Paul Hulin:

[T]ownscapes are singularly apt to become dis-urbanized [...] through the magic of atmospheric influence: rain, snow, mist and fog, sun and moon, set out in turn to proclaim Nature's ascendancy over man's feeble or ugly artefacts. Every season, every hour of the day—though with a distinct preference for the more peaceful hours—has its own way of making the city look more natural, less aggressively urban and evil (25).

It seems that the speaker believes that there is nothing else in the whole world which would appear so idyllic to him as the city in the early morning. According to Joseph M. Garrison, "the speaker is trying to account for his sense of the presence of some special beauty—in a scene which he apparently had not expected to find beautiful—by comparing it advantageously with every other 'fair' thing on earth" (46). So, when he says that "[e]arth has not anything to show more fair" (l. 1), he might believe that it is just as beautiful as nature in this very moment. He even thinks that "this beauty is so

⁴² The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Eds. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963 (Reprint). 38.

readily and universally recognizable that anyone who was not spiritually and aesthetically dead would see it and be touched” (Garrison 46). Those who would simply pass by and not see how unfamiliarly nice the city looks in the morning must indeed be “[d]ull” (l. 2). So, obviously, the difference between the city in the morning and the city by day must be very striking, otherwise the speaker would not feel the need to mention it and claim that others would notice it as well. He tries to make clear to the reader that people could not simply pass by and not notice it because the sight also affects one in a certain way: It is “touching in its majesty” (l. 3). The word “majesty” shows that the scene must appear even sublime to the speaker and thus explains why he is so overwhelmed. Sucksmith is quite right in saying that “[t]he poem opens with a judgement expressed in general terms—‘Earth has not anything to show more fair’—but proceeds smoothly, and almost imperceptibly, from abstract generalization [...] into the particular experience that has given a rise to the judgement” (“Ultimate Affirmation” 113). The speaker states that “[t]he City now doth, like a garment, wear / The beauty of the morning” (ll. 4-5) and this image stands for the speaker’s feeling that the city is pervaded by a very peaceful, calming, and idyllic atmosphere that is so typical of the morning. Once it is no longer draped in “[t]he beauty of the morning”, when the “garment” is taken off so to say, the speaker will be confronted again with the ‘bare’ facts and reality. So, he obviously knows that the atmosphere and the view of the city in the morning are actually only an illusion and that they hide its real character.

In the following, he mentions that “[s]hips, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie / Open unto the fields, and to the sky” (ll. 6-7), which could be said to reveal the speaker’s impression that the city (at this time of the day) even appears to fit into nature in a way. By bringing certain aspects and buildings of the city in connection with aspects of nature (“fields” and “the sky”) in two lines, the speaker makes clear that the contrast between the city and nature is not so striking in the morning. The skyline of the city seems to ‘merge’ with the natural scene because the buildings all “lie / Open unto the fields, and to the sky” (l. 7). Thus, as Charles V. Hartung says, “[i]n the morning there is an equilibrium between the city and its natural surroundings; the city has not yet become contaminated by commercial and industrial activity” (202). The use of the word “[o]pen” in line 7 suggests that the speaker wants to stress that people will not suffer from a feeling of ‘constriction’ in the city in the morning, but that the city seems to be so “[o]pen” (to its surroundings) that it could rather be associated with freedom. The aspects he mentions in line 6—“all clearly the work of man’s hand” (“Ultimate

Affirmation” 114)—stand for certain things the speaker associates with city life (commerce, entertainment, religion, monarchy, and politics), but since he connects these aspects with the word “silent” (l. 5), he makes clear that, in the moment he stands on Westminster Bridge looking at the city, there are no signs of bustling city life—there is only a soothing silence (like in nature). One just has to think of the mentioning of the “noiseless noise” (l. 12 in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”) that helped the speaker in Keats’s “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill” to convey the atmosphere of calmness and quietness in nature. The connection between the city (in the morning) and nature is further underlined through “the listed details of the city skyline [...] find[ing] a careful parallel in the features of the natural landscape, ‘valley, rock, or hill’, [...] features which, like those of the city skyline, cause the eye to rise and fall, in a somewhat similar pattern, as it traces their sequence” (Sucksmith, “Ultimate Affirmation” 115).⁴³ In the following, the speaker also finds it important to refer to the “smokeless air”, probably because it was so unusual to him to see that there was no air-polluting factory smoke in the city. In fact, the air seems to be so ‘clean’ that he imagines the “[s]hips, towers, domes, theatres, and temples” (l. 6) to be “[a]ll bright and glittering” (l. 8). Obviously, now that the air in the city is still “smokeless”, everything appears much more beautiful to look at. Because of the factory smoke in the cities, the atmosphere was probably often very depressing; with the words “bright” and “glittering”, the speaker may not only want to express what the city’s buildings looked like to him in the “smokeless air”, but also what the sight means to him: It makes him happy (cf. “bright”) and it is precious (cf. “glittering”) to him. We also learn that the speaker has never seen a more beautiful sunrise anywhere—not even in nature: “Never did sun more beautifully steep / In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill” (ll. 9-10). Likewise, the calmness he experiences when he stands on Westminster Bridge looking at London seems to be singular and exceeds all his past experiences because he “never felt, a calm so deep” (l. 11). As Sucksmith notes, it is quite surprising that “Wordsworth, the poet of nature, tells us that his most sublime experience of the rarest beauty was not in the contemplation of a natural landscape at all, but in the contemplation of the city” (“Ultimate Affirmation” 115).⁴⁴ The speaker explains that the feeling of calmness does

⁴³ Charles G. Davis comes to a similar conclusion in his essay “The Structure of Wordsworth’s Sonnet ‘Composed upon Westminster Bridge’”, noting that the speaker “establish[es] a sympathetic relation between city and country through the use of concrete references [and that] [t]he list of general components of the country scene parallels the catalogue of prominent objects in the city” (19).

⁴⁴ In his essay dealing with Wordsworth’s sonnet “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”, Sucksmith elaborates further on Wordsworth’s view of the city and makes an interesting point: “Not even in *The Prelude*, the grandest and most extensive statement of his creed [...] does Wordsworth so convince us

not only result from the view of the city, but also from seeing that “[t]he river glideth at his own free will” (l. 12). In Blake’s “London”, the Thames was described as “charter’d”, which was interpreted as pointing to how much everything was ‘controlled’ or commercially managed (cf. Paulin n. pag.) in the city. Here, however, we learn that, in the morning, London and the Thames are associated less with control and more with freedom.

At the end of the poem, the speaker says that “the very houses seem asleep” (l. 13) and, even if the word “asleep” certainly serves to underline the calming and peaceful atmosphere of the city in the morning again, it is also an indication of the speaker’s awareness that this atmosphere (and his positive experience) will have an end at some point because the city will ‘awake’ again. It is also quite interesting that the speaker uses personification in the poem (cf. l. 4 and l. 13) although the city seems so positively ‘lifeless’ to him. Without wanting to overinterpret, one could argue that the speaker makes use of personification because, at the back of his mind, there is the knowledge that the city is actually very much ‘alive’ and usually full of people, traffic, and bustle. Even though his perception of the city is very positive in the morning, he might not be able to completely forget about the actual (rather negative and depressing) situation and feeling in the city in the middle of the day (like the speaker in Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”). Because of this awareness of what the city looks like by day, Gassenmeier and Gurr find the last line of the poem (“And all that mighty heart is lying still”, l. 14) to be ambiguous: They claim that it “may even be read as encoding the poet’s death wish for the city whose ‘sight so touching’ is known to be but an impression of the moment to be erased by the reawakening *cit  fatale*” (319). Also, it should be noted that the speaker probably only states that the view of the city in the early morning is even better than the experiences one can have in nature (cf. l. 1 and ll. 9-11) because he wants to express how great a relief it would be to him if reality looked like this: He surely appreciates nature very much, but he may want to convey that even the positive experiences in nature cannot make you so happy as the impression that there is nothing negative about the city anymore.

Summarizing, one can say that the speaker’s descriptions of his ‘dream-like’ perception of London in the early morning can be seen as a criticism of the *actual* atmosphere in the city by day, which is why the poem can be categorized as Zapf’s

that he has come to terms with the city, with a man-made urban life. On the contrary, the city in *The Prelude* largely remains the antithesis to all that Wordsworth loves and values” (“Ultimate Affirmation” 115).

cultural-critical metadiscourse again—even if it is achieved in a more indirect (but not less powerful) way here. By pointing out what the city is in the morning (picturesque, calming, and conveying a sense of ‘freedom’), he shows implicitly what it is not by day and thus most of the time (terrible to watch, bustling, and leading to feelings of ‘constriction’). One could say that the ‘beauty’ or ‘perfection’ of the city in the morning is also reflected in the form of the poem, because the sonnet has always been regarded as a structurally well-composed poetic text, and thus (maybe) as a ‘perfect’ type of poetry, from the Renaissance up until now. The atmosphere of the city in the morning was probably so striking to the speaker because he was only used to the misery and problems described in Blake’s “London”. Thus, the poem may have been meant to make others become aware of this contrast as well and to realize how terrible the atmosphere in the city actually was (and maybe also as a plea to do something about it).

For this intermediate chapter, one can conclude that the speakers in William Blake’s “London” and William Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” have both, in opposite ways, pointed to the fact that the city usually had a rather negative effect on people’s emotions and well-being during the time of the Industrial Revolution and that one could no longer simply ignore the problems of urban life. As stated before, from an ecocritical view, both poems certainly function as what Zapf has termed cultural-critical metadiscourse, although Blake’s text achieves this through direct and explicit criticism of the city, while Wordsworth’s poem employs an implicit technique of critique. In “London”, the speaker’s account of his perception of the city is a stark contrast to the depiction of the positive aspects of nature in the Romantic poems that were analyzed before—he tries to convey that nature appeared beautiful and harmonious to the same extent the city seemed frightening and chaotic. Nevertheless, there seems to be more about the poems than a simple enumeration of the negative aspects of the city: As proven by the form Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” takes on, the intention is probably not exclusively to offer a critique of urban surroundings (the poems do not go much into detail about the single aspects and their causes by the way), but also about expressing—indirectly—a strong longing for nature that is increased when realizing the negative effect of the city on one’s well-being. From a literary-environmental and literary-historical perspective, Romantic poetry concerned

with the urban sphere is helpful for today's readers to get an insight into the very early forms of skepticism towards modernization and urbanization: By looking back and comparing these views with more recent poetical expressions of 'urban anxiety', one is able to see in how far the issue has taken on more diverse forms with the passing of time. This might lead to an understanding of the persistence of the problem and the urgency to act against it. Still, what is striking with the two poems analyzed is that they do not offer any solutions at all to the conveyed urban misery, which would further add to the poems' ecocritical function. It will become clear that this slowly changes with time, as can be seen already from the Victorian city poems that will be studied in a next step and from the contemporary city poems that will follow later on (since they often go further into the reasons for the problems).

5. The Depiction of the City in Victorian Poetry

The poems from the Victorian Period that will be interpreted with respect to the presentation of the city will include even more examples of those aspects of the city that had a negative effect on people and will illustrate in more detail why the experience of the city (as a place) and urban life became more and more frightening with the advancement of industrialization. One could say that the late Romanticists' attitudes "provided in advance a ready-made viewpoint for the nineteenth-century poets to adopt when confronted by the machine world" (Viereck, "The Poet in the Machine Age" 95). In contrast to poets (and people in general) who lived during the Romantic Period and still saw in nature a possibility to escape from the harsh reality of urban life, people who lived during the Victorian Period were already so disillusioned by the situation and developments in the city that they believed there was no longer an actual possibility of escape. With the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian Period there was thus not only a change in the subject matter of poetry (from a focus on nature to a focus on the city), but also in attitude, since the idea of nature as a place where one could go to have positive experiences often only remained as a nostalgic memory. Again, the city poems that will be explored in this chapter do not only reveal the different aspects of the city and of urban life that were apprehended in a negative way during the age of industrialization, but they simultaneously help us become aware of the origins of more recent skeptical attitudes towards the city and the process of modernization in general.

5.1. Ernest Jones's "The Factory Town"

The first poem from the Victorian Period that will be analyzed with regard to the perception of the city is Ernest Jones's "The Factory Town", which was published in 1855. Ernest Jones was "a journalist, and only incidentally a poet", but the fact that "[h]is political verse [...] was widely popular" (Warburg 39) definitely makes it worth studying. As the title already suggests, the poem can basically be seen as a description of a factory town and thus it serves nicely to get a first impression of what industrial towns looked like in the middle of the nineteenth century. While the speaker describes his impression of the factory town by night, he also refers to a range of different aspects of urban life and industrialization which affected people very negatively and accounted for the depressing atmosphere in cities at the time when the poem was written. One will see that "The Factory Town" harshly criticizes such issues as child labor, poverty, long

working hours in factories, and the harmful effects of machinery, which is why it is a straightforward example of what Zapf has termed cultural-critical metadiscourse in his theory of literature as cultural ecology. Further, the subject matter can also be said to reflect Jones's political attitude, since "he joined the Chartists in 1846" (Bebbington 44), which "signifies his conviction that the working class is the social force capable of accomplishing social change" (Lieske 119). Even though the poem shows that nature still remained in people's minds as the positive counter-image to the city in the Victorian Period, it also becomes clear that it was seen as a more 'distant' place with time because industrial landscape replaced nature more and more.

In the first line of the poem, it becomes clear that the speaker's situation of visiting the city contrasts strongly with that of the speaker in Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", which also accounts for the differences in their portrayals of the urban atmosphere. While the speaker in Wordsworth's poem tells about his impression of the city in the early morning, the speaker in "The Factory Town" reveals that he visited the city by night (cf. "[t]he night had sunk along the city"). He also immediately tries to convey a little bit of the atmosphere of the city at that time when he adds that "[i]t was a bleak and cheerless hour" (l. 2).⁴⁵ The adjectives "bleak" and "cheerless" already point to the misery that he will refer to step by step in the course of the poem, but, here already, the reader is made to understand that there is nothing positive about the city—nothing that could make one feel happy and comfortable—but that the place is rather only characterized by dreariness and hopelessness. The sad and depressing atmosphere is further stressed when the speaker says that "[t]he wild winds sang their solemn ditty / To cold grey wall and blackened tower" (ll. 3-4). One can say that the color references in line 4 (cf. "grey" and "blackened") fit in well with the bleakness of the city and, moreover, the "wild winds" certainly create a feeling of discomfort. It is also quite interesting that lines 3 and 4 form a contrast: The speaker first mentions something that conveys movement and life (cf. "wild winds") and also makes use of personification (cf. "sang") and then, in the next line, he refers to something in which there is no movement or life at all, but rather a certain stasis and coldness (cf. "cold grey wall and blackened tower"). Maybe the intention behind these lines is to hint at how 'full of life' nature is in contrast to the city, since the "wild winds" might be taken as a symbol of nature and the "cold grey wall and blackened tower" represent man-made parts of the city. One might argue that the city could also be seen as

⁴⁵ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Battle-Day: And Other Poems*. London: Routledge & Co., 1855. 82-88.

a place 'full of life' (because of the crowds of people), but in the course of the poem the speaker will show why the atmosphere in the Victorian city was indeed very dark (cf. "grey" and "blackened", l. 4) and not so much 'full of life' in a positive sense (like nature), since the city rather 'took' the life and energy from the people who lived and worked there.

In the second stanza, the speaker goes deeper into the causes for the "cheerless" (l. 2) atmosphere in the city and the first things he mentions are the factories and especially people's long working hours in there. The darkness of the first stanza is now interrupted by some light, since the speaker mentions that "[t]he factories gave forth lurid fires" (l. 5). However, this does not mean that the atmosphere also changes into one of cheerfulness now that there is light in the darkness: Because fire is not always a positive source of light, but also a very dangerous one, it might rather have an 'alarming' function in this stanza. The speaker mentions the fire to draw the reader's attention to the work that was done in factories no matter what time of the day; even at night the factories were lighted by fire and one was reminded of the people working in there. He clearly criticizes the long working hours when he says that "[e]ven Etna's burning wrath expires, / But *man's* volcanoes never rest" (ll. 7-8). It is also added that the fire came "[f]rom pent-up hells within their [the factories'] breast" (l. 6). The word "hells" is used here as an allusion to the bad working conditions in the factories because the speaker wants to express that working in factories could make people feel as if they were in hell and that, sometimes, the hard work, the long working hours, and the (often) dangerous working environment also led to deaths. Moreover, by ascribing a certain body part to the factories (cf. "breast"), the speaker makes them appear 'alive' and thus maybe also in a way powerful, conveying to the reader a sense of the control the factory system had over people's lives. Because the speaker makes the factories seem 'alive' with the help of imagery, one is likely to imagine the factories as "voracious" (Storch 117) 'beasts' or 'monsters' that are 'swallowing up' the factory workers and keeping them 'captured' in their "breast[s]" (l. 6). Being a worker in a factory meant, of course, that one had to spend most of one's time there—in a working environment that was indeed truly 'monstrous' (cf. Voigts-Virchow 214). It is striking that the aspect of liveliness (of an environment that seems much 'alive') is stressed both in the nature poems and in the city poems—however, with a completely different message. The liveliness experienced in the nature poems is obviously an invigorating one that is further associated with a certain calmness, while the liveliness felt in the city is not

positive at all, but rather has a grueling effect. Moreover, the speaker describes the factory as a volcano (cf. l. 7), but “[u]nlike the irregular natural cycle of Ætna it is marked by regularity and permanence” (Voigts-Virchow 214), since people work there day and night. At a later point in the poem, there is one more reference to the factories when the speaker says that it is due to the smoke that comes out of their chimneys that “[t]he city like a cauldron bubbled / With its poison boiling over” (ll. 15-16). When the speaker went through the city at night, there was so much factory smoke (cf. “poison”) in the air and such a loud noise that “[e]’en the very stars seemed troubled / With the mingled fume and roar” (ll. 13-14).

Having described his perception of the factories and outlined how it must feel for people working there, the speaker now also mentions another group of workers whose situation and working conditions struck him as miserable: the weavers. When he says that “women, children, [and] man were toiling / Locked in dungeons close and black” (ll. 9-10), it becomes clear that he wants to make the reader understand that people of all ages were working as weavers. The fact that children were forced to work as well reflects the situation of poverty at that time: Parents often did not earn enough money to provide for the whole family and depended on their children to contribute to the family’s income. Thus, in parts, the poem also relates to ideas from the theory of social ecology, namely in showing that the experience of the environment is also often linked to social structures and problems. Again, as with the factories, the workplace is depicted in a very negative way. It is no longer described as ‘monstrous’ as the factories, but equally frightening, since the workers were “[l]ocked in dungeons close and black” (l. 10). The blackness in the working rooms, just like the blackness or darkness in the whole city, stands for the depressing and cheerless atmosphere. By including the word “close” in his description, the speaker probably wants to stress that one could often see one working room after the other in the streets and he might also intend to express that a large number of people had to work in very confined spaces. Thus, he draws the reader’s attention to the fact that many people were suffering from feelings of constriction in the city, especially in crowded workplaces. Next, the speaker even carries this image to the extreme, when he states that “the reeking walls environ / Mingled groups of death and life” (ll. 17-18) and that there are “[f]ellow-workmen [...] / [s]ide by side in deadly strife” (ll. 19-20). Here, he clarifies that the confined spaces cannot only have negative consequences on people’s psyche (feelings of constriction), but also on their physical health: The image of the “[m]ingled groups of

death and life” (l. 18) imply that people often had to work in the same room with diseased workers and that there was thus a risk of contagion. Also, by saying that the workers were “in deadly strife”, the speaker may want to express that the workers were probably aware of the fact that they were working themselves to *death*, but that they went on with their work nevertheless because they needed the money to make a *living*—which is, of course, quite ironic. The image of the weavers being “[l]ocked” (l. 10) in their working rooms is similar to the idea of the factories ‘swallowing up’ the workers and ‘capturing’ them in their “breast[s]” (l. 6). In both cases, the speaker conveys that the workers had very little freedom in their lives and that they spent most of their time at their place of work. The reference to “the wheel, the *modern rack*” (l. 12) certainly has a double-meaning: On the one hand, the speaker points to the workers’ suffering again by describing the wheel as a kind of torture device (cf. “*rack*”) in the age of industrialization and modernization, but on the other hand, the wheel itself (due to its circular shape) also conveys a sense of ‘endlessness’ and implies that the workers had to do the same work over and over again every day.⁴⁶

In the following, the speaker also hints at the fact that walking through the city with air full of factory smoke and the loud noise coming from the factories, one was immediately reminded of how terribly people were suffering from the working conditions, the poverty and misery, and the atmosphere in the city in general. Thus, he says that, “amid the wheels’ dull droning” (l. 21), he could hear “[s]trength’s repining, labour’s groaning” (l. 23). Likewise, “the heavy, choking air” (l. 22) made him think of the workers’ “throttling of despair” (l. 24). Thus, instead of making it more difficult to see or hear things clearly, the factory smoke and the noise from the machines rather enabled the speaker to become aware of the actual suffering behind it. Maybe these lines are so striking to the reader because of the way the speaker achieves links here: First, at the level of sound, he connects “the wheels’ dull droning” (l. 21) with “[s]trength’s repining, labour’s groaning” (l. 23), and then the aspect of not being able to breathe (and thus live) easily is conveyed in “the heavy, choking air” just as in the workers’ “throttling of despair” (l. 24). The speaker then goes on by telling the reader what else reminded him of people’s suffering in the factory town and he mentions, for instance, “half-naked infants shivering” (l. 29) who could be taken as a symbol of the poverty in the city. However, the “shivering” can also be read as the reaction to the frightening atmosphere in the city and in the factories (or other workplaces), since the

⁴⁶ There is certainly a connection here between the spinning wheel that is described as a ‘modern’ instrument of torture and the ‘breaking wheel’ which was used as a torture device in Medieval times.

speaker further says that the children were “shivering / With heart-frost amid the heat” (ll. 29-30)—the heat standing for steam power or machinery running hot in the factory and the general psychological stress of the workers. The image combining frost and heat is quite paradoxical, but it serves the speaker’s intention to express, once more, that the atmosphere in the factories was so depressing that one could never be happy. Also, the paradoxical character of the combination of frost and heat could be an allusion to the workers’ inner contradictions: On the one hand, they do not want to work in factories because they know how badly it affects them, but on the other hand, they also know that it is impossible to simply stop working there because they depend on the wages to survive. The speaker also imagined being able to see how badly factory hands suffered from their work in certain bodily features: He refers to “[m]anhood’s shrunken sinews quivering / To the engine’s horrid beat” (ll. 31-32). The “quivering” (l. 31) may serve to give the reader an idea of the hard work that people had to do in the factories, since it is well known that very hard work and extreme physical exercise can lead to a kind of muscle tremor. In addition to that, by saying that this “quivering” happens “[t]o the engine’s horrid beat” (l. 32), he connects man and machine via imagery, probably to make the reader become aware of how much the workers were actually ‘bound’ to the factories and how much they were affected by the hard work. The speaker might also mention “the engine’s horrid beat” to clarify that working in a factory did not only mean that one had to do *hard* work, but also always the same tiring tasks over and over again, in the pace set by the machine. Likewise, through the repetitive work, the workers themselves appeared less human and more machine-like (cf. “Here are men, and engines yonder. / ‘I see nothing but *machines!*’”, ll. 39-40).

At a later point in the poem, the speaker pronounces very clearly that he was absolutely shocked by what he saw in the city and especially by the suffering in the factories. The hard work in the factories did not only have negative effects on the workers’ physical health (cf. “bloodless slaughter”, l. 41) and psychological well-being, but it also often led to death, especially among children (cf. “Young lives—sacrificed in vain”, l. 76). The speaker was very horrified when he saw “withered corpses [sic]” (l. 77) lying on the ground because it made him realize that no one really cared about the dying people, that no one felt responsible for their death, and that no one found it important to change the working conditions in the factories so that fewer people would die. Once a person died, he or she was simply forgotten and the speaker watched how “[w]ith not one regretful thought” (l. 78) the dead bodies were “trampled by [...] fierce

steam-horses” (l. 79). He criticizes that people in power only seem to care about progress and becoming more ‘modern’ instead of taking the general well-being of fellow human beings more seriously. This idea is also expressed again in a list of questions the speaker addresses to those in power: “Hear ye not the secret sighing? / And the tear drop thro’ the night? / See ye not a nation dying / For want of rest, and air, and light?” (ll. 85-88). In contrast to those who are in favor of industrialization, the speaker is very much aware of the ‘destructive’ side of the process, which is why he describes it with the words “England’s mighty *Juggernaut*” (l. 80). With the “*Juggernaut*” image, “in Hindu myth an enormous car beneath which people are crushed” (L. Hughes 125), he points to the fact that the process is unstoppable and simultaneously expresses his fear that the situation might become worse with time.

Not only the situation in the city could become worse with the advancement of industrialization, but urban and industrial landscape could also replace nature more and more. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker already imagines what this would look like: “Thinner wanes the rural village / Smokier lies the fallow plain— / Shrinks the cornfields’ pleasant tillage / Fades the orchard’s rich domain” (ll. 93-96). Imagining a future in which the negative influences on one’s emotions increase and the possibilities of seeking positive influences on one’s well-being (in nature) become fewer makes the speaker feel so desperate that he prays to God to “save [the] nation” (l. 99) by making people see that they need “[l]ess of *cotton* [and] more of *wheat*” (l. 100). He bids God to lead the people on the right track again by “[t]ak[ing] [them] back to lea and wild wood, / Back to nature” (l. 101-102). Since going through the city felt to him like a visit to ‘hell’, he now realizes that nature is indeed just the opposite: a harmonious and paradise-like place which has a very strong positive influence on one’s well-being and therefore needs to be protected. This also corresponds with the city dwellers’ general “want of *Nature*” (l. 89) which is expressed at several points in the poem (cf. ““One fresh touch of dewy grasses, / ‘Just to cool this shrivelled hand! / ‘Just to catch one breeze that passes / ‘From some shady forest land.””, ll. 45-48). Thus, his ‘horror’ trip through the city ends with the determination that things must change: One should not strive for becoming more ‘modern’ *at any cost*—without caring about what happens to the people working and the natural world. If things do not change for the better, the speaker believes that “Dwarfed in brain and shrunk’ in stature— / Generations [are] growing *down!*” (ll. 91-92).

All in all, the analysis of Ernest Jones's "The Factory Town" has enabled us to get a first impression of the nightmarish Victorian city and to understand why urban surroundings and life during the Industrial Revolution were often felt to be frightening. We learned that the speaker was absolutely shocked by the dark and cheerless atmosphere, the bad working conditions in factories, and the pollution and noise in the city. Also, he mentioned that people were often suffering from poverty and feelings of constriction, and he finally expressed his fear that reckless urban and industrial expansion could eventually lead to the 'disappearance' of nature. In the following, the other city poems that have been chosen for this thesis shall now serve to find out about more possible reasons for the feeling of 'urban anxiety' and other aspects that have contributed to the negative view of the industrial city in the Victorian Period.

5.2. James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night"

James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night", first published in 1874, is quite similar to Ernest Jones's "The Factory Town" because it also conveys a hell-like image of the Victorian city. Still, it is said to "[occupy] a unique position" (Tinkler-Villani 125) among poetry dealing with urban settings, since the speaker in the poem describes the frightening atmosphere in the city with the help of different images and in great detail, without commenting much on the aspects that have caused this atmosphere in the first place: For instance, he does not mention people's working conditions in the city, the issue of poverty, or the effects machinery had on the workers' psychological and physical health. Therefore, the poem is not as politically motivated as Jones's "The Factory Town", but the focus is rather on the individual's experience in the city and the expression of the feelings and thoughts it leads to. As William B. Thesing says, Thomson "stands isolated in his troubled despair from [...] other poets" (*The London Muse* 146) because his "fears were essentially philosophical and spiritual rather than social or political" (ibid.). Since the image of the city conveyed in the poem is basically a result of the speaker's first-hand experience, the poem becomes a very immediate expression of 'urban anxiety'. In "The City of Dreadful Night", there is also no longer a tone of hope (as we still have it at the end of "The Factory Town"), but the speaker rather tries to make clear that the city is so full of despair that it is already 'lost', which is shown in the rather apocalyptic picture he draws. Lastly, because Thomson's poem has often been described as "a key poem in defining the new urban experience of the great Victorian city as godless and hopeless" (F. O'Gorman 394) and because it is one

of the most popular pieces of Victorian poetry about the city, it definitely requires to be analyzed at least partially in this thesis.

Even before the poem actually begins, the epigraph, a quote from the *Inferno* in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (“*Per me si va nella città dolente*”) already raises the reader's expectations with regard to its content.⁴⁷ One is immediately led to think that there must be some connection between the description of hell in Dante's *Inferno* and the depiction of the city in “The City of Dreadful Night”. The connection will become clear right from the start of the poem: Just like “Dante journeys into hell [...] encountering stage by stage its wretched inhabitants”, the speaker in Thomson's poem “moves through the hellish spaces of a vast city, stumbling upon some of its tormented souls” (F. O’Gorman 394). Thus, one could say that the quote from the *Inferno* already sets the tone for the speaker's account of his walk through the city that is about to follow.

At the beginning of the poem, the speaker makes clear to the reader that he will describe his experience in the city because he wants “[t]o show the bitter old and wrinkled truth / Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles” (p. 123, ll. 2-3).⁴⁸ He believes that it is necessary to explain what the city really looks like to him and to present the ‘naked truth’, so that people will become aware of the fact that industrialization has not really improved life in the city, but that it has also made life more difficult for people in certain ways. Seed also states that “the clearest role Thomson adopts at the beginning [...] is that of truth-teller and [that] he mounts an assault on all means of deception” (89). The negative consequences of industrialization seem to be much more striking to the speaker than the positive effects and one has the impression that he believes that the idea of industrialization leading to progress and improvement is only an illusion (cf. “false dreams, false hopes”, p. 123, l. 4). Obviously, the speaker is very convinced that, by celebrating the positive effects of industrialization, people forget that the “truth” is actually not so positive at all; reality remains hidden behind “false masks” (p. 123, l. 4). In his presentation of the city, he wants to show what the industrial city really looks like and make people realize that industrialization and modernization are actually also the main causes for the misery and problems in the city. Moreover, he also immediately states that other people who come

⁴⁷ Francis O’Gorman translates the quote from Dante's *Inferno* as follows: “through me is the way to the city of pain” (395).

⁴⁸ The page numbers and lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of James Thomson*. Ed. Bertram Dobell. Vol. 1. London: Reeves & Turner, 1895. 122-172. Due to the extreme length of the poem and for reasons of clarity, the lines have been counted separately for each page.

to the city and walk through it (just like the speaker) will be able to comprehend the things he is going to say, since it is likely that they would have the same experience. He thinks that “here and there some weary wanderer / In that same city of tremendous night, / Will understand the speech, and feel a stir / Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight” (p. 123, ll. 29-30, to p. 124 ll. 1-2). Thus, he claims that although he tells about his own individual experience in the city, the experience will actually be more or less the same for everyone who goes there. Even though he “suffer[s] mute and lonely” (p. 124, l. 3), he knows that he is not the only one who suffers, since other people “[travel] the same wild paths” (p. 124, l. 5). Of course, with this claim he also intends to make his description of the city more credible.

The speaker in Thomson’s poem begins his account by saying that “[t]he City is of Night” (p. 124, l. 13) and he also immediately adds that it is “perchance of Death” (ibid.). It is not clear whether the speaker really goes through the city by night, as the speaker in “The Factory Town”, but he certainly uses the image of the night symbolically because it fits the dark and depressing atmosphere and to suggest a “condition of suffering and ignorance” (Tew 111). As Valeria Tinkler-Villani says, for the most part of the poem, the speaker wanders around in the dark city as “a silent observer and spectator recording his personal viewings” (126), but at times “we also hear the very different, public voice of a prophet addressing a mass of people” (ibid.), as will become clear in the following.⁴⁹ The darkness motif continues throughout the whole poem and, as a reader, one can easily comprehend how frightened the speaker must feel during his trip through the city. For instance, later on, he says that “[t]he open spaces yawn with gloom abysmal” (p. 130, l. 15) and we also get to know that “[t]he sombre mansions loom immense and dismal” (p. 130, l. 16) and that “[t]he lanes are black as subterranean lairs” (p. 130, l. 17). The speaker’s descriptions are very similar to the images one often finds in gothic fiction. At a later point, he also claims that it is due to the ‘heightened senses’ in the darkness that he is actually able to experience the city so thoroughly and to pay attention to every detail in order to see the ‘truth’ (cf. p. 130, l. 18, to p. 131, l. 10). Instead of hiding things, the darkness makes it possible for the speaker to perceive things that he would probably miss in the daylight: He says that the eye “clearly in this darkness [...] discerns / As in the daylight with its natural sense”

⁴⁹ The fact that he *walks around* in the city makes him a kind of “urban *flâneur*” (Seed 93)—however a very untypical one. In his essay, Seed compares Thomson’s poem to Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Man of the Crowd” and says that “Poe anticipates Thomson in narrating a kind of pursuit and also in depicting a more anxious and uneasy guise of the *flâneur* who is normally a dilettantish stroller” (93).

(p. 130, ll. 20-21) and that “[t]he ear, too, with the silence vast and deep / Becomes familiar” (p. 131, ll. 4-5). Thus, ironically, the darkness also has an ‘enlightening’ function for the speaker, because it is in the dark that he learns about the true meaning of the city. Since he even goes so far as to say that the city is “perchance of Death” (p. 124, l. 13), he is probably so overwhelmed by the dark and sad atmosphere in the city that the image of the night, at times, appears to be insufficient to express this atmosphere. By claiming that “[t]he sun has never visited that city” (p. 124, l. 18), he wants to convey to the reader that he has the impression that there is darkness all the time—during the day and at night—because the atmosphere never changes. In the Victorian city, there are just as many things going on at night as during the day. Thus, it could also be possible that the speaker goes through the city at daytime (and only uses the darkness motif to express the general depressing atmosphere), but, since he later mentions burning “street-lamps” (p. 126, l. 8), it is indeed more likely that he actually wanders around the place at night. In the way the speaker expresses that the atmosphere in the city remains the same, whether it is day or night, the poem can also be seen as a striking contrast to Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”, which emphasized the difference between the city’s appearance during the day and in the very early morning. Obviously, Thomson’s speaker has a completely different impression of the city and wants to convey that there is nothing positive left, which makes his observations seem more pressing.

He elaborates on the street-lamps by saying that they “burn amidst the baleful glooms, / Amidst the soundless solitudes immense / Of ranged mansions dark and still as tombs” (p. 126, ll. 8-10). With the help of the words “glooms”, “solitudes”, and “tombs”, he creates an atmosphere that is characteristic of cemeteries, in order to express that there are no signs of cheerfulness in the city, but that it is rather a place of mourning and sadness. As Rolf P. Lessenich rightly notes, “[e]ven where [...] artificial lights illuminate the streets and open spaces, the speaker’s focus is on ultimately unconquerable darkness” (721). Later on, the speaker even refers to the place as a “necropolis” (p. 126, l. 15) and speaks of a “mausoléan night” (p. 145, l. 22). Instead of being ‘full of life’, the city is reminiscent of death. In fact, the speaker does not describe the urban bustle and noise, which is so often criticized in other poems from that time, but he rather wants to stress the absence of life as well as the despair and depression in the city and therefore uses imagery that fits this purpose. The silence mentioned by the speaker, however, is probably “not literal, but reflects the lack of resistance and

agitation” (Tew 124). Thus, it adds to the image of a ‘dead’ or lifeless city; it makes the speaker feel very uncomfortable because it “benumbs or strains the sense” (p. 126, l. 11). In several other poems from the Victorian Period, the city is described as ‘alive’ and there are many references to the bustle and noise that one could usually perceive there. In “The City of Dreadful Night”, the speaker probably presents the city as ‘dead’ in order to show what is actually behind its surface: One could say that the image of the city as a “necropolis” reflects the emotional life of the people living there. Even though the city might not have been as ‘dead’ as the speaker describes it, he uses this image to make the reader aware of how sad and desperate the situation actually was—as he said before: he wants to show the “truth” (cf. p. 123, l. 2).⁵⁰

It then becomes clear how badly the people in the city are affected by their surroundings when the speaker states that he sees “worn faces that look deaf and blind / Like tragic masks of stone” (p. 126, ll. 17-18). Thesing is definitely right in saying that “the figures in Thomson’s poem are dreadful not because of their numbers but because of their enervation” (*The London Muse* 135). The speaker also adds that they “wander, wander, / Or sit foredone and desolately ponder / Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head” (p. 126, ll. 19-21). By saying that the people “look deaf and blind” (p. 126, l. 17), he probably wants to express that life in the city has changed these people since they are not able anymore to really perceive all the things happening around them and to grasp and understand the surroundings as the speaker does it. They are *blasé* and in a state of apathy. One could say that they have already been a part of the city for too long and that they have resigned to the fact that there is misery everywhere: They have probably once thought about the city like the speaker (and maybe still do it deep inside), but because they are also dependent on the city (e.g. because they need to earn money there), they may have tried to block out the negative atmosphere, problems, and fears in order to go on. This is probably also why they are referred to as “ever sleeping” (p. 126, l. 13). The speaker’s observation that the people either “wander, wander / Or sit foredone” (p. 126, ll. 19-20), again, points to their despair, confusion, and aimlessness. Everyone seems to be ‘lost’ or forlorn. Thesing states that “the poem [...] deals with a universal situation that concerns all mankind, for [...] ‘Fate’ has become the villain condemning all men to a meaningless life” (*The London Muse* 143). Children, too, suffer from the atmosphere in the city. The speaker is

⁵⁰ In William Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”, the speaker also describes the city as ‘lifeless’, but the lifelessness affects him in a positive way since he experiences it as calming. In Thomson’s poem, however, the effect is exactly the opposite.

absolutely shocked when he discovers “[a] child” (p. 127, l. 1) and says that “it bleeds with anguish / To meet one erring in that homeless wild” (p. 127, ll. 4-5). The sight arouses pity in the speaker and it also reminds him of the fact that the child will not have a real childhood in the city, since it was common at that time that children were forced to work at a very young age already (cf. “youthless life”, p. 127, l. 4). Shortly afterwards, he also mentions that the people he encounters in the city “often murmur to themselves [and that] they speak / To one another seldom” (p. 127, ll. 6-7). Maybe the speaker thinks that real interaction between the people in the city is missing, that everyone lives his or her own life, and that “[c]ommunity’ and ‘society’ no longer seem words that refer to the modern city” (F. O’Gorman 395).

After his brief description of the people in the city, he follows a man (cf. p. 128, l. 5) and “[travels] [with him] many a long dim silent street” (p. 128, l. 9). According to Seed, “[p]ursuit reflects the narrator’s urgent desire to gain access to a purpose—any purpose—but the results are anticlimactic” (92). Following the man and passing different places, the speaker “witnesses the death of the Christian canon of values” (Voigts-Virchow 216): At one place “Faith died” (p. 128, l. 15), at another place “Love died” (p. 129, l. 2), and at yet another place “Hope died” (p. 129, l. 8). The speaker then realizes that these are actually the things that matter most in life and that the city must indeed be lifeless if faith, love, and hope have died there: “When Faith and Love and Hope are dead [...] / Can Life still live? By what doth it proceed?” (p. 129, ll. 13-14). So, the speaker is not the only person who believes that the city is lifeless and ‘dead’, but the people living there have also become aware of the fact that that they are missing certain things in the city which would make their lives more pleasant and would make them feel that they are still ‘alive’. The speaker also adds that he assumes that the people in the city do not even dream of escaping from the city anymore because they probably think that their lives could not change for the better and that being forlorn at one point means to be forlorn forever: “Escape seems hopeless to the heart forlorn: / Can Death-in-Life be brought to life again?” (p. 136, ll. 9-10). For this reason, it is claimed that “the horror of Thomson’s City derives from there being nothing beyond it: it is a nightmare from which one cannot awake” (Sharpe 83). The speaker further expresses how terrible the atmosphere in the city seems to him when he says that “[t]he City rests for man so weird and awful, / That his intrusion there might seem unlawful, / And phantoms there may have their proper home” (p. 141, ll. 5-7). Obviously, he thinks that the city is not a proper dwelling place for mankind; because it is so horrible a place,

it would rather fit ghost-like creatures. He even claims that people's feelings of 'urban anxiety' take on forms of madness with time, since he has the impression that "[n]o man there [is] being wholly sane in mind" (p. 140, l. 13). What further contributes to the misery and the depressing atmosphere in the city is definitely the gap between the rich and the poor. The speaker draws on the issue of social injustice during the Industrial Revolution by saying:

And some are great in rank and wealth and power,
And some are renowned for genius and for worth;
And some are poor and mean, who brood and cower
And shrink from notice, and accept all dearth
Of body, heart and soul, and leave to others
All boons of life: yet these and those are brothers,
The saddest and the weariest men on earth (p. 148, ll. 15-21)

How helpless and desperate the people seem to the speaker becomes clear once more when he describes them as "battling in black floods without an ark" (p. 154, l. 14). Since he commiserates with the city dwellers and can very much comprehend their feelings, he sees them as "melancholy Brothers" (p. 154, l. 13) and explains that "[his] heart is sick with anguish for [their] bale" (p. 154, l. 19). However, he also states that one cannot blame God for the misery in the city, but that it is man himself who has led to this situation (cf. p. 155, ll. 7-12) by too recklessly pushing on industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Because everyone is so 'lost' in the city, he regards it, in fact, as 'godless'. As Barry notes, this idea

is part of the traditional mental framework which sees the countryside as nature, the work of God, and the city as culture, the product of 'Man', and hence always suspect, part of a scenario in which Sodom and Gomorrah, the infamously wicked 'cities of the plain', become the covert [...] archetypes of all cities (*Contemporary British Poetry* 24).

For all these reasons, the speaker can easily understand if people decide to kill themselves in order to put an end to their suffering (cf. "Lo, you are free to end it when you will, / Without the fear of waking after death", p. 156, ll. 23-24). This is also why he mentions in his account the river that goes through the city which "[i]s named the River of the Suicides" (p. 165, l. 16).⁵¹ Because simply leaving the city and living somewhere else is no option for the people (at least, it seems, they believe it would not change their lives for the better), those who are "overweary, / And shuddering from the future yet more dreary" (p. 165, ll. 17-18) often commit suicide in the river.

⁵¹ Since there is the widely held assumption that the speaker in the poem describes London, the "River of the Suicides" refers to the River Thames "which became particularly associated with suicide in the nineteenth century" (F. O'Gorman 418, n. 99). It is often thought that "The City of Dreadful Night" is about London because Thomson wrote in his diaries about this city that "its mighty gloom is more impressive & fascinating than all splendours" (qtd. in Campbell 130).

Interestingly enough—whether the poem is meant to convey this idea or not—the final escape is *through nature* (the river), even if it also means the end of one’s life. According to the speaker and his depiction of the city, the people have never had a ‘real life’ in the city anyway, so even if committing suicide seems very pessimistic, it is probably not less pessimistic an idea than ‘living’ (well—rather *existing* than *living*) in the seemingly ‘dead’ “City of Dreadful Night”. With the help of the horrifying images in the poem, the speaker does not only want to convey the feelings of the people he encounters in the city or his own feelings, but he tries to make the reader feel the frightening atmosphere as well. As Ian Campbell says, Thomson “constructs vivid patterns of imagery to assault and wound the reader, and he orchestrates individual effects to sustain the shock, and to convince” (133).

Interpreting Thomson’s poem has shown how much people have actually suffered from the drawbacks of industrialization and modernization in urban surroundings because the image of the city that the speaker presents in the poem reflects the sadness, despair, and hopelessness that many people experienced there. In fact, “the totality of life is expressed pessimistically” (Den Tandt 108). Den Tandt is absolutely right in saying that “[t]hrough the text focuses in most cases on isolated, alienated figures” (104), as represented by the speaker himself or the people he follows on his way through the city, “the urban waste land it evokes is haunted by absent multitudes” (*ibid.*). The text can thus be said to fulfill the functions of cultural-critical metadiscourse which Zapf names as one of the main three ‘dynamic processes’ of literary texts in his theory of literature as cultural ecology. Thesing regards the poem as a “case [study] of mental alienation from the surrounding world” (*The London Muse* 141) and says that it “exhibit[s] the darkest side of melancholy by moving beyond compassionate sadness and partial dejection to numbing depression and complete enervation of spirit” (*ibid.*). In contrast to other poems dealing with the Victorian city, which rely on descriptions of city *life* to convey the misery and to express how much people have suffered, the speaker in Thomson’s poem rather points to the lifelessness behind the bustling industrial city to stress what people’s lives actually looked like (cf. the “truth”, p. 123, l. 2) and to reveal their innermost feelings. In fact, several times, the city is associated with a cemetery and the atmosphere is described as overly frightening, so that the poem becomes one of the most striking examples of ‘urban anxiety’: “A profound psychic suffering—loss of purpose, depression, faithlessness, suicidal despair—colours the metropolis and makes it into a place of living death, a wasteland” (Epstein Nord 530).

The poem appears less politically motivated and calling for change than others, but, first and foremost, it simply appeals to the reader's emotions: The speaker focuses on the gothic effect—he constantly uses images of darkness and death—so that one can comprehend how frightened the urban citizen must have felt. The poem ends without hope for change because it expresses the idea that there is no escape from the misery in the city except in death.

5.3. Robert Buchanan's "Bexhill, 1866"

Extracts from Robert Buchanan's poem "Bexhill, 1866", published in that year, present yet a different view of the industrial city, since the perspective is a new one.⁵² Here, the speaker tells about his memories of his stay in the city while being in a rural town and it will become clear that one of the central aims of the poem is to make the reader become aware of the strong contrast between urban surroundings and the countryside. As Forsyth says, "[t]he poem takes the form of an interplay, discursively lyrical rather than dramatic, between the 'pastoral solitude' [...] and the 'unsung city's streets'" ("Nature and the Victorian City" 393). The city is still described in similar terms as in the other two poems that were analyzed so far, which grants the text its role as cultural-critical metadiscourse: The urban sphere is frightening because it is dark, bleak, and full of weariness and despair. However, it is exactly due to the way the speaker contrasts the city with the rural town and points out the differences between the two places (which also includes imaginative counter-discourse), that the negative image of the city is reinforced: Because the countryside is described so positively and with a pastoral view in the poem, the city appears even more terrible a place. Thus, by showing both sides of life, one could agree with Forsyth's view that "Buchanan attempts to present a poetic credo acknowledging his indebtedness to Wordsworth, the guiding light of his youth, but at the same time intimating the shortcomings in the contemporary world of his mentor's poetic philosophy" ("Nature and the Victorian City" 393).

The poem begins with the speaker's description of the atmosphere in the rural town where he is later reminded of the experiences he had in the city some time ago. The atmosphere in this town in the countryside is very similar to the atmosphere conveyed in the nature poems that were interpreted earlier in this thesis: Everything appears to be perfectly harmonious and pleasant and it even seems like there is nothing that could disturb the harmony and beauty of the place. One is introduced to the place

⁵² The city described here is, again, London, because "Bexhill, 1866" is the first of Buchanan's London Poems (cf. Warburg 56) and the speaker also refers to the city as London in the poem in line 55.

and its atmosphere by the speaker's references to flora and fauna; he mentions, for example, that he can see "the catkins of the hazel swing / Wither'd above the leafy nook wherein / The chaffinch breasts her five blue-speckled eggs" (ll. 1-3).⁵³ It is said that "catkins of the hazel" are "[w]ither'd", but the word does not have a negative connotation here, since it rather conveys that spring has come (cf. "may", l. 4; "on this gentle sunset of the spring", l. 7). Likewise, the "leafy nook" and the appearance of the "chaffinch" point to the fact that the place is very much 'alive'. Spring is the season that 'brings life to nature' again after the season of winter and this is very much expressed in the images the speaker uses in his description. He further states that "[a]ll round the thorn grows fragrant" (l. 4) and that "the fresh wild hyacinth-bed / Shimmers like water in the whispering wind" (ll. 5-6). The speaker's descriptions of the different aspects of nature reveal that he is aware of nature's diversity and "of the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89), which fits the main principles of ecology. In this very moment when the speaker sits "within [his] cottage by the sea" (l. 8) on a day in spring and recognizes how beautiful and harmonious the place is, he is suddenly for some reason reminded of the city that he visited some time ago. We learn that he is "[t]hinking of yonder city where [he] dwelt, / Wherein [he] sicken'd, and whereof [he] learn'd / So much that dwells like music on [his] brain" (ll. 9-11). Maybe it is exactly because everything seems so perfect, pleasant, and harmonious to him in the countryside that he is then reminded of how terrible and uncomfortable the city appeared to him and how bad he felt there (cf. "sicken'd", l. 10). Obviously, the experiences he had in the city were so horrible and shocking that he has not really been able to forget about them—they have become imprinted in his memory. The memories of his experience in the city are like a catchy tune that one cannot get out of one's head anymore (cf. "dwells like music on my brain", l. 11) because they always come back, even in the most beautiful natural surroundings.

A little later, it becomes clear that the city the speaker once visited is London and he also explains that, during his stay there, he often tried to put his experiences into poetry "to make / The busy life of London musical" (ll. 54-55). Being in London, he was determined to "phrase in modern song the troubled lives / Of dwellers in the sunless lanes and streets" (ll. 56-57), but somehow he did not manage to do it. The reason he gives for not having been successful in putting his experiences into poetry while he was in the city is that the terrible atmosphere in London forced him to ponder pictures of

⁵³ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Buchanan*. Vol. 1. London: Chatto & Windus, 1976 (Reprint). 113-115.

more pleasant places (like in nature), in order to suffer not so much from the harsh reality.⁵⁴ Thesing puts it quite nicely when he says that

whenever he [the speaker] tries to focus his poetic talents directly on city conditions, he hears a deflective call that would have him write what Raymond Williams has described as the poetry of ‘rural retrospect or retreat’, that melancholy longing for an Arcadian rural community, that ‘use of the country, of nature, as a retreat and solace from human society’ (*The London Muse* 82).

The speaker claims, for instance, that “the presence of the Mountains / Was on [him]” (ll. 59-60) and that “the murmur of the Sea / Deepen’d [his] mood” (ll. 60-61), so that “everywhere [he] saw, / Flowing beneath the blackness of the streets, / The current of sublimer, sweeter life” (ll. 61-63). So, obviously the memories of the place in the countryside (that he has now come back to) had a very calming and comforting effect on him back then. Therefore, in the city, he probably felt the need to write about nature (instead of writing about the city) to cheer himself and others up rather than making everybody feel worse. Certain critics deduce from this passage in the poem that “Buchanan was aware of the attractiveness of rural community, but [...] also knew that the more the poet turned to memory and the country, the less competently he would be able to treat the actualities of the city” (Thesing, *The London Muse* 82). Now that the speaker has come back to his rural town, he is haunted by memories of urban life and, in this different environment, he is also able to write about the city. This is certainly a consequence of him being no longer constantly confronted with the misery, having gained some distance to it, and having had time to reflect on the experience. He also asserts, however, that it is far more difficult to write poetry about the city than about nature or other positive things (or people) in life: “But easier far the task to sing of kings, / Or weave weird ballads where the moon-dew glistens, / Than body forth this life in beauteous sound” (ll. 80-82). It probably took him some time to realize that his thoughts and feelings about the misery in the city deserve to be given a voice to as well.

How, then, does the speaker express his thoughts and feelings about the city now? What was his impression of London and the people living there and how did he feel about being in the city? Apart from mentioning the atmosphere of darkness in the city (cf. “sunless lanes and streets”, l. 57; “the blackness of the streets”, l. 62), which was also a central aspect in the other city poems that have been analyzed so far, he actually only tries to describe the sadness, despair, and hopelessness that the people conveyed to

⁵⁴ One could say that the speaker’s behavior in the poem reflects a common trend among poets in the nineteenth century. Viereck claims that “a deliberate avoidance of industrial references in poetry was as much a reaction against industrialism as any direct denunciation. In fact, it seemed that the louder the factories hummed, the louder the nineteenth-century poets made their skylarks and nightingales warble, as if to drown out the unwelcome realities” (“The Poet in the Machine Age” 97).

him. Thus, he is not so much interested in referring to the different aspects of city life that had a negative effect on people (as, for instance, factory work, pollution, poverty, etc.), but he immediately concentrates on the effect itself: people's emotional reaction to city life. First, he mentions the "weariness and weight of tears" (l. 76) that was striking to him. Just like the speaker in Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night", he could see how sad, tired, and desperate the Londoners were by simply looking at them. It is also worth mentioning that the speaker includes an alliteration in this line (formed by the words "weariness" and "weight of tears"), which serves as a means of emphasis here, since the reader's attention is drawn to these words and one is likely to reflect on the causes. The "weariness", just as before, is certainly a consequence of the working conditions in the factories, especially the long working hours. The "weight of tears" stands for the people's unhappiness about their situation in the city because "tears" are an open expression of sadness. It also shows that the situation in the city was really terrible and that people could not always suppress their feelings; they often showed their emotions openly so that other people who came to the city (for example as visitors, like the speaker) could get an impression of their misery and despair. Thesing also notes that the "special sharpness of observation" ("Robert Buchanan" 44) is probably also a result of the poet's "Scottishness" (ibid.), which made him an "outside[r] to the English metropolis" ("Robert Buchanan" 44). Moreover, the speaker's exclamation "ah!" (l. 75) indicates that the sight of the people was so shocking to him that it also affected him in a way: Seeing how sad and desperate the Londoners felt, he was certainly overcome by similar emotions. It is also said that one could not only see how unhappy the people felt, but also hear it. The speaker remembers that they were "crying out to God [...] wish[ing] for slumber" (l. 77). Thus, he makes clear that he could perceive the misery with different senses and that it was basically ever-present, because, even if one had closed one's eyes to the horrible reality of city life, one would still have been haunted by the sound of misery: people's crying. In Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night", London is described as a 'godless' place and the Londoners are presented as lost and hopeless; here, however, the speaker says that he had the impression that the people were "crying out to God" and that they might not have lost all hope. Because the Londoners appeared so weary to him (cf. l. 76), he believed that their "crying out to God" was caused by "the wish for slumber" (l. 77). Many working-class people living in the city spent most of their time in the factories and since they had to work there by day and at night, they only had very little time to sleep. Therefore, the fatigue,

weariness, and exhaustion have definitely contributed very much to their sadness and to their negative attitude towards the city. Although the speaker acknowledges that “[t]he crowd had voices” (l. 83), it also seemed to him that their voices were not ‘real’ voices, since “each living man / Within the crowd seem’d silence-smit and hard” (ll. 83-84). Thus, he might want to explain that the people had actually no power and strength to really give a voice to their feelings and thoughts about life in the city by other means than crying, since they were too shocked and depressed. Also, he probably intends to express that the crowd could be heard when all people cried together and expressed their sadness and despair, but that the people were nevertheless rather ‘voiceless’ because the crying was largely ignored by those in power and did not lead to any reactions that would have brought about a change in the people’s situation. In the following, the speaker points out how much control the city actually had over people’s emotions when he says that “[t]hey only heard the tumult of the town” (l. 85) and that “[t]hey only felt the dimness in their eyes” (l. 86). The speaker probably wants to show that the Londoners were so deeply affected by their surroundings that they were very limited in the things they “heard” and “felt” because the negative experience in the city determined their emotions to a great extent. Obviously, the noise in the city was so loud and penetrating that one could not hear other sounds anymore; likewise, the long working hours in the factories have strained the Londoners so severely that “the dimness in their eyes” was stronger than anything else they felt. Since the speaker makes use of an anaphora—both lines begin with the words “[t]hey only”—he puts special emphasis on the statement made here and wants the reader to realize not only how badly life in the city influenced the Londoners, but also how *deeply* it did so. Finally, the poem also includes a reference to people dying in the city (as a result of their weariness): The speaker states that the people sometimes “saw / Some weary one fling up his arms and drop, / Clay-cold, among them,—and they scarcely grieved, / But hush’d their hearts a time, and hurried on” (ll. 87-90). Thus, there is again a parallel to Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night”, since the speaker here also tries to make the reader understand that the situation in the city ultimately led to many deaths. The fact that “they scarcely grieved” (l. 89) and immediately “hurried on” (l. 90) further shows that the people were no longer really themselves and that they had lost all traces of humanity: They no longer demonstrated empathy and the only thing that mattered to them was to go on with their work, duties, and lives in the city because they were so much under pressure and dependent on earning money. As Thesing remarks with regard

to the people's indifference, "[t]hough dejected, the people hurry on with aimless direction whenever trouble is encountered" ("Robert Buchanan" 50).

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker refers once more to the place in the countryside (probably some place in or near the seaside town Bexhill that is referred to in the title) where he sits now and where he is finally successful in putting his thoughts about the city into poetry. Just as at the beginning of the poem, he points out why this place has such a positive effect on him and simultaneously contrasts it to the city. For instance, he states that he enjoys the "pastoral solitude" (l. 106), the "purer sunshine" (l. 108) and says that he is "[h]appy to breathe again serener air" (l. 107). In addition to that, we learn that the "meadows were to [him] an ecstasy, / The singing birds a glory, and the trees / A green perpetual feast to fill the eye" (ll. 109-111)—these being more examples of his appreciation of nature's diversity. In this place, "[t]he terrible City loom'd from far away" (l. 121), but because he was no longer there and gained distance to it, he could now "in brighter mood [...] make the life of London musical" (ll. 125-126). One could say that the poem is quite similar to poems from the Romantic Period dealing with 'emotion recollected in tranquility' (e.g. Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey") because it also refers to the important function of memory in the production of poetry. Analyzing the nature poems has shown that the speakers were often able to remember their experience in nature in great detail (and to put it into poetry) after some time had passed and when they were no longer in the place where they had actually had the experience. In Buchanan's "Bexhill, 1866", the speaker's memories of his experience in the city are just as strong and vivid as the speakers' memories of their experiences in nature in the poems from the Romantic Period. He, too, needed some distance to the actual place and had to reflect on the experience in order to "make the life of London musical" (l. 126).

It should have become clear that the focus in Buchanan's "Bexhill, 1866" is not on the detailed description of the urban experience and on pointing out the various different reasons for the frightening atmosphere in the city. The poem rather shows that the experience in the city—the perception of the suffering, despair, and misery—often had a very strong impact on the observer because it was so terrible that the memories kept coming back again and again. Thus, "Bexhill, 1866" points to the enduring influence of the urban experience and makes us aware of how difficult it was to forget or to come to terms with the things one saw in the city. Just like Romantic poets remembered their experience in nature, because it was so *positive*, the Victorian poet

was haunted by memories of his experience in the city because it was so *negative*. Furthermore, we should have learned that, although the actual experience in the city already made people see how terrible the situation was, the constant confrontation with the misery might also have put them in a state of shock and could have made it difficult to spend more thoughts on the things seen (or to put them immediately into poetry). After having gained some distance to the city and having spent time in an altogether different place, one might have come to a *deeper* understanding of the things seen and have realized the critical degree of the city's potential to arouse fear. Thesing rightly notes that, behind Carpenter's poetry, there is the belief that "[his] poetry ought to state a truth about what [he] see[s], believing too that poetry ought to affect how people think, feel, and act in reality" ("Robert Buchanan" 44).

5.4. Edward Carpenter's "In a Manufacturing Town"

Edward Carpenter's poem "In a Manufacturing Town" from 1885 still deals with the city in spatial terms and shows why it is frightening *as a place*, but it will become apparent that the focus now shifts to the frightening aspects of city *life*—especially to the gap between the rich and the poor. Although such issues as social injustice and poverty were already hinted at in the other poems with the help of imagery, "In a Manufacturing Town" refers to them in greater detail and criticizes these aspects more explicitly, which is why the analysis will complement the image of the Victorian city that has been developed so far.

Just like the speakers in the other city poems that were interpreted, the speaker in Carpenter's poem tells us about his visit to a city that lies somewhere in the past (as indicated by the use of the past tense). He begins his account with a very long list of the things he saw there and only at the very end of this list does he tell the reader how being in the manufacturing town and being confronted with all these things actually made him feel. Of course, the speaker's choice of words in the list-like description of the things he saw in the city already gives some indication of his emotions, but it becomes clear that he is determined to convey to the reader an image of the manufacturing town before telling about his own feelings. Because he gives the description of the city first, the reader can imagine what it must have looked like in the city and one will later probably comprehend the speaker's emotional reaction more easily. Only the very first line of the poem gives the reader a rough idea of the speaker's feelings, since he says that "[he]

walked restless and despondent through the gloomy city” (l. 1).⁵⁵ From the words “restless” and “despondent”, one can tell that the speaker must have felt very uncomfortable while he was going through the city. The restlessness might have been both physical and emotional: He was certainly wandering around restlessly, going from one place to the next and seeing one thing after the other (therefore also the list-like description that is to follow). But then, he might also have been thinking about the things he saw around him and was probably constantly haunted by the images, which caused an inner unrest. Lastly, since he describes the city as “gloomy” (ibid.) at the very beginning, he already alludes to the dark and depressing atmosphere in the manufacturing town, and one can guess that he felt very frightened by the surroundings. The list-like effect of the speaker’s description of the things he saw in the city is mainly due to the stylistic device of anaphora. Every time he mentions a new aspect, he introduces it with the words “[a]nd saw” (cf. l. 2, l. 3, l. 4; and “[a]s I saw” in l. 6 and l. 8) and because there is always another “[a]nd saw” that follows (four in total), one has the impression that there is such a great variety of aspects the speaker finds worth mentioning (probably because they are so shocking) that he could continue even longer with his enumeration. Thus, because the list seems to have no end while one reads it, it is quite overwhelming and the content might appear more striking—more horrible.

The first thing he mentions is “the eager unresting to and fro—as of ghosts in some sulphurous Hades” (l. 2) and with this image, the speaker probably wants to express his impression of bustling city life. The “eager unresting to and fro” stands for the activity and the hectic atmosphere in the city and because the speaker also referred to his own restlessness in the first line of the poem, it is possible that he was greatly influenced by the urban bustle. That he experienced the bustling atmosphere in a very negative way becomes clear through his comparison of the manufacturing town to “some sulphurous Hades”. He might want to convey that the city seemed to him like a place of the dead because the bustle was not really a sign of positive liveliness, but rather something that reminded him of death. By combining the contrasting images of life and death, the speaker wants to make the reader understand that although the city could have seemed ‘full of life’ to a visitor at first sight, because of the large number of people and the happenings in the streets, there were actually not so many signs of life. It is the life in the city in particular—the bustle, the crowds, the illnesses, the pollution,

⁵⁵ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Towards Democracy*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926 (Reprint). 123-125. Due to the length of the verses, the print image of the poem demands that each paragraph is counted as one line.

and the work one had to do there—which ultimately led to many deaths. Maybe the speaker felt the need to express how ‘dead’ the people in the city actually appeared to him by referring to them as “ghosts” (l. 2) because their weariness, exhaustion, and depression was so striking to him. Therefore, one could say that he perceives the city in a similar way as the speaker in Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night”. It was obviously not only the sight of the ghost-like people that has led to his view of the city as a place of the dead, but also the stench one could smell there. By describing the manufacturing town as a “sulphurous Hades” (ibid.), he points to the terrible smell which was so typical of cities at that time and which was often described as a stench of death. The association with death probably came from “Miasma theory [which] argued that diseases like cholera were caused and spread by the gases emanating from diseased bodies, waste products, and decaying matter” (Choi 566). Hector Gavin, “physician, secretary to the Metropolitan Sanitary Commission, and member of the Health of Towns Association” (Choi 564) described the air as

loaded with the most unhealthy emanations from the lungs and persons of the occupants,—from the foecal remains which are commonly retained in the rooms,—and from the accumulations of decomposing refuse which nearly universally abound [...] to breathe it was to inhale a dangerous, perhaps fatal, poison (qtd. in Choi 567).

Next, the speaker refers to the factories and mentions “the crowds of tall chimneys going up” (l. 3). Through the use of the word “crowds”, one can imagine that there must have been a great number of chimneys and it is likely that the speaker finds this worth mentioning because it adds to the impression of the menacing atmosphere in the city. He also makes use of personification here, since he refers to the chimneys with the word “crowds”—a word which one would usually only use when talking about people. Again, as in some of the other city poems, the speaker personifies the chimneys (and the factories in general) to make them seem ‘alive’ and to show how menacing they were. Likewise, with the help of the adjective “tall”, he makes clear that the factories with their chimneys were very threatening. However, the speaker does not only want to express that it was simply the sight of the factories or their size which was threatening and frightening. The main intention behind his presentation of the factories as symbols of oppression is to emphasize how the workers in the factories felt: The atmosphere inside was just as (negatively) overwhelming as the factories appeared from the outside, since the hard work, the bad working conditions, and the long working hours made the workers feel threatened and frightened all the time. Shortly afterwards, the speaker also refers to the air-polluting smoke that came out of the chimneys (cf. “the pall of smoke

covering the sun [and] covering the earth”, l. 3), adding further to the oppression the factories symbolized to him. It did not only make people feel uncomfortable, because it caused a dark atmosphere in the city blocking the sunlight, but it was indeed a huge threat, since the speaker also implies that the factory smoke was basically *everywhere*, that it lay over the city like a black curtain, and that the people were constantly confronted with pollution.

The stench in the city that the speaker referred to before, when speaking of the “sulphurous Hades” (l. 2), was probably also a result of the “huge refuse-heaps” (l. 4) in the city that he mentions a little later. However, he only includes the description of the “huge refuse-heaps” in his account because it was striking to him that they were “writhing with children picking them over” (*ibid.*). With this image, he points to the miserable situation of children in the city and especially to the problem of poverty. Since he concentrates on the issues of poverty and social injustice in the rest of the poem, one is led to believe that these are the things he was most shocked by during his walk through the city. In this respect, the poem is similar to Blake’s “London”, since the speaker was also found to focus mainly on these aspects in his descriptions of the city—in a less detailed way, though. Due to the speaker’s attention to the issues of poverty and social injustice, “In a Manufacturing Town” can also be read as reflecting the basic claims from the theory of social ecology, since it illustrates the interconnectedness of social structures and environmental problems, saying that the experience of the environment is also strongly dependent on decisions of those who are in power in society. At some points, the issue of environmental justice is even addressed, namely when the speaker compares and contrasts the housing conditions of the rich and the poor: He mentions that he saw, on the one hand, “the ghastly half-roofless smoke-blackened houses” (l. 5) and, on the other hand, a little more “far away” (l. 6), the “Capitalist quarter, / With its villa residences and its high-walled gardens and its well-appointed carriages, and its face turned away from the wriggling poverty which made it rich” (ll. 6-7). Here, he makes clear that he saw poverty and wealth at the same time and that it was exactly the co-existence of both which was so shocking and difficult to understand. Also, he may have commiserated with the poor people because they lived in the middle of the city and were constantly suffering hardships, while the rich simply fled to nicer parts of the city, where they did not have to see the misery and deal with the problems anymore. The speaker’s indignation finds an echo in Samuel Wilberforce’s complaint that “[i]n all great towns thin walls separate luxury from

starvation” (qtd. in Hulin 21). He, too, had to notice with shock that “[t]he two classes live[d] in absolute ignorance of each other [and that] there [were] no points of contact between them” (ibid.). Maybe the speaker’s main point of criticism here is the rich people’s lack of sympathy with and responsibility for the poor people in the city and their situation. Leaving the poor people alone, ignoring their miserable situation, and not doing anything to help them was certainly not what one expected from those in power.⁵⁶ Then, at the end of his list-like description of the things he saw in the city, the speaker expresses once more very clearly how shocking the experience was to him: He reveals that “[he] shuddered: / For [he] felt stifled, like one who lies half-conscious— knowing not clearly the shape of the evil—in the grasp of some heavy nightmare” (ll. 9-10). From the word “stifled” one can tell how (negatively) overwhelmed the speaker was by the experiences he had in the city. The description of himself as “half-conscious” could hint at the fact that he was not able to completely realize how terrible it really was to live in the city (cf. “not knowing clearly the shape of the evil”)— he could only guess it. However, seeing the misery in the city and imagining the feelings of those living there sufficed to make him feel like he was having a nightmare.

It is only in the second half of the poem that the speaker becomes convinced of knowing why the people felt so terrible and frightened in the city and why it was so difficult to live there. While he was still very much emotionally affected in the first half of the poem, and thus probably too overwhelmed to actually comprehend and respond to what he had seen, he now appears to be able to reflect on the experience and to understand how much the situation in the city actually differed from his view of an ideal communal life. Instead of continuing with his explanation of the feelings that arose in him when he walked through the city, he now refers to the thoughts and insights the experience led to. We learn that the speaker had his moment of ‘enlightenment’ when he saw a “little ragged boy” (l. 11) with an “innocent wistful child-face” (l. 12) and “strangely pale” (ibid.). When he looked at the poor child, he suddenly “saw it all clearly, the lie [...] and the truth” (l. 13). For some reason, the sight of the boy made the speaker understand “in an instant” (ibid.) that city life (as the speaker experienced it) was a “lie”, since it only favored the rich and caused a life of hardships for the poor. Becoming aware of this “lie” then also made him see “the truth”, namely the things that

⁵⁶ This passage could be seen as reflecting the author’s personal view, since it is said that “Carpenter’s socialism arose in part from his hostility towards the wealthy middle classes in which he had been brought up and which he had rejected in favour of a life among the labouring classes of Northern England” (T. Brown 313).

would change the atmosphere and life in the city for the better. It soon becomes clear that it is a vision that leads to these insights: The speaker first draws on apocalyptic imagery and visioned the collapse of the city (as it was known to him) and then had another vision of a place that is the exact opposite of the city, since it is beautiful, peaceful, harmonious, and full of sources of pleasure—an ideal place: He claims that he could see that “the smoke-blackened walls and the tall chimneys, and the dreary habitations of the poor, and the drearier habitations of the rich, crumbled and conveyed themselves away as if by magic” (l. 14). Immediately afterwards, he saw the “joy of free open life under the sun: / The green sun-delighting earth and the rolling of the sea” (ll. 15-16) and also “[t]he free-sufficing life—sweet comradeship, few needs and common pleasures—the needless endless burdens all cast aside” (l. 17). It is quite striking that the image of the ideal place, where one can see the sunlight and enjoy “[t]he green [...] earth” (l. 16), is a total reversal of the image of the city with the factory smoke “covering the sun [and] covering the earth” (l. 3). Thus, the encounter with the “little ragged boy” (l. 11) and the vision have led to the insight that urban life could be more pleasant if the place looked more ‘natural’ and less polluted. Moreover, the atmosphere in the city would improve and there would be fewer problems (cf. “burdens all cast aside”, l. 17), if people (rich *and* poor) lived together and helped each other. Finally, the speaker concludes that all that is needed for people living together in the city is “the simple need and hunger of the human heart” (l. 20), since these aspects are “[s]tronger than all combinations of Capital [and] wiser than all the Committees representative of Labor” (l. 20). This shows that the speaker strongly advocates more humanity in the city: He wishes the rich and powerful would stop following their economical interests so recklessly with negative consequences for lower classes, the environment, and the general atmosphere in the city. As he shows by presenting alternatives to the *status quo*, the speaker has not yet completely given up his hope for a better future, which corresponds with Tony Brown’s finding that Carpenter’s poetry is often “optimistic about the possibility of social change” (315).

Taking everything into account, one can say that Carpenter’s “In a Manufacturing Town” differs dramatically from the other city poems that have been interpreted so far—in content as well as in the message it conveys. While the speakers in the other poems were mainly interested in describing the atmosphere in the city and explaining what the place looked like to them, the speaker in Carpenter’s poem focuses only briefly on the description of the city and then looks deeper into the main causes for the misery he saw

there. His main motivation is probably to make the reader aware of the perverseness of the capitalist idea of the city, namely the way the rich and powerful people saw the city as a profitable place without being interested in the consequences industrial business had on the environment and on the people working and living in the city. It is thus a poem that appeals much to ideas from social ecology, eco-Marxism, and environmental justice—while, above all, it functions as cultural-critical metadiscourse as defined by Zapf.⁵⁷ By showing what life in the city was *actually* like (with the help of his description) and what it could *potentially* be like (with the help of his vision that functions as imaginative counter-discourse), the speaker in “In a Manufacturing Town” aims at raising the reader’s consciousness for the great need of improvement in the Victorian city. When the poem was published, the speaker’s insights of how one could improve the situation in the city were probably meant to serve as an instruction to the reader and to lead to necessary reforms.

5.5. Thomas Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt”

Finally, analyzing Thomas Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt” and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children” will contribute to a broader understanding of how poets reacted to social injustice and the miserable situation of the urban worker— aspects that have certainly played a central role in causing an atmosphere of fear in the city, which further proves the significance of ideas from the field of social ecology. Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt”, published in 1843 and a poem for which Hood is said to be “best remembered” (Casteras 19), deals with the routine and working conditions of a seamstress and puts a lot of emphasis on the exhaustion, weariness, and pain the woman feels during her work.⁵⁸ Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children” from 1844 provides an insight into the cruelties of child labor and it will become clear that it “is preoccupied with how a wretched environment inflicts suffering not only on the body but also on the mind” (F. O’Gorman 25). When reading the poems, one should keep in mind what Hyson Cooper said, namely that

⁵⁷ The attitudes expressed in the poem certainly reflect Carpenter’s own ideas regarding nature and the city at the time he wrote it: He “sought to become closer to the natural world by leaving [his] bourgeois professional [life] in town and living a simpler life in the country. Millthorpe, the seven-acre farm and cottage Carpenter established at the Yorkshire border near Sheffield in 1883, became the stuff of legend among [...] English socialists concerned about the environmental as well as the social impact of industrialization” (Mayer 222).

⁵⁸ It should be noted that the poem “must be understood in terms of its author’s experience on the [...] marketplace for periodical poetry” (Simonsen 60), Hood’s personal struggles with making a living out of his poetry, “which in the end opened his eyes to the subject matter and provided him with an answerable style of writing” (ibid.).

[t]he frustration of socially conscious authors [...] stems not from any lack of awareness on the part of the financially secure that such wretched people existed, but that their wretchedness had not yet been placed in a context that would make those with wealth to spare become socially conscious themselves (32).⁵⁹

In the first stanza of Thomas Hood's "The Song of the Shirt", the speaker introduces the seamstress whose working conditions and feelings are described in the rest of the poem.⁶⁰ The first information he reveals about the woman is that she had "fingers weary and worn" (l. 1) and "eyelids heavy and red" (l. 2).⁶¹ Both descriptions point to hard work and the extreme working conditions at the time of the Industrial Revolution that often caused exhaustion, weariness, and pain: The woman's fingers are probably referred to as "weary and worn" because the constant sewing and stitching have left marks on her. The negative effects of the hard work and the working conditions, as expressed in the words "weary and worn", are then even more emphasized through the alliteration formed by the two adjectives. Likewise, with the "eyelids heavy and red", the speaker alludes to the long working hours and the limited amount of sleep the workers could get. He further states that he saw the woman sitting in her room in "unwomanly rags" (l. 3). It is quite interesting that the speaker uses the words "woman" and "unwomanly" in just one line. Obviously, he does not only mention the "unwomanly rags" to give the reader an idea of the seamstress' poverty, because she cannot afford 'real' clothes (like the clothes she makes), but also to address the issue of social injustice: The seamstress is forced to sew clothes for wealthier people who can afford them, while she can only wear "rags". Also, while women from the upper classes can look womanly, in the clothes the seamstress produces, she makes a very "unwomanly" impression on the speaker. However, this is not only because of her clothes, but mainly a consequence of her being a *worker*, which, of course, clashed with the Victorian idea of the woman as the 'Angel in the House'.

By means of repetition (cf. "Stitch! stitch! stitch!", l. 5; "Work! work! Work!", l. 9), the speaker then makes clear to the reader the monotony and endlessness of the seamstress' work, and immediately afterwards, he mentions that she expressed her pain and suffering (cf. "dolorous pitch", l. 7) in "the 'Song of the Shirt!'" (l. 8) that he could

⁵⁹ Cooper traces this back to the fact that "the wealthy were so accustomed to the sight of ragged children and seamstresses that they had become desensitized" (32).

⁶⁰ According to Susan P. Casteras, "the needlewoman became a prototype of the female modern worker and the oppressive impact of rapidly changing technologies of the post-Industrial Revolution on the lives of such laborers (the invention of the sewing machine in 1851 was both a blessing and a curse to women)" (37). She adds that "[s]empstresses not only led lives of despair, but [...] were also victims of skewed ideologies of hyperfemininity and class distinctions" (ibid.).

⁶¹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Works of Thomas Hood*. Ed. Epes Sargent. Vol. 1. New York: Putnam, 1862. 147-149.

hear her singing “[i]n poverty, hunger, and dirt” (l. 6).⁶² Again, the words “poverty, hunger, and dirt” convey an impression of the woman’s miserable situation and terrible living conditions. She works all the time, but she cannot afford (enough) food or a clean and comfortable housing. The speaker then refers once more to the inhumanely long working hours via imagery, when he says that the woman worked from early in the morning (cf. “[w]hile the cock is crowing aloof”, l. 10) until late at night (cf. “[t]ill the stars shine through the roof”, l. 12). Also, at a later point in the poem, this idea of the seemingly endless tasks which are always repeated is continued on an even broader scale when the seamstress is said to sing about her working “[i]n the dull December light” (l. 58) *and* “[w]hen the weather is warm and bright” (l. 60). She does not only work day and night, but also all seasons long—the whole year. Thus, this continuation of the first image can be seen as a means of intensifying the message. The fact that the work often seemed to have no end for the workers and that they had to do the same tasks over and over again is definitely emphasized in the poem and it also stressed another time in lines 21 to 22: “Seam, and gusset, and band, / Band, and gusset, and seam”. Here, the level of content and the level of structure are connected in the seamstress’ song: Through the chiasmus, the lines become somewhat like a closed circle, which certainly underlines that the seamstress had to follow the same procedure day in and day out. This is further intensified in a more general sense through the lines’ “function as a formulaic refrain” (Simonsen 16) throughout the poem.⁶³ The stylistic devices do not only fit the genre of the song (as introduced in the title), but the song as such powerfully reinforces what is expressed content-wise, because, “with its instantly memorable rhyme and rhythm, [it] represents the age-old oral tradition of ordinary people” (Onyett 20). What is maybe most interesting about the beginning of the poem (and what gives it much of its persuasive power) has been noticed already by Cooper: “Rather than opening the poem with immediate reproachful words in unschooled dialect, Hood begins with a narrator, and then slips into the voice of his oppressed subject” (32).

As in the very first lines of the poem, the reader next learns more about the consequences of the long working hours; however, it is now no longer the speaker, but

⁶² Jennifer McClure has a similar understanding and finds that the “repetition of the word ‘work’ not only echoes the labor but also demonstrates its homogenizing influence. It is a repetition that denies all difference, flattening life into a vast monotony on one endless repeated action. [...] The woman’s life loses all variety” (154).

⁶³ Still, as Cooper remarks, “the poem’s catchiness stands in sharp contrast to its grim subject matter” (32).

the seamstress herself who describes them. Via singing, she reveals that she works until “the brain begins to swim” (l. 18) and until “the eyes are heavy and dim” (l. 20). Sewing all day until late at night obviously does not only lead to weariness and tiredness, but it also makes it difficult for her to concentrate properly on her work (cf. “the brain begins to swim”, l. 18). Even when the seamstress falls asleep, her work continues to haunt her in her dreams because she reveals in her song that she “sew[s] [the buttons] on in a dream” (l. 24). Thus, it becomes clear that she is so busy sewing all the time that it is almost impossible for her to think of something else and to recover from her work—not even in her sleep. This probably also explains why she uses the word “slave” (l. 13) with reference to herself; it shows how much the work actually determined her life and feelings and how much she was bound to her workplace. With reference to the term “slave”, Casteras mentions that “[t]he protagonist is significantly uprooted from her home and placed in an alien urban world, not sewing for her family but producing cheaply-paid, sometimes poorly made, items for a hard-hearted employer and consumers” (23).

In the following, the seamstress addresses those who wear the clothes she sews, and she implies that these people are only interested in wearing the clothes without thinking about where they come from and under which circumstances they were produced: “O, men, with mothers and wives! / It is not linen you’re wearing out, / But human creatures’ lives” (ll. 26-28). Here, she criticizes the wealthier people’s disregard of the poor and their indifference to the terrible working conditions and their consequences.⁶⁴ The seamstress wishes that these people would see that her life only consists of working, and she is also aware of the fact that she will probably die early because of excessive labor, since she sings about her “[s]ewing at once, with a double thread, / A shroud as well as a shirt” (ll. 31-32). As Casteras says, “[t]he shirt [...] she sews [...] prefigure[s] her own death” (23). Shortly afterwards, she even states that she does not really fear death anymore because “his terrible shape, / [...] seems so like [her] own” (ll. 35-36). On the one hand, she clarifies how thin and poorly fed she is as a result of her poverty (cf. “It seems so like my own, / Because of the fasts I keep” (ll. 37-38), but, on the other hand, one could also take her statement as an expression of her welcoming death and seeing in it an escape and relief. In order to further explain

⁶⁴ MaClure makes an interesting point here: She states that “[t]he term ‘shirt’ was used specifically to refer to men’s clothing” (155) and that, by addressing not only men but also their women (cf. “mothers and wives”, l. 26), the speaker “suggest[s] not only that the wearers of the clothes she makes are exclusively male but also that they could only feel sympathy for her repetitive labor through association with the women they love” (155).

why she longs for death, she reveals details about her bad living conditions in her song: We learn, for instance, that she only has “a bed of straw” (l. 43), a “shattered roof” (l. 45), a “naked floor” (ibid.), “a broken chair” (l. 46), and “a wall so blank, [her] shadow [she] thank[s] / For sometimes falling there” (ll. 47-48). Moreover, she adds that her low wages only suffice for “[a] crust of bread—and rags” (l. 44).

At the end of the poem, it becomes clear that the seamstress does not regard death as the only escape because she believes—at least for a brief moment—that visiting nature can have a similar function. In her song, she expresses the wish to “breathe the breath / Of the cowslip and primrose sweet” (ll. 65-66) and explains that she would enjoy “the sky above her head, / And the grass beneath [her] feet” (ll. 67-68). She imagines that being in nature would make her “feel as [she] used to feel” (l. 70) before she became a seamstress and when she was not yet suffering from the working conditions, poverty, the atmosphere in the city in general, and other negative consequences of industrialization and urbanization. Just as in most of the other city poems that have been analyzed in this thesis, nature is described as the positive counter-image to the city and it is *imagined* as a place that can affect one’s emotions and well-being positively (just as in the sense of Zapf’s imaginative counter-discourse from his theory of literature as cultural ecology). Even if this positive image of nature often only existed as an idea or ‘vision’ for those living in cities in Victorian times (and was no longer an *actual* possibility of escape as in the Romantic Period), it shows, at least, that many city dwellers were very much aware of the negative effects living in the city had on their well-being and of the positive impact of nature. Right after the seamstress expressed her desire to go out into nature to “feel as [she] used to feel” (l. 70), she immediately realizes that this is impossible, since she would not be able to really forget the misery and problems she is confronted with all the time in the city, and because she knows that she would feel sad in nature as well. Thus, she does not expect that being in nature would help her to forget her sadness and to feel happy (cf. “No blessed leisure for love or hope”, l. 75), but she would nevertheless like to be there, since she would at least have “time for grief” (l. 76) and the opportunity to weep, which is impossible during her work (cf. “for every drop / Hinders needle and thread”, ll. 79-80).

Finally, the speaker concludes that the aim of the seamstress’ song is to draw the rich and powerful people’s attention to the misery and suffering of the poor (cf. “Would that its tone could reach the rich”, l. 88). By giving a voice to her feelings and singing about the terrible working conditions, social injustice, and her living conditions—with

references to pain, hunger, and death—the seamstress hopes that the wealthier people stop being so indifferent to the situation of the people from lower classes. The main aspects she mentions in her song—the long working hours, the monotony of the sewing tasks, and the pain and weariness the work causes—were found to be emphasized again and again throughout the whole poem, not only at the level of content but also structurally, by a frequent use of repetition and other stylistic devices such as alliteration and chiasmus.⁶⁵ Moreover, the great number of exclamation marks (26 occurrences in the song) definitely serves to make the seamstress’ statements more immediate and alarming.⁶⁶

Thus, Thomas Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt” differs from the other city poems that have been analyzed so far because it does not provide an overview of the different frightening aspects of the city as a place, but focuses on the terrible working conditions as one of the main reasons for an atmosphere of ‘urban anxiety’. Strongly connected to the bad working conditions in the city and thus adding to (and intensifying) the general feeling of ‘urban anxiety’ expressed in the poem is the issue of social injustice and especially the upper-class people’s indifference to the miserable situation of the urban worker. McClure thus has every reason to hope that “[i]f poetry can rehearse social justice, then its proliferation can encourage powerful people to *recite* social justice” (166).

5.6. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children”

The next “social protest poem of the era” (Henry 541), Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children”, also deals with the terrible working conditions in the Victorian city and the way the workers thought and felt about their work. However, as the title already suggests, the focus is now on child labor.⁶⁷ Having learned from Hood’s poem how much suffering the work caused *adult* workers, one will probably be even more shocked now by the description of the working conditions and the workers’

⁶⁵ Cooper also raises the idea that the poem may indeed be successful in attracting the attention of people outside the working classes and arousing pity in them, because of a “subtle implication of solidarity between the seamstress and the housewife” (34). This is because what the seamstress tells in the poem “might well have been uttered by a housewife leading a leisured but useless and unsatisfying existence” (Cooper 33)—both women can be said to “have certain forms of suffering in common” (Cooper 34).

⁶⁶ Peter Simonsen has also commented on the striking number of exclamation marks, concluding that the poem “call[s] attention to itself in a powerful—indeed theatrical—manner” (59).

⁶⁷ James Richard Simmons says that “[i]t is conservatively estimated that no fewer than 100,000 children under fourteen worked in English factories at midcentury, and [that] if one includes all teenagers, the number rises to as much as half a million” (337).

situation in general because Barrett Browning's poem is concerned with *children*. Dorothy Mermin even finds "the appeal to our feelings inartistically explicit" and says that the poem is, in fact, "painful to read" (96).

At the beginning of the poem, the speaker becomes aware of the children's suffering for the first time by hearing them weeping. Although he cannot yet see them, hearing the children weeping suffices for him to imagine how painful and exhausting it must be for them to work in the factories and coal mines. The fact that he asks other people in the city if they can also hear the children crying (cf. "Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers [...]?", ll. 1-2) might show that the speaker has the impression that he is the only person who pays attention to the plaintive cries of the children and that it seems to him that the other people who wander around in the city ignore the weeping.⁶⁸ Thus, one could say that "The Cry of the Children", like Hood's poem, addresses the issue of the upper-class people's indifference to the suffering and awful situation of the people from lower classes, including children. With regard to the image of the crying children, Peaches Henry concludes that Barrett Browning uses this image "not merely to invoke pity (the sentimental response to distress) but to give a sense of how extensive the children's misery is, to protest against it, to indicate who is responsible for it, and to insist that something be done to alleviate it" (544). In this context, she also points to the fact that "'crying' in various forms appears in the poem seventeen times" (Henry 545). In the following, it becomes clear that the speaker finds the weeping so striking (and believes that it should be striking to others as well) because he thinks that it is wrong that young children, who should actually have a carefree and happy childhood, are so sad and are forced to lead a life full of hardships. He refers to certain different other "young" (cf. l. 5, l. 6, l. 7, and l. 8) living things (animals and plants) and points out how different their lives are from the lives of the children, because they seem happy, trouble-free, and light-hearted:

The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly! (ll. 5-10)

Thus, the enumeration of these positive examples serves to underline the hard life of the children and their miserable situation. Moreover, by saying that many "young" creatures or plants have an 'easy', 'carefree' life, he also implies that it is wrong and unfair that

⁶⁸ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Vol. 2. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1889. 205-212.

the “young, young children” (l. 9) who work in the factories and mines are an exception and must endure so much suffering. He states that “[t]hey are weeping in the playtime of the others” (l. 11) and thus clearly criticizes that the children have no real childhood; instead of *being children* and doing what one would normally do at such a young age, they are already working like grown-ups in the textile and mining industry. Barrett Browning clearly “juxtaposes the children’s age against the adult experiences which daily assault them” (Henry 545). In the next stanza, the speaker then also gives a list of “old” (cf. l. 15, l. 17, l. 18, l. 19, and l. 20) things which he associates with sadness (cf. “The old man may weep for his to-morrow”, l. 15), loss (cf. “The old tree is leafless in the forest”, l. 17), and pain (cf. “the old wound, if stricken, is the sorest”, l. 19). With the help of this list, the speaker tries to express that one may be sad and suffer a lot at an advanced age (for different reasons), but that it is definitely not right that the children are feeling that way already at their young age.

A little later, the speaker describes what the children look like to him by using “pathetic diction [...] to accentuate their prematurely aged appearance” (Henry 545). Cooper even goes so far as to say that he “turns the exploited children into something almost otherworldly” (36), so that “the children themselves become terrifying instead of merely pitiable” (ibid.). The speaker mentions, for instance, their “pale and sunken faces” (l. 25) and states that “their looks are sad to see” (l. 26). In addition to that, we learn that he can tell from looking at the children’s faces how much pain and suffering the work in the factories and mines causes in them—their outward appearance reflects their emotions: Because “man’s hoary anguish draws and presses / Down the cheeks of infancy” (ll. 27-28), the children have a pained expression and appear very depressed and worn out. As Clayre says, “[f]actory hours, even if the work was physically lighter than the tasks it replaced, could induce extreme fatigue, [...] because the absence of play and the constant exercise of a limited number of muscles” (xxiv). At this point in the poem, the children also speak for themselves for the first time and tell the story of “[l]ittle Alice” (l. 39) who worked with them and died at a very young age. From their story of “[l]ittle Alice”, one can deduce that they believe that being dead is better than being forced to work as a child and that they are thus welcoming death as a relief and escape from their daily work. Therefore, Henry notes rightly that the children “describe serious subjects such as death and dying with the resignation one would expect of adults” (546) and adds that “[t]his heart-wrenching tableau seems calculated to appeal directly to readers’ feelings” (ibid.). That they think about death in a very positive way

is made clear, for example, when they say that they would rather like to be in the position of “[l]ittle Alice”. For example, they believe that Alice is better off dead, since “[f]rom the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her, / Crying, ‘Get up, little Alice! it is day’” (ll. 43-44). They also add that she is no longer weeping now that she is dead (cf. “little Alice never cries”, l. 46) and rather imagine her smiling in her grave (cf. “merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in / The shroud by the kirk-chime”, ll. 49-50). Finally, the children come to the conclusion that “[i]t is good when it happens [...] [t]hat [they] die before [their] time” (ll. 51-52). The story of “[l]ittle Alice”, especially the children’s wish to die in order to put an end to their suffering, expresses very much their hopelessness and despair. They are so hopeless that they do not even think that visiting nature would help them to forget their problems and to feel happy (at least) for a short while.

After having heard that the children long for death, the speaker “[m]istakenly [frames] the situation in terms of an urban-rural binary” (Henry 546) and suggests that they “[g]o out [...] from the mine and from the city” (l. 57) to enjoy nature. He believes that it would do them good to “[p]luck [their] handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty” (l. 59), to “[l]augh aloud” (l. 60), and to “[s]ing out [...] as the little thrushes do” (l. 58) instead of going on with their weeping. However, the children only answer that the speaker should stop telling them about the “pleasures fair and fine” (l. 64) because they probably know that spending some time in such a nice place, where they could feel light-hearted and free, would increase their sadness once they are back in the city again. Moreover, like the seamstress in Hood’s poem, the children may know that the idea of nature as an escape is only a ‘vision’ and that spending time in nature would not really help them to feel better. Whatever reason accounts for their lost hope with regard to the ‘healing’ function of the natural world, the clear answer from the children is that it is due to their weariness, exhaustion, and tiredness that they do not see any benefits in visiting nature. Because of the hard work they have to do each day, their “knees tremble” (l. 69) and “[they] cannot run or leap” (l. 66). They also add that they are too tired from working so long in the factories that with “[their] heavy eyelids drooping, / The reddest flower would look as pale as snow” (ll. 71-72) and that “[i]f [they] cared for any meadows, it were merely / To drop down in them and sleep” (ll. 67-68). From the things the children tell the speaker, it becomes clear that they are, in fact, too exhausted to enjoy nature and that this is also why the only escape they see is in death and therefore seek so desperately for “grave-rest” (l. 32). In order to help the speaker

understand why they feel so weary and exhausted, they briefly tell him about the work they do in the factories and mines and also comment on the working conditions. They tell him, for example, that the work in the factories is extremely repetitive and monotonous because, “all day, [they] drive the wheels of iron [...] round and round” (ll. 75-76) until “[their] heads with pulses [burn]” (l. 79). Moreover, they also refer to the loud noise at work, coming from “the iron wheels [that] are droning” (l. 85), and explain that the noise makes them wish for silence (cf. ““Stop! be silent for to-day!””, l. 88). Henry is quite right in saying that “Barrett Browning develops the wheels into a rich synecdoche of the mining and factory systems which reveals the emotional, psychological, and especially spiritual damage experienced by working children” (547). The work and climate in the mines is just as bad as in the factories, since “all day, [the children] drag [their] burden tiring / Through the coal-dark, underground” (ll. 73-74) and they cannot catch a glimpse of the sunlight. Thus, in this passage, Barrett Browning “create[s] a melodramatic scene which vividly depicts the physical degradation, sensory deprivation, and psychological isolation endured by the children” (Henry 548).

Having understood how desperate and hopeless the children are, the speaker thinks that it is important that he and his “brothers” (l. 101)—other people who also want to change the children’s situation for the better—tell them to pray to God so that they can gain hope again (cf. ll. 101-102). The speaker believes in God and is confident that “the blessed One who blesseth all the others, / Will bless them [the children] another day” (ll. 103-104), but the children have lost all hope—even their hope in God—and believe that no one is interested in helping them. The fact that “human creatures near [them] / Pass by” (ll. 107-108) and simply ignore the children’s weeping seems to be proof enough for them that God cannot hear them crying for help either “with angels singing round Him” (l. 111). They also refer to God as “speechless” (l. 126) because they never get an answer when they pray to him. The children have “little experience” of God and consequently also “little faith” (Henry 550).⁶⁹ Furthermore, when the children look up to the sky, they claim to see only “[d]ark, wheel-like, turning clouds” (l. 130)—everywhere they are confronted with the negative consequences of industrialization and reminded of their work. Since they even imagine that the factory smoke in the air is shaped like a wheel, the atmosphere at work and in the industrial city

⁶⁹ Interestingly enough, “[t]he places in which church-going was lowest included every large town described [...] as a cotton town, the two greatest woolen towns, Leeds and Bradford, every large coal town except Wolverhampton, and the two great metal centres of Birmingham and Sheffield” (Briggs 63).

in general must have had a very strong and negative impact on the children. It is probably due to the children's impression that no one attempts to change their situation for the better and due to their seemingly endless suffering that "grief has made [them] unbelieving" (l. 131) in the course of time—with regard to God and with regard to nature as an 'escape'. This issue has been taken up already in a similar way in Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night", in which the speaker "witnesses the death of the Christian canon of values" (Voigts-Virchow 216) and depicts the city as 'godless'. Further, this finding fits well with the saying that "the industrial city [...] came to be the visible symbol of what we might call a cosmological dislocation, a radical alteration in the time-honoured relationship between God, man and nature, necessitating in the process a new configuration of that fundamental trinity" (Forsyth, *The Lost Pattern* 3). Like the speaker in Hood's "The Song of the Shirt", the children finally very directly address the (rich and powerful) people's indifference to their miserable situation and working conditions. With the question "[H]ow long, O cruel nation, / Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart [...]" (ll. 153-160), they certainly try to express that the work they do is not meant to be done by children and that it costs many lives. Thus, the children make clear that they expect others (rich and powerful people), and especially "the men who own and operate the factories and mines" (Henry 551), to no longer ignore them and to help them improve the situation. According to Simmons "the indifference exhibited by the upper and middle classes seemed to indicate that factory children were victims of the popularity of the principles of Malthusian economics: they were regarded as an insignificant part of the surplus population" (338). The poem's message can therefore be seen as in line with the ideas from the theories of social ecology, eco-Marxism, and environmental justice.

Concluding, one can say that Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" conveys an idea of what child labor looked like during the Industrial Revolution and what consequences the work had on the children's physical health and also on their feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and outlook on life. This is not only achieved via the content, but also by means of form, namely through the device of repetition and "[t]he poem's [...] metrical density [which] makes it laborious to read" (MaClure 152). It is definitely a "passionate and evocative condemnation of the Victorian child labor system" (Henry 542) and "the 1842 *Report of the Royal Commission on Children's Employment in Mines and Factories* [which] told of the systematic exploitation and degradation of British child workers" (ibid.) probably had a great influence on Barrett

Browning's writing. The children's tone in the poem is characterized by pessimism and utter hopelessness—they have lost hope in every respect. They do no longer believe that visiting nature could help them to feel better and they have even lost hope in God. In Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" just as in Hood's "The Song of the Shirt", the 'voiceless' are finally given a voice as the words "Cry" and "Song" in the titles already suggest. By reading and analyzing the poems, it becomes clear how important it was that these voices were heard at the time when the texts were published: Both poets certainly intended to raise people's consciousness for the 'darker' side of industrialization and aimed at leading to changes with their poems that function as what Zapf has termed cultural-critical metadiscourse.

Looking back at the poems analyzed in this chapter, one will notice that, overall, they can all be related to Zapf's concept of cultural-critical metadiscourse because of their straightforward critique of the urban situation during the age of industrialization. They consistently point to such aspects as poverty, social injustice, or the drawbacks of the factory system (including long working hours, child labor, pollution, illnesses, etc.) which all serve to show that the city and city life often had a negative effect on the people living and working there during the nineteenth century. Due to their feature of making the reader aware of how Victorian urban surroundings could negatively influence one's well-being and even going further and offering insights into the causes, the poems clearly fulfill an ecocritical function and, in parts, even show parallels to ecocritical theories, like the theories of social ecology and environmental justice. This was shown to be the case, for instance, whenever the speakers contrast the living conditions of the poor and the working class with those of the people who were better off at that time (and who probably suffered less from the negative consequences of industrialization and urbanization). When having in mind the general picture of nature drawn by the Romantic poems, it is also striking that the Victorian poems convey an impression of the city that seems to be just the opposite: In fact, the city poems even apply similar images, but reverse them and give them a completely different message. One just has to think of the positive liveliness, energy, and vitality of nature that one encounters in all the Romantic nature poems studied in this thesis, which is turned into a negative liveliness (to express the bustle, hectic, and crowdedness) in the Victorian city

poems. At some points, the contrast appears even more distinct, namely when the city is described as ‘dead’, as was shown in the analysis of Thomson’s “The City of Dreadful Night”. The strange mixture of liveliness and lifelessness that is so characteristic of the urban atmosphere conveyed in the Victorian city poems obviously best describes the dominant sentiment of the times and the inner conflict of the city dweller—a conflict caused by the pressure to support the striving for progress and development (in order to make a living) and by suffering hardships as a result of that. Interestingly, though, nature as a concept is included as a point of reference in every single poem explored in this chapter, which shows that it is never completely ignored or forgotten. Sometimes, the brief descriptions of the natural world were even found to be in line with the main ecological premises, like the “recognition of the *diversity* of life and of the *uniqueness* of its manifestations” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89) in Buchanan’s “Bexhill, 1866”. Still, nature is mostly only referred to in a pastoral way—as a contrast to the urban scene—and some poems express quite clearly that the hope of nature as a refuge could no longer be maintained, as can be seen from Browning’s “The Cry of the Children”. Thus, the Victorian city poems may be quite pessimistic in tone, but they are not intended to be plainly depressing; instead, they often seem politically motivated with the aim of inspiring the reader to reflect on the points made.

6. The Depiction of Nature in Contemporary Poetry

Turning back to nature poetry again, it will now be interesting to learn what has changed or stayed the same regarding the attitudes towards nature and the city over time. A look at contemporary poetry will serve to show that more recent attitudes are, indeed, often linked to views that were expressed in a similar way already in the process of industrialization, but also sheds light on new aspects as an influence to standpoints which have evolved over the last decades. The attitudes towards our spatial surroundings obviously undergo changes just as much as the surroundings themselves.

The ecocritical function of the nature poems that will be studied in a first step in this second part of the thesis results from their attention to the positive aspects of nature (and their beneficent effect on people's well-being) on the one hand, and from their devotion to the 'ugly' side of nature on the other hand, as achieved by presenting examples of environmental pollution. Thus, contemporary poetry both clearly draws on the Romantic concept of nature and also explicitly distances itself from former modes of 'nature poetry'. For example, the exploration of nineteenth-century poems has shown that the destruction of nature and the issue of environmental pollution were mainly dealt with in an urban context so far, while behind contemporary poetry, there seems to be the motivation of emphasizing the actual force, degree, and acuteness of environmental destruction that has reached more and more into formerly unspoiled parts of the environment as well. But then, at other moments, the closeness to Romantic nature poetry becomes clear again through similarities in the employed imagery and in the ways some of the contemporary poems express views that can be compared to ecocritical theories and concepts, which was also found for the poems by Wordsworth and Keats already.

6.1. Ted Hughes's "Spring Nature Notes"

The first one of the contemporary poems that will be analyzed with regard to the depiction of nature and as an example of the positive experiences it allows for is Ted Hughes's "Spring Nature Notes" from the poetry collection *Season Songs*, which was first published in 1975. This collection was initially meant for children, but it could be just as much addressing an adult readership. Overall though, especially due to the fact that Hughes avoided over-complex syntax and language (with a few exceptions), the initial purpose of aiming at children can still be felt. This is maybe also one of the big

advantages of the poem with regard to the aim of this dissertation: If poems should help stimulating environmental consciousness, young audiences should be of central concern for us (as through the inclusion of ecopoetry into English lessons at school) because they have grown up in a world in which the bond to nature has loosened, but in which they are the ones with a lot of potential to change things for the better.⁷⁰ It is widely known that poetry is generally quite difficult to teach because it is felt to be outdated or even ‘cheesy’ by students, and it becomes an even more arduous task if the poem is hard to grasp for younger people, either because of its language, form, or content. Thus, an analysis of “Spring Nature Notes”, which—in contrast to other poems—does not pose so many difficulties in understanding for a younger readership, is particularly suitable for the aim of this dissertation. As, in *Season Songs*, the poems follow the order of the seasons, with “Spring Nature Notes” describing the transformation of nature that comes with springtime, the following analysis will serve to give the reader an impression of the manifold aspects of nature that can be cherished due to their positive effect on one’s emotions, especially when nature ‘awakens’ and flourishes again after a long period of winter.

Right from the beginning of the poem, the coming of springtime is described with the help of various images of ‘awakening’ that play with the contrast of what nature usually looks like during winter and what it looks like when spring arrives. The first indication of the start of the new season is immediately given in line 1, when the speaker states that “[t]he sun lies mild and still on the yard stones”.⁷¹ The sun, which rises in the morning and thus marks the beginning of a new day, here functions to introduce the start of springtime. Even though the sun is not completely missing in winter, seeing it come out again more often after a long period of cold and gray weather certainly reinforces the feeling that the new season has broken. What underlines this sensation even more is the fact that the sun is said to lie “mild and still on the yard stones” (l. 1). The words “mild” and “still” perfectly match the atmosphere of spring because they fit the soft and subtle power of transformation that is so typical of the season: The sun is not missing any longer, as during winter, and it is not yet as blazing and aggressive as during summer. Due to the fact that the words “mild” and “still” also

⁷⁰ With regard to teaching texts with an environmental message in English lessons, most critics regard as preferable a “gemäßigte Form der Ökodidaktik [...], welche Schülerinnen und Schüler nicht ökologisch indoktrinieren möchte, sondern kritisch-reflexives Denken und Kommunizieren als Lernziel anvisiert und dabei auch das Bewusstsein ökologisch positiv verändern mag” (Volkmann 398).

⁷¹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Season Songs*. London: Faber and Faber, 1976. 17-19.

form an internal half rhyme, they immediately attract the reader's attention and determine the first impression he or she gets from the speaker's description of nature. But there is even more to these two words, adding to the highlighting effect: By speaking of "mild" and "still" with reference to the way the sun brightens the place in nature he finds himself in, the speaker expresses himself with a mixture of different sensory impressions. It seems that the image of nature he tries to convey here is not coming from purely visual input at that moment because he describes the sun in terms of his perception of motion and sense of touch in the first place. He perceives it to be "still", not moving, but rather resting on the stones, and also believes that it lies on the stones in a "mild" way, meaning that he feels it to be light sunshine that is warming the stones softly in contrast to an oppressive heat. Furthermore, the speaker personifies the sun by ascribing to it the action of lying (cf. "The sun lies [...]", l. 1), which adds liveliness to the sun and fits perfectly to the (soft and subtle) liveliness the sun adds to nature with the beginning of springtime. Therefore, with the first line of the poem already, the speaker makes clear to the reader that he feels fully immersed into nature, experiencing it with different senses, and that he also regards it as animate and alive. One could say that the speaker's impression of nature is closely connected to the theory of deep ecology, since it dissolves an anthropocentric view that puts humans on a higher level than nature and reveals nature to be just as 'alive' as humans (as shown, for example, in the speaker's technique of attributing human actions to it). When the speaker goes on to describe the place in nature he has visited and the signs of springtime he finds there, he next mentions a "solitary daffodil—the first" (l. 2) and refers to it as "[t]he clue" (ibid.). With the word "clue" he wants to express that the blossoming time of the daffodil is a clear sign of spring, and with his highlighting of the fact that there is only one daffodil (with the help of the words "solitary" and "first"), he intends to stress that spring is really only in its very beginnings—basically in the very moment of transforming the natural landscape. The daffodil might have caught the speaker's attention because it was the only one far and wide, but the striking yellow color has probably also added to it. Just as it was said already for the function of the daffodils mentioned in Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", the bright color of the flower is associated with cheerfulness, optimism, warmth, and the sun, and so influences the speaker's anticipations for the coming months of spring. The atmosphere of current transformation, shown here by the blooming of the first daffodil, is also expressed in the next lines of the poem, when the speaker's attention changes from the

flower on the ground to what is happening in the air. In lines 3 to 4, he states that “the whole air is struggling in soft excitements / Like a woman hurrying into her silks” to express that he really feels his surroundings to be changing in the very moment he stands in nature, and that he does not just notice this in one aspect, but rather in manifold natural spectacles. First, one might think that the words “struggling” and “excitement” (l. 3) establish a paradox, but when reading on, the use of these seemingly contrasting words becomes clear right away: The speaker uses these words to convey that all is happening very quickly, but with joyful expectations. That the air is “struggling” should thus not be interpreted negatively, since the speaker only tries to capture in words the gentle breeze he feels—the wind of change so to say—and the liveliness it bears. Thus, it is only together with the addition “soft excitements” that the meaning of the line is complete, since the “soft excitements” tone down the word “struggling”. This effect is intensified through the next line, where the spring breeze and the liveliness of the air are compared to “a woman hurrying into her silks” (l. 4). The speaker, once again, personifies nature and uses the image as a means to express the atmosphere of the awakening of the new season and the liveliness of nature connected to it. Like a woman who gets ready in the morning and dresses quickly to start into the day, the air seems full of lively activity, as if preparing itself for the coming of the new season. The initially surprising word “struggling” is further mitigated through the reference to a female (in the simile of line 4), who is generally associated with gentleness, and the mentioning of the material silk (cf. “silks”, l. 4) that is undoubtedly one of the softest and most precious fabrics. Thus, the overall effect of the spring breeze on the speaker is one of perceived liveliness and maybe even a slight hectic, but a very positive one that makes him look forward to spring joyfully. Again, as encountered in the Romantic nature poems already, this liveliness is always associated with a certain ‘gentleness’ (cf. l. 63 in “I Stood Tip-Toe”). To further elaborate on what exactly renders the air so ‘lively’, the speaker then goes on telling about the “[b]irds everywhere zipping and unzipping / Changing their minds, in soft excitements, / Warming their wings and trying their voices” (ll. 5-7). The *figura etymologica* built by the words “zipping” and “unzipping” (l. 5), referring to the birds flying in the air, just like the addition “[c]hanging their minds” (l. 6), stress, again, the atmosphere of the ‘in-between-state’ described in this first part of the poem. With the repetition of the phrase “in soft excitements”, the speaker, once again, intends to convey that, despite the fact that nature seems so very ‘active’ and ‘alive’ again now, the transformation of

nature happening in front of him is not stressful, harsh, and abrupt, but rather gradual and gentle—arousing cheerful expectations in him. As the words “[w]arming” and “trying” in line 7 affirm, it is all about ‘preparing’ for spring and the birds are still “[w]arming their wings and trying their voices”. Not content-wise, but at least at the level of language, there is another attempt of bringing together the world of human beings and the world of nature, as in the sense of the theory of deep ecology; through the reference to birds “zipping” and “unzipping” (l. 5) right after the line that mentions the woman’s “silks” (l. 4), at least the choice of vocabulary and its connotations help to imagine mankind and nature engaging with one another. In the following, the speaker comments on the trees as being “still spindle bare” (l. 8) with the effect of making the reader pause for a moment: So far, one has only learnt about the transformations that springtime brings with it, but the trees, on the verge of the beginning of spring, are still as bare as in winter. Thus, for a moment, the speaker calms down (and maybe disappoints) the reader’s expectations which have grown with the speaker’s account, but only with the intention of intensifying the effect of his portrayals that are following next. Right afterwards, the speaker tries to express his overall perception of the coming of spring with the help of a range of meaningful images: So, he says that “from the warmed blue hills / An exhilaration swirls upward, like a huge fish. / As under a waterfall, in the bustling pool.” (ll. 9-11). Here, the expression “warmed blue hills” (l. 9) refers, again, to the effect of the sun which has started to illuminate the trees on top of the hills with its light. To the speaker, this process obviously seems very overwhelming and he thus refers to it as an “exhilaration [that] swirls upward” (l. 10). Due to the choice of the word “exhilaration”, one is also led to believe that observing this event has given him a lot of pleasure. In addition to that, in order to stress the transformative force of spring and the aspect of rendering nature more ‘alive’, the speaker compares the dawn of spring to a “huge fish / As under a waterfall, in the bustling pool” and not only presents it as a living thing (an animal), but also uses three words associated with motion (namely “swirl”, “waterfall”, and “bustling pool”) to convey its ‘energy’. It is due to this ‘energy’ and ‘drive’ that the speaker here tries to put into words that “[o]ver the whole land / Spring thunders down in brilliant silence” (ll. 12-13) and that the influence of spring weather on nature can now be felt in the whole valley. The fact that the speaker makes use of an oxymoronic expression here (cf. “thunders down in brilliant silence”), serves, once again, to make the reader understand the ambivalent character of the season: Although, in a way, one can feel, see, smell, and

hear that spring is coming, it is actually coming very subtly, silently and not always in an instantly perceivable way. Overall, one could say that, with his description of the coming of springtime, the speaker shows his understanding of one of the main principles of ecological discourse, namely of “the view of reality as a constantly changing and self-transformative *process*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88).

It is in the second part of the poem that the speaker reveals more about these effects of spring weather on nature which are not perceivable at first sight and which only reveal themselves at second glance, after more ‘intimate’ examination. Here, the speaker brings in the trees which he described as “spindle bare” in line 8. The trees may look “spindle bare”, as if spring has not yet had an effect on them, but when spending more time watching the trees, the speaker notices something about them that has changed with the coming of spring:

An oak tree on the first day of April
Is as bare as the same oak in December
But it looks completely different.

Now it bristles, it is a giant brazier
Of invisible glare, an invisible sun.
The oak tree’s soul has returned and flames its strength. (ll. 14-19)

The speaker, again, ascribes liveliness to the natural world around him and uses the verb “bristle” to express his impression that the tree is reaching out towards the sun. The tree is not only illuminated by the sunshine, but, obviously, the speaker feels that the light has also helped to make the tree seem more ‘alive’, vivid, and glowing, which is why he refers to it as “a giant brazier / Of invisible glare, an invisible sun” (ll. 17-18) and later adds that it “flames its strength”, using a verb from the same semantic field. The effect of the alliteration formed by the words “bristles” and “brazier”—which, at the same time, present hyperboles—is to highlight these words and make the reader think about them, as they seem surprising or even unsuitable at first glance and only reveal their real meaning in context (together with the preceding and following lines). Further, the repetition of the word “invisible” in line 18 is used to convey, once more, that the changes of the natural environment coming with springtime may be subtle and not always immediately perceivable, but that it sometimes affords more attention to nature and time to reflect on it to really grasp its particularities and become aware of differences between the seasons. To exhaust all possibilities of attributing liveliness to the tree, the speaker finally goes so far as to speak of “[t]he oak tree’s soul [which] has returned and flames its strength” (l. 19). With the help of this image, he carries the theme of nature’s ‘awakening’ through spring to extremes by attributing human qualities

to the tree. It seems that, in this very moment, the speaker feels that the tree is just as 'alive' as a human being, but maybe even more interestingly, he also seems to believe that this 'liveliness' and 'power' of nature can be felt by human beings—as if it were transmitted in some kind of way: “You feel those rays—even though you can't see them / They touch you” (ll. 20-21). He wants to stress that there is a kind of connection between nature and human beings and constantly tries to prove this by pointing out how 'human-like' nature is in certain ways, on the one hand, and how human beings are affected by nature, on the other hand. Thus, again, the way the speaker thinks and reacts to nature seems absolutely in line with the basic premises of ecology, since he also supports a holistic world view and understands that, in an ecosystem, “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology 88). The last lines of the second part of the poem present another example of this: The speaker states that, if one “feel[s] touched, and turn[s] round” (l. 22), one will “meet eyes staring straight at the back of [one's] head” (l. 23). After having already mentioned the tree's 'soul', the speaker now also bestows “eyes” (cf. *ibid.*) upon nature, which, in his position of observation, ultimately puts him at the same level with nature, since he, too, is 'watched' (or, at least, feels so).

With the following parts of the poem, the speaker's attention is drawn to other aspects of the place in nature he finds himself in. In part three, for example, he goes on telling that he now also sees more daffodils in front of him, in fact “[a] spurt of daffodils, stiff, quivering” (l. 24). The speaker uses the adjective “stiff” (*ibid.*) to point out that the daffodils have only just begun to grow and bloom with the beginning of spring; their stiffness indicates their freshness. The addition “quivering” (l. 24), another verb of motion, is yet another means to convey their liveliness and a way to make the reader understand that the force of nature can be felt in the movements of the daffodils which are provoked by the light breeze. One is immediately reminded of the speaker in Wordsworth's “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, who was also impressed by the daffodils “[f]luttering and dancing in the breeze” (l. 6 in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”), which shows that contemporary nature poetry sometimes also builds upon long-established images of nature poetry. The reader then learns that the daffodils in front of the speaker are surrounded by “[p]lumes, blades, [and] creases” (l. 125) which he regards as “Guardsmen / At attention” (ll. 25-26). The fact that he uses this metaphor for the surrounding plants shows that the daffodils at the center are of great value and preciousness for the speaker because guards usually protect something or someone very

important. Therefore, that the plants are said to be “[a]t attention” (l. 26) means that they function as shelter in a way and, in addition to that, they may also be in joyful attention for springtime and nature coming to life again. If one thinks of the plants as having a protective role, one will also automatically ask oneself what the dangers could be: At this point, the speaker probably has in mind man’s reckless behavior towards the environment resulting from the often criticized anthropocentric attitude towards nature; the word “quivering” in line 24 could then have a double meaning, making the daffodils ‘tremble’ with fear of mankind. The following lines and part four of the poem seem to be in line with this interpretation. This is because the speaker then says that the plants are “[l]ike sentinels at the tomb of a great queen” (l. 27) and immediately adds, in parentheses, that they are actually “the advance guard / Of a drunken slovenly army / Which will leave this whole place wrecked” (ll. 28-30). Here, the word “sentinels” (l. 27) supports the preceding labeling of the plants as guards. Next, the word “tomb” (ibid.) is striking; it first sounds very negative and sad, but if one puts it into the context of the poem’s topic, it could be used here to express that the daffodils (standing for nature in general) have been ‘dead’ during the last seasons and now, with the beginning of spring, can rise again. This would support the speaker’s method of portraying spring as the season that brings nature back to life, which was shown through various examples already. Like before, when the speaker described the daffodils and nature as something valuable and in need of protection, he now even goes further and refers to the daffodils (and nature in general) as a “great queen” (l. 27), by which he also ascribes a power and authority to nature that, in his imagination, should be acknowledged by every human being. With the remark in parentheses, however, the speaker seems to be reminded of reality again: His mentioning of the “drunken, slovenly army / Which will leave this whole place wrecked” (ll. 29-30) suggests a condemnation of man’s unecological and unmindful behavior towards the environment (cf. “drunken, slovenly”, l. 29) which results in the destruction of nature. The speaker hereby proves, once more, his ecological way of thinking, since the view that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology 90) in nature is another main premise of ecological discourse. An “army” (l. 29) usually obeys orders and can also be relentless and unstoppable depending on its size. When confronted with nature, mankind might often act like an army, interested only in pushing through its aims. Nonetheless, the vocabulary used in this part of the poem also makes clear that nature (here referred to through the daffodils)

is actually at the top level of power, since the word “queen” (l. 27) is not only a means of personification, but also expresses a certain superiority.

In part four of the poem, the speaker’s account of his observations in nature is, again, reminiscent of the theory of deep ecology and the core belief of basically all ecocritical thinking. Here, he unequivocally expresses that everything in nature, even the tiniest little flower, is part of a massive ecosystem, and that mankind, too, is just a part of a larger whole. Mankind and nature are put at the same level through indirect comparison. The speaker probably wants to articulate that all the diverse communities of life on Earth, the separate parts of the ecosystem, ultimately function as a whole—which, once understood and realized—should lead to more appreciation and valuing of the ecosystem’s ‘constituents’. The speaker gets this idea across by mentioning that “[t]he crocuses are too naked [...] [and that] [s]pace shakes them” (l. 31); the crocuses are just a small part of the whole and there are larger forces (of this whole) influencing them, which is why they are described as ‘shaking’ (cf. *ibid.*). It is from this observation that the speaker comes to his final conclusion: “They remind you the North Sky is one vast hole / With black space blowing out of it / And that you too are being worn thin / By the blowing atoms of decomposed stars” (ll. 32-35). Since direct address is used here (cf. “you”, l. 34), the reader feels spoken to and is inspired to reflect on the speaker’s statement. Further, in this part of the poem, the speaker also refers to another group of animals, namely hares (cf. ll. 36-41), probably to even heighten the reader’s impression of the ‘liveliness’ of the place and to show that it is indeed full of diverse life forms—yet another proof of his ecological thinking. At this point in his account, however, the speaker also explicitly mentions other human beings for the first time—with the effect of hinting at the relationship between mankind and the natural world. So, when speaking of the food the hares look for, he says that “[w]hat the hares do not want / Looks next morning like the leavings of picnickers / Who were kidnapped by a fright from space” (ll. 39-41). With this remark, the speaker might want to convey his feeling that humans have lost their connection to nature and that they have gotten used to living in crowded cities, with the effect of becoming nervous when visiting a place of ‘green vastness’ in nature.

The following lines seem to underline this interpretation: We learn that “[t]he crocus bulb stays hidden—veteran / Of terrors beyond man” (ll. 42-43). That the crocus bulb is “hidden” (l. 42) means that it is planted in the earth, and if one takes this idea a bit further and takes into account the preceding lines, one could also come to the

interpretation that the plant (or here, the crocus bulb, because the crocus as such is not visible yet) is in a 'safe' place where mankind can do no harm. Thus, these lines could be a very subtle allusion to man's treatment of nature and that this has not always been ideal, as in the sense of Zapf's cultural-critical metadiscourse in his model of literature as cultural ecology. The fact that the speaker then describes the crocus bulb as a "veteran / Of terrors beyond man" (ll. 42-43) indicates that he understands that the crocus bulb (actually, nature in general) has been witness to and has undergone quite a lot of terrible things. The "terrors beyond man" (l. 43) are ambiguous: The expression could refer to the terrors nature has had to endure that were so terrible that they seem beyond what man is thought to be capable of, and it could also be a hint at the powerful forces of nature that the crocus bulb has already experienced—these, too, are "beyond man" and highlight that nature, too, has certain powers that are not to be underestimated. This interpretation would also fit one of the central messages of the poem, namely the concept of deep ecology and the idea that nature and man are equal, which counters man's assumption that one can exploit nature for one's own use. It is not for nothing that the speaker also makes use of a metaphor with the effect of personification here by referring to the crocus bulb as a "veteran" (l. 42), which is usually only a name used with regard to people with a certain long experience in a particular field. Thus, the crocus bulb is not only put at the same level with human beings, but it is also ascribed a memory.⁷²

Part five of the poem ties in with the speaker's strategy of expressing nature's liveliness that could be felt throughout prior stanzas and reveals his understanding of central ecological premises through the "recognition of the *diversity* of life and of the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89). Here, he makes use of several different images to accomplish that, namely of "[s]pring bulg[ing] the hills" (l. 44), of "trees [that] creak and shift" (l. 45), and of "buds [that] have burst in tatters— / Like firework stubs" (ll. 46-47). The verbs he uses to refer to the scene in front of him all describe certain forms of movement, which should tell the reader that nature is not 'standing still', but 'full of life'. The image of the "firework stubs" (l. 47) reminds the reader of a festivity and could be meant to point out that springtime bringing life to nature is indeed a kind of celebratory event. He continues the theme by referring to yet another group of animals: a scene of bullocks standing in the field. He finds it important to mention what he notices about the bullocks because it also

⁷² In a way, this is reminiscent of the beginning of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", where the lilacs coming with springtime are also linked with memory.

contributes to his general description of the atmosphere of spring in nature. So, he begins by saying that “winter’s lean bullocks / Only pretend to eat / The grass that will not come” (ll. 48-50) to point out to the reader that, shortly after winter, at the very beginning of springtime, there is not much grass on the meadow lands. Through the use of phrasings like “lean bullocks” (l. 48) and “[t]he grass that will not come” (l. 50), this first looks like a rather negative description, but this is part of the speaker’s strategy. Reading on, one learns that the somber perspective on the bullocks’ situation is only part of the account so that it can be contrasted to the very positive situation of the bullocks he recounts immediately afterwards, which thus seems even more positive. Since it is only the very beginning of spring and there is not enough grass growing on the meadows yet, the bullocks’ food comes from a “bale of hay” (l. 53) which turns the picture into a very positive one full of liveliness and elatedness. To express this mood, the speaker makes use of simile and exaggeration, as in lines 51 to 52: “Then they bound like lambs, they twine in the air / They bounce their half tons of elastic”. The bullocks are likened to lambs in order to convey that they seem lively and energetic (in the sense of ‘young’) as soon as they have found food. Just as mentioned before for other stanzas in the poem, words of movement, like “twist” (l. 51) and “bounce”, lead to an atmosphere of liveliness and exhilaration. Line 54, in which it is said that the bullocks “gambol from heap to heap”, is another example of this. Summarizing, one can say that the speaker’s intention, here, is to express that, when spring has advanced further and the bullocks find grass on the meadows again, they will seem just as lively and happy (maybe even in a more extreme way) as when “the bale of hay breaks open” (l. 53), and no longer “lean” (l. 48) and marked by winter. The grass, the dried grass from last summer in the form of hay and even more so the fresh green grass of spring that will come with the passing of time, is imagined as an aspect of nature that stands for liveliness and happiness and is here associated with a power of nature that contributes to the animation of the bullocks.

In the sixth and final stanza of the poem, then, the speaker draws on the idea of the passing of time and the change of the seasons. He knows that, although he perceives first signs of spring in nature, the season has not fully arrived. Still, he senses that springtime is coming closer with each day, as becomes clear from reading the following lines: “With arms swinging, a tremendous skater / On the flimsy ice of space, / The earth leans into its curve—” (ll. 57-59). The fact that he mentions our planet at this point is probably not just because of its path around the sun that results in the change of

seasons, but also because he considers the image of ‘wholeness’—of the earth as a huge ecosystem, in which all its little parts and diverse communities of life influence one another. It is only in the very last lines of the poem that we learn about the speaker’s actual point of view from which he observes the scene in nature. He has seen all this from looking out of his window: “Thrilled to the core, some flies have waded out / An inch onto my window, to stand on the sky / And try their buzz” (ll. 60-62). This last image, once again, proves that the speaker wants to convey that nature is coming to life again with springtime and that this can be felt in various different aspects; here, this is expressed in the way the flies fly out into the air to “try their buzz” (l. 62) and “thrilled to the core”—filled with excitement for spring, just like the birds from part one which are “[w]arming their wings and trying their voices” (l. 7). Obviously, the coming of spring can be felt in all aspects of nature, even in the behavior of the tiniest little fly.

Just like nature, mankind, and all other communities of life form one vast ecosystem that functions as a whole, according to the concept of deep ecology, the poem is formed of several parts with different topics that belong together and only unfold their full meaning in their entirety. Thus, taking everything into account, it can be said that Hughes’s poem is a very illustrative example of the holistic world view that ecocritics try to promote and therefore functions perfectly as ecopoetry for adults and children alike. It fulfills the ecocritical aim of leading to a

fundamental shift from one context of reading to another—more specifically, a movement from the human to the environmental, or at least from the exclusively human to the biocentric or ecocentric, which is to say a humanism (since we cannot evade our human status or identity) informed by an awareness of the ‘more-than-human’ (Kern 18).

With its pastoral subject matter and the presentation of a new way of looking at and experiencing nature, it can also be seen as an example of imaginative counter-discourse, according to Zapf’s concept of literature as cultural ecology.

6.2. Ted Hughes’s “Autumn Nature Notes”

Ted Hughes’s “Autumn Nature Notes”, which will be analyzed next, is also part of the poetry collection *Season Songs*, first published in 1975. This poem is quite similar to “Spring Nature Notes” in its structure, because it also consists of several parts that focus on different aspects of nature, but it is slightly longer and also special in the image of nature it conveys. This poem, too, will be interpreted with regard to the positive descriptions of nature it contains and with a particular focus on the positive effect the experience in nature has on the speaker. While, for these purposes, one usually draws on

poems describing nature in full bloom (as during spring and early summer), because these poems most often address such issues, “Autumn Nature Notes”, as the title already suggests, focuses on how nature is perceived during autumn—a season that is often associated with the decay of nature and its rough side.⁷³ In this way, “Autumn Nature Notes” is quite unique in its function as ecopoetry that gives an overview of the aspects of nature affecting one’s emotions positively, and it will be quite interesting to explore in which ways the more rough side of nature and the aspect of decay can fulfill this function.

In part one of the poem, one immediately learns what time of the year it is when the speaker tells about his observations in nature and refers to the “September sunlight” (l. 2).⁷⁴ He mentions this in the context of the description of the first thing that catches his attention in the landscape he is looking at: a laburnum tree. While during spring and early summer the tree is striking due to the beautiful sight of its glowingly yellow blossoms (therefore also the colloquial name ‘golden chain’), it is now interesting for another reason, namely its silence and rest, as can be seen from the first line: “[t]he Laburnum top is silent, quite still”. The atmosphere is obviously one of peaceful calmness and completely devoid of the exciting hectic that can be found in parts of “Spring Nature Notes”. One is, again, reminded of nature’s quietness which was expressed already in Romantic times, like in Keats’s “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill” and implicitly also in Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”. Even though “all [the Laburnum’s] seeds [are] fallen” (l. 3) and the color has turned into yellowish-brown by now, the remembrance of its flowers in full bloom still remains, since “the afternoon yellow September sunlight” (l. 2) leads to a “few leaves yellowing” (l. 3). The atmosphere of silence, however, does not last long because the speaker then goes on telling about how the presence of a goldfinch adds a certain liveliness to the tree:

Till the goldfinch comes, with a twitching chirrup,
A suddenness, a startlement at a branch-end.
Then sleek as a lizard, and alert, and abrupt
She enters the thickness, and a machine starts up
Of chitterings, and a tremor of wings, and trillings—
The whole tree trembles and thrills.
It is the engine of her family. (ll. 4-10)

⁷³ Of course, poetry dealing with nature during autumn does not necessarily have to be concerned with decay only—Keats’s well-known ode “To Autumn” is a perfect example of this.

⁷⁴ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Season Songs*. London: Faber and Faber, 1976. 45-50.

Through the presence of the goldfinch and its family, the tree now seems very much alive, populated, and no longer as bare as before—even though the bareness was not experienced as negative or depressing by the speaker at all, rather the opposite. That there is a lot happening in the tree is conveyed through references to the sounds that can be heard and which have an almost onomatopoeic function, like the “twitching chirrup” (l. 4) or the “chitterings” and “trillings” (l. 8), just as through the references to movements, as for example the mentioning of the “tremor of wings” (ibid.) or the description of the bird as being “sleek as a lizard, and alert, and abrupt” (l. 6). As a result of all this liveliness, the tree suddenly “trembles and thrills” (l. 9); the fact that the two verbs form an alliteration highlights the liveliness even more and inspires the reader to reflect on the sudden change for a moment. Quite interestingly, just as quickly as the atmosphere changed into one of liveliness, it also returns to one of silence and emptiness: When the goldfinch “with eerie delicate whistle-chirrup whisperings / [...] launches away, towards the infinite / [...] the laburnum subsides to empty” (ll. 13-15). Maybe it is exactly this alternation of lively sounds and movements, on the one hand, and silence and rest, on the other hand, that seems so intriguing to the speaker during autumn. The reference to the bird’s sound as “whistle-chirrup whisperings” could be seen as underlining this interpretation because it is an oxymoronic expression that also plays with the contrast of loud and silent. The effect of the bird’s sounds on the speaker is expressed through an oxymoron as well: It is perceived as “eerie” and “delicate” (l. 13) at the same time, which further supports the interpretation that it is exactly this mixture of loud and silent, of calm and lively, which is so pleasant to the speaker and so unique for autumn that he finds it worth mentioning. By referring to the changes in atmosphere, the speaker shows that he is aware of nature’s diversity, which speaks for an ecological attitude (cf. Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89).

In the second part of the poem, the speaker continues appreciating nature’s diversity and “the intrinsic value even [of its] apparently most insignificant forms” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89) by naming other pleasurable sights he finds striking in this place, namely the remains of sunflowers and buddleia which attract butterflies. Even though we learn that the sunflowers look “tired out, like old gardeners” (l. 17) and that there is only some “last cones of lilac intoxicant” (l. 20) visible, the flock of butterflies seems to be a spectacle for the eye. It should also be noted that the remains of the sunflowers and buddleia are not described in a negative way or as unsightly: The sunflowers are just marked by the passing of time and it is remarkable

that the bits of lilac from the buddleia, in their small amount, still have a captivating effect on the speaker. By mentioning the butterflies sitting on these plants, the speaker also wants to point out to the reader the variety of life that can be found in this place. He mentions three different species of butterflies, namely “[c]abbage-white butterflies” (l. 18), “[p]eacock butterflies” (l. 21), and “[r]ed [a]dmirals” (l. 21). Adding further to the presentation of the variety of life in nature, the speaker also includes in his account the sight of birds in the sky; he has spotted “[a] raven, orbiting elm high-lazily” (l. 22), “martins” (l. 24), and “[s]wallows” (l. 25). Here, too, the atmosphere on the ground is calm, but the birds’ sounds in the air (cf. “cronks”, l. 23; “voices” l. 25) add a whiff of animation to the place. Another aspect the speaker values about autumn is the moderate temperature, as becomes clear from his statement that “[t]he sun is finally tolerable” (l. 16) and from his enjoyment of the comfortably warm post-summer weather: “So we sit on the earth which is warmed / And sweetened and ripened / By the furnace / On which the door has just about closed” (ll. 27-30). The metaphor “furnace” (l. 29) is used to refer to the summer sun which can be unbearable, and due to the speaker’s addition that its “door has just about closed” (l. 30), we learn that summer has ended only recently and that now, in September, autumn is still in its very beginnings.

The speaker dedicates part three of the poem almost exclusively to his sight of a chestnut that has fallen from a tree, which inspires his imagination to make up a brief story that mixes creativity with a sense of deep ecological appreciation. The ‘fairy tale’ he makes up and the creativity shown in his choice of words are proof that reflecting on nature (or on parts of it) can sometimes help to stimulate one’s creativity and to help comprehend the real importance or intrinsic worth of nature. John Gough is convinced that the “fantastical imagery” at this point is also a very powerful device of communicating the emotions felt by the speaker at this moment to the reader because “the poem is able to show simple living things with breath-taking freshness” (192). The story the speaker tells in this part is about the development of the fallen chestnut into a chestnut tree that depends on several different factors. The initial motivation for him to tell the story is his notice that “[t]he chestnut splits its padded cell” (l. 31) and “opens an African eye” (l. 32). With the metaphor “African eye”, the speaker refers to the dark brown color and eyeball shape of the chestnut. Furthermore, the comparison to the eye functions as a reminder that it is witness to the happenings in nature which can either come as positive or as negative influences to its development into a tree. In addition to that, the speaker describes the chestnut as a “cabinet-maker, an old master / In the root

of things, [who] has done it again” (ll. 33-34). With this metaphor, the speaker refers to the chestnut’s cycle of life and also to its (traditional) use for mankind; once it has grown into a tree, the wood can be claimed by people for making furniture (cf. “cabinet-maker”, l. 33). The word “again” in line 34 highlights that chestnuts keep falling from the trees every autumn and that, each time this happens, there is a new chance for a tree to grow. The factors that determine if the chestnut can grow into a tree are then referred to in the form of a story resembling a fairy tale: For example, the speaker says that, as an “armoured rider” (l. 43), it must find its way through “[t]he mirk-forest of rooty earth” (l. 44) in order to “win a sunbeam princess / From the cloud castle of the rains” (ll. 46-47). The speaker’s description of the chestnut as “armoured” (l. 43) is a hint at its spiky hull and he brings in the “sunbeam princess” (l. 46) and the “castle of the rains” (l. 47) to make clear that it must lie in a place with both rain and sunshine to develop into a tree with the passing of time. There are certain forces of nature preventing the chestnut from growing into a tree, though, like animals with “evil faces, / Jaws without eyes” (ll. 48-49) which could “tear [the chestnut] to pieces” (l. 49). Only if the chestnut succeeds in lying untouched on the ground under the named weather conditions, it can be said to have “snatch[ed] [its] crown from the dragon / Which resembles a slug” (ll. 51-52), since this is the animal frequently populating the ground in autumn. Gough has a similar understanding of these ‘obstacles’, saying that “the metaphors [are] used to describe people who eat roast chestnuts, small boys who play conkers, and slugs that devour the fallen nuts” (192). If the conditions are met, the speaker finally concludes, the chestnut “will reign over [the] garden / For two hundred years” (ll. 53-54) in the form of a tree. The speaker’s motivation behind his use of vocabulary of conquer and reign might be his acknowledgment of the powers of nature that he would like the readers to realize as well. The fact that a small chestnut can grow into a huge tree, remarkable in size and longevity, is definitely a very powerful image of nature’s vitality and force. The story of the chestnut reveals that the speaker’s attitude towards nature is in accordance with the main principles of ecology, because he tries to convey to the reader both the idea of “evolution as a fact of natural [...] life” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88) and the view that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature.

In part four of the poem, the speaker focuses on an elm tree and tries to remember what it looked like in summer to finally compare it to how it appears to him at this point

in autumn. To convey his memory of the elm tree in summer, he uses ship imagery, as in the first stanza of this part: “When the Elm was full / When it heaved and all its tautness drummed / Like a full-sail ship” (ll. 55-57). If one thinks of the grandeur of a ship, the elm tree, in full bloom and sap, obviously has had an overwhelming effect on the speaker, leaving a lasting impression on him. In addition to that, one could interpret the ship imagery as standing for comradeship and community, since one is usually part of a group of passengers or voyagers on a ship. This forges a bridge to the idea promoted by ecocritics that the natural world is a web of inter-relationships of different communities of life and that it functions as a ‘whole’. Ideally, in the sense of deep ecology, man regards himself as a part of this web, as a constituent of the whole. In the poem, the speaker seems to follow this idea—however, not by ‘being on board’ of the ship, but by having immersed himself into nature just like the elm tree had done (‘like a ship’) in summer. The speaker states that he could somehow relate to the elm tree (or the ‘ship’) because he felt deeply connected to nature in summer, realizing that he, too, is a part of it: “It was just how I felt. / Waist-deep, I ploughed through the lands, / I leaned at horizons, I bore down on strange harbours” (ll. 58-60). The speaker, too, has been ‘driven’ by nature in a way. When he leaves his memories of the elm tree in summer behind and turns back to the tree as it is actually in front of him, he comes to the conclusion that it appears different now, but that its liveliness and grandeur can still be felt—in a different way, though. So, he states that “the Elm is still / [and] [a]ll its frame bare” (ll. 65-66), which is a completely different sight than in summer. Nevertheless, this bareness and stillness does not have a disappointing or even depressing effect on the speaker, as one might assume; quite the contrary is true: In the following lines, we learn that, when the tree—in this ‘bare’ appearance—is illuminated by autumn sunlight, it looks very spectacular and has a special effect on the speaker. Adding to the effect is the sight and hearing of a pheasant the speaker spots in the tree:

And it stands engulfed in the peculiar golden light
With which Eternity’s flash
Photographed the sudden cock pheasant—

Engine whinneying, the fire-ball bird clatters up,
Shuddering full-throttle
Its three tongued tail-tip writhing (ll. 68-73)

The fact that the speaker describes the light by which the tree is illuminated as “peculiar” (l. 68) and “golden” (ibid.) shows what it means to him; the picture and atmosphere it creates is valued highly by the speaker. Also, his statement that “[e]ternity’s flash / Photographed the sudden cock pheasant” (ll. 69-70) does not only

include another reference to the sunlight, but also tells us that the speaker believes that the sight of the tree together with the pheasant is so special that it will be remembered forever. Since he refers to the pheasant as a “fire-ball bird” (l. 71), probably due to the radiant and luminous reddish color of its plumage, it fits in perfectly in the sun-drenched tree and provides it with even more liveliness. The initial bareness and stillness of the tree is suddenly not only filled visually by sunlight and the striking pheasant, but also through sound and movement. Namely, it is said that the pheasant “clatters up” (ibid.) the tree while “[s]huddering full-throttle / Its three tongues tail-tip writhing” (ll. 72-73) and making noises (cf. “[e]ngine whinneying”, l. 71). The alliteration in line 73 attracts the reader’s attention and highlights the peculiarity of the moment. Just as before, it seems to be the mixture of calmness and stillness, on the one hand, and liveliness, on the other hand, that is so typical of autumn and accounts for the speaker’s fascination. Concluding, to express this rapture, the speaker says that “the Elm stands, astonished, wet with light” (l. 74) and that he himself “stand[s], dazzled to [his] bones, blinded” (l. 75). The degree of his fascination is conveyed through exaggerations (“wet with light” and “blinded”), and further, the lines also establish a connection between the tree (‘nature’) and the speaker (‘humankind’) due to the use of parallelism (the same grammatical structure). Unity between nature and mankind is not only suggested at the level of form, though, but also through the choice of words in these lines: The tree is “wet with light” and the speaker is “blinded” by it. Moreover, the tree is personified with the help of the word “astonished”, which shows that spending time in nature can make you forget about boundaries between different forms of life and inspires you to think of them as constituting one great ‘whole’ in which they interrelate, just as in the sense of the theory of deep ecology.

In the following part of the poem, it is not clear whether the speaker, due to his powerful emotions and heightened senses, only imagines a fire in front of him, or if there is a real one, when he says that “[u]nder ripe apples, a snapshot album is smouldering” (l. 79). Since the beginning of this part ties in with the preceding lines and the speaker starts by referring to the effect of the light again, one could be led to believe that the ‘fire’ he mentions is not a real one, but an exaggeration of the glow and light he observes in nature. He tells that he perceives “[t]hrough all the orchard’s bows / A honey-colour stillness, a hurrying stealth, / A quiet migration of all that can escape now” (ll. 76-78). The fact that the speaker’s description of the light includes an example of synesthesia (cf. “honey-color stillness”, l. 77) and personification (cf. “hurrying

stealth”, l. 77) shows that his senses are definitely heightened at this moment. Moreover, the juxtaposition of words associated with calmness and rest (cf. “stillness”, l. 77, and “quiet”, l. 78) and others that are connected with sounds and movement (cf. “hurrying”, l. 77, and “migration”, l. 78) proves, once again, that it is this unique mixture in the atmosphere of autumn that is so striking to him. Then, when the speaker first mentions the ‘fire’ in front of him in line 79, one could also think that the “snapshot album [that is] smouldering” is only an exaggerated description of certain picturesque parts of the landscape that are astonishingly illuminated by the sunlight, as it was already the case with the pheasant that he referred to as a “fire-ball bird” (l. 71). However, because the speaker, in the rest of this part, elaborates almost exclusively on this fire and makes it seem real through words like “flame” (l. 82), “[b]lackenings” (l. 84), and “bonfire” (l. 90), one might also come to the conclusion that it does, in fact, exist. What, then, could this fire stand for? The answer seems to be conveyed in lines 83 to 87:

The fleshless faces dissolve, one by one,
As they peel open. Blackenings, shrivellings
To grey flutter. The clump’s core hardens. Everything

Has to be gone through. Every corpuscle
And its gleam. Everything must go.

Even if this might seem slightly far-fetched, the “fleshless faces” (l. 83) in the burning snapshots and the fact that everything turns into ashes could be meant as an allusion to mankind in general and a remembrance of mortality. Matching the speaker’s technique from earlier in this poem, inspired by the theory of deep ecology, this could be another attempt at pointing out that man and nature are equal—a rejection of the anthropocentric worldview. In the final lines of this part, one learns that “[a]n alarmed blackbird, lean, alert, scolds / The everywhere slow exposure—flees, returns” (ll. 92-93). Obviously, the fire does not go unnoticed by the animals in nature, but what is interesting is that, after fleeing from the place (because of fear), they will also return (because of a sense of belonging). Thus, nature is presented as a place to which one can develop a strong bond and which one will always feel drawn back to—something that is not always given in modern cities, due to their anonymity, unfamiliarity, and fast pace. It is for this reason that this poem can be seen as another example of imaginative counter-discourse, as presented in Zapf’s theory of literature as cultural ecology.

In part six of the poem, the reference to the month of October in the first line could either mean that the speaker continues his account after some time has passed, or that what he tells us in the following is what he imagines nature to look like in October.

Here again, the speaker gives proof of valuing nature's variety. So, for example, he mentions more animals, "[f]ieldfares" (l. 100) and a "woodpigeon" (l. 101), the "last watery blackberries" (l. 108), and "[f]lowers so low-powered and fractional / They are not in any book" (ll. 96-97). It is quite interesting that the flowers, in this state, seem just as attractive and worth mentioning to him as in full bloom during spring or summer—a sign of his unconditional appreciation of nature. Shortly afterwards, this esteem is contrasted to a hunter's disregard of nature: His shots can be heard (cf. "A far Bang! Then Bang!", l. 102) and the speaker anticipates that the hunter is "trampling brambles" (l. 104). One could thus take the hunter as an embodiment of the anthropocentric worldview because he is presented as someone who regards nature only as a resource for human needs. That the speaker, after smelling and then finding a dead fox (cf. ll. 106-113), decides to come back to this place in spring to "steal [the fox's] fangs, and wear them, and honour them" (l. 114) shows that he, in contrast to the hunter, is someone who is aware of the inherent worth of nature. Moreover, the speaker's mentioning of the fox as a "neighbor" (l. 106) also tells us about how close he feels to it (and to nature in general).

Part seven ties perfectly in and is just another example of the speaker's appreciation of nature's beauty in autumn. He enjoys the sight of some last "foxglove lamp-mantles, in full flare / Among gritty burned-out spires of old foxgloves" (ll. 115-116) and the fallen apples which are a "festival of small slugs" (l. 120). The decay of nature provoked through the beginning of autumn has a very special picturesque quality for the speaker. What he perceives in nature are not signs of a harsh break between the seasons or a sudden 'death' of nature, but indications of a very gentle change. This is further underlined by the expression of gentleness (via use of personification) in the last lines of the part: "So the old year, tired / Smiles over his tools, fondling them a little, / As he puts them away." (ll. 122-124).

In the eighth and final part of the poem, the speaker finishes his account by telling the reader what he sees and feels when he looks out of the window the next morning. The mentioning of the "[o]ceanic windy dawn" (l. 125), the "[s]hapes [that] grab at the window" (l. 126) and the "[r]avens go[ing] head over heels" (l. 127) reveal that it has become very windy and that autumn has proceeded further—in a perceivable way. It is quite interesting that, in this part, the speaker turns back to the sea and ship imagery he used before, as can be seen from words like "[o]ceanic" (l. 125), "flood" (l. 128), and "deck" (l. 129). It seems that he is now, like back in summer (cf. ll. 55-64), completely

overwhelmed by the view of nature—so much that he feels fully immersed into it, as if being on a ship at sea. That autumn is finally there, and that the time of the fascinating in-between state has come to an end, is nicely expressed in the very last lines of the poem: “The quince tree, which yesterday / Still clung to a black leaf, has lost it” (ll. 131-132).

Taking everything into account, it can be said that “Autumn Nature Notes” is an excellent example of a poem dealing with the beautiful aspects and inspiring qualities of nature during a season that is not spring or summer, when nature is usually said to be in full bloom and thus thought of as most beautiful. The poem shows that, even during a season like autumn, which is generally associated with withering and decay, there are certain aspects of nature that are of striking beauty. In “Autumn Nature Notes”, this beauty can often be led back to a unique in-between atmosphere—an intriguing mixture of calmness, rest, and quiet, on the one hand, and liveliness and movement, on the other hand, which is also similar to the description of the subtle transformations with the beginning of spring in “Spring Nature Notes”. Due to the idealization of nature and the focus on the bond between man and nature, the poem has a certain pastoral character, however, one that is closer to what Gifford has identified as “post-pastoral” (“Gods of Mud” 132) in some other poems by Hughes, since it sheds light on a rougher and wilder side of nature and not on its typical beauty during warmer times of the year. This also accounts for its success in helping the reader to not only look at nature as one already knows it ‘from the book’, but to immerse oneself into it, in order to explore it in its entirety and discover a new side of it. In the way the poem presents nature and speaks to the reader it is thus far away from Calvin Bedient’s impression of the poem as “nature kitsch” (“Ted Hughes’s Fearful Greening” 150) written for “tender minds” (ibid.). Furthermore, just like “Spring Nature Notes”, the form of the poem—its being constituted by eight single parts that build one whole—could be taken as supporting the idea of deep ecology that is also expressed symbolically at several points in the poem. Additionally, the frequent use of *enjambments* intensifies this impression of the described connectedness of man and nature.

6.3. Ted Hughes’s “River Barrow”

Another poem by Ted Hughes that is interesting to look at with regard to its positive description of experiences that one can have in nature is “River Barrow”, a poem which is part of the poetry collection *River*, first published in 1983. For writing *River*, Hughes

could draw on his “frequent fishing trips, particularly to Scotland, Ireland, and British Columbia [...] [as well as on] his intimate knowledge of his local rivers, the Taw and the Torridge” (Sagar, “Hughes” n. pag.). The collection is, however, not only about Hughes’s “most intimately known part of the environment” (Gifford, “Hughes’s Social Ecology” 86), but also “a key indicator of the state of our relationship with it” (ibid.)—an example of Hughes’s “sense of social ecology” (Gifford, “Hughes’s Social Ecology” 86). This corresponds with Reddick’s view that “Hughes saw rivers as primal conduits to the core of our inner nature” (213). “River Barrow” differs from the other nature poems that were analyzed so far because of the clear focus on a river as part of a natural landscape. While rivers and other sources of water may have been mentioned in the poems presented so far at some point (or even in titles), the focus on the river is of a different quality in “River Barrow”—it is distinctly at the center of the poem. The surrounding natural landscape is not ignored, but it is mostly only referred to in relation to the river. Thus, it will be shown that the appreciation of the place is largely due to the sight of the river and the positive effect it has on the speaker’s well-being. The following analysis will serve to point out the various reasons for the speaker’s fascination with the river and also prove that every aspect of nature matters differently to each person, depending on how one engages with nature.

In the first two stanzas of the poem, the speaker introduces the River Barrow (cf. l. 3) and also indicates that he has visited this natural place as an angler (cf. “We sprawl / Rods out”, ll. 5-6).⁷⁵ His way of engaging with nature, namely by fishing, definitely determines his unique way of looking at the river and the special interest and appreciation it arouses in him. If one spends a considerable time fishing on the bank of a river, one will have a very specific image of it which is, most likely, also characterized by an attentiveness to detail. The very first reference to the river is in stanza 1, where the speaker reveals what time of the day it is when he is fishing. He is obviously out in nature in the evening hours, since “[t]he light cools” (l. 1) and the “[s]un is going down clear / Red-molten glass-blob, into the green ember crumble / Of hill trees, over the Barrow / Where the flushed ash-grey sky lies perfect” (ll. 1-4). The image of the setting sun and its ‘coloring’ of nature seem to be quite striking to the speaker, which is expressed via metaphors in this part: The evening sun is referred to as a “[r]ed-molten glass-blob” (l. 2) and the trees on the horizon are described as a “green ember crumble / Of hill trees” (ll. 2-3). By making use of fire imagery here (cf. “[r]ed-molten” and

⁷⁵ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Three Books: Remains of Elmet, Cave Birds, River*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993. 152-153.

“ember”, l. 2, and “ash-grey”, l. 4), the speaker adds a certain excitement to the atmosphere. Quite interestingly though, the atmosphere is not at all alarming, like when a fire breaks out, but the effect is exactly the opposite; the fire imagery rather functions as a means to convey the soothing evening atmosphere, with a certain coziness and comfortableness, comparable to the effect of a bonfire, that is complemented by an attentiveness of the senses. That the speaker perceives the sunset and the calm end-of-day atmosphere in a very positive way is further underlined by the adjective “perfect” in line 4, where he describes the sky. The fact that “all verbs are in present” (Bedient, “Ted Hughes’s Fearful Greening” 160) makes it seem like “everything happens before our eyes” (ibid.), which ultimately helps the speaker’s words to have a deeper impact on the reader.

The speaker’s first indication that he is fishing in the river Barrow is made with the help of the word “[r]ods” in line 6, when he states that he and his company (probably one or more other anglers) “sprawl / Rods out, giant grasshopper antennae, listening / For the bream-shoal to engage [them]” (ll. 5-7). From this statement, it can be seen that even the things that are not ‘natural’ (as in ‘coming from nature’), like the rods, are presented as fitting into it through the use of simile. The speaker compares the rods to “giant grasshopper antennae” (l. 6) and thus shows that he has only eyes for nature at this moment and is ready to appreciate its different facets. The fact that, from line 7 on, he does not mention his fishing company (as indicated by the use of the personal pronouns “[w]e” in line 5 or “us” in line 7) ever again in the whole poem also underlines that he is completely focusing on the beauties of nature, trying to ignore or blank out everything that does not seem to fit in. That the speaker is ready to perceive nature in its wholeness and immediacy is further expressed through the sharpened receptiveness of the senses: In addition to the visual assessment of the surroundings and the eye for detail, there is now also an eagerness to listen to nature (cf. “listening / For the bream-shoal to engage us”, ll. 6-7).

Next, the speaker goes on giving a more detailed description of how he perceives the river in front of him:

The current
 Hauls its foam-line feed-lane
 Along under the far bank – a furrow
 Driving through heavy wealth,
 Dragging a syrupy strength, a down-roping
 Of the living honey. (ll. 8-13)

The reference to the current which whirls around the fish in the river (cf. “[h]auls its foam-line feed-lane / Along under the far bank”, ll. 9-10) is an expression of the liveliness that the speaker associates with the water. This is not only due to the fish as such, but also because of the drive and the movements he perceives, which seem to be quite striking, even creating a “foam” (l. 9). At this point, the speaker is extremely fascinated by the flow of the river which he further qualifies in the next lines: Apart from the fact that he regards the river as a “furrow / Driving through heavy wealth” (ll. 10-11), meaning that it runs through a beautiful landscape which he appreciates and values (cf. “wealth”, l. 11), he also adds that it comes with a “syrupy strength, a down roping of the living honey” (ll. 12-13). For this passage, Tongsukkaeng has noticed that “the river’s transformative power and mobility” (242) are referred to “through a vocabulary of hard labour: ‘Driving’, ‘Dragging’ and ‘roping’” (ibid.), underlining the general power of nature. Although it is not clear whether it is the river itself or the shoals of fish in it that the speaker refers to as having a “syrupy strength” (l. 12) and compares to “living honey” (l. 13), the expressions definitely reveal his degree of enjoyment, since both forms of liquid, syrup and honey, are sweet treats and thus present a very positive description of the water or the fish in it. Maybe it is exactly this combination of the water and the fish in it, which are whirled around by the current, that makes the speaker describe the river as having such a “syrupy strength” (l. 12), since the shoals of fish add a certain ‘richness’ to the water.

In the following, the speaker, shortly interrupts his description of the river and goes on by telling about how watching the river and the surrounding landscape at this exact time of the day affects him:

It’s an ancient thirst
 Savouring all this, at the day’s end,
 Soaking it all up, through every membrane,
 As if the whole body were a craving mouth,
 As if a hunted ghost were drinking – sud-flecks
 Grass-bits and omens
 Fixed in the glass. (ll. 14-20)

In the speaker’s view, watching the river and the surrounding landscape at the end of the day is a desire for experiencing nature that he has felt again and again over time—it is “an ancient thirst” (l. 14) that he has always felt urged to satisfy. Apparently, the experience is remembered as having a positive impact on him, which is why it is depicted as worth craving for. The word “[s]avouring” (l. 15) and the statement that he is “[s]oaking it all up, through every membrane, / As if the whole body were a craving mouth” (ll. 16-17) convey the sense of pleasure that the speaker connects with the

experience in nature, and also prove that it involves the whole body. The impact of nature cannot only be felt through the perception with the different senses, but it also fills the speaker with certain emotions of joy and contentment. This is also why he compares the effect to a “hunted ghost [...] drinking – sud-flecks / Grass-bits and omens / Fixed in the glass” (ll. 18-20); he intends to point out to the reader that the experience in nature endows him with vitality. A similar experience is described and longed for by the speaker in Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”, who desires to sink more into nature with a drink “[t]asting of Flora and the country green, / Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth” (ll. 13-14 in “Ode to a Nightingale”).

It is then that the speaker finally gets more explicit with regard to the features of the river and the surrounding nature that contribute to this positive impact. For example, he mentions the mirroring of the trees in the water (cf. “[t]rees inverted”, l. 21) which “[e]ven in this sliding place are perfect” (l. 22), and that it seems to him that “[a]ll evil [is] suspended” (l. 23). The speaker probably wants to convey that there is nothing that can destroy the beautiful view—even “inverted trees” (l. 21) seem harmonious. The repetition of the word “perfect” (cf. l. 4 and l. 22) reinforces the reader’s impression that the speaker thinks very positively about the experience in nature and literally takes it to the maximum. Moreover, it is striking that, when he sees “[f]lies / Teem[ing] over [his] hands / twanging their codes / In and out of [his] ear’s beam” (ll. 23-25), he does not react annoyed but rather with calm observation. It seems that almost every aspect of nature, even the tiniest little fly, can arouse fascination in the speaker in this very moment of fishing in the sunset. In *The Experience of Nature*, Kaplan and Kaplan state that sources of fascination are vital for any restorative experience (as, for example, in the form of a retreat from the city and urban life) and explain it as follows:

A fascinating stimulus is one that calls forth involuntary attention. Thus fascination is important to the restorative experience not only because it attracts people and keeps them from getting bored but also because it allows them to function without having to use directed attention (184).

Elaborating further on the reasons for his fascination with the river, the speaker then describes the river by means of personification, namely with the help of several terms usually used to refer to parts of the human body: For example, he speaks of a “[h]eavy belly / Of river, solid mystery / With a living vein” (ll. 28-30) and also adds that an “[o]dd trout / Flash-pop, curdle[s] the molten, / [and] [r]ive[s] a wound in the smooth healing” (ll. 30-32). The last image is not to be understood negatively, though, it is only meant to express that the trout in the water (cf. “[o]dd trout / Flash-pop”,

ll. 30-31) makes the reflection of the sunset in the water vanish for a moment because of its leaps (cf. “curdle the molten”, l. 31) and thus interferes with the calm flow of the river due to its liveliness (cf. “[r]ive a wound in the smooth healing”, l. 32). It is exactly this mixture of the calmness of the evening atmosphere and the vitality of nature (as conveyed through the mentioning of the river’s movements and the various forms of life that can be found in that place) which accounts for this special effect on the speaker. This is also why he immediately brings together the evening atmosphere and other living beings (insects) in the following lines again, when he says that “[o]ver the now pink-lit ballroom glass / Tiny sedge-flies partner their shadows” (ll. 33-34). According to the speaker’s description, the setting sun colors the water surface and makes it look like “pink-lit ballroom glass” (l. 33) on which the sedge-flies are dancing. Thus, even though the water might have appeared ‘wild’ and ‘lively’ just before, it appears calm again at the next moment and is associated with the gentleness and harmony of a ball event. On the other hand, if the mentioned sedge-flies are not meant to be real ones, but a sort of fishing bait used by the speaker and his companions, one could interpret this part differently: Possibly, it is a means of expressing that everything non-natural that could disturb the speaker’s view is imagined to be alive and being a part of nature—just as before with the rods that appeared like “giant grasshopper antennae” (l. 6). Here, the speaker does not only give proof of his awareness of nature’s diversity (in terms of atmospheres and life forms), but also of his holistic world view—both indications of ecological thinking (cf. Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88-89).

In the next stanzas, the speaker continues with his elaboration on the reasons for his fascination with the river by referring to more features that have a strong impact on him. So, he describes the river as “[a] wobbly, wavering balance of light” (l. 35) and also compares it to “[m]ercury precarious in its sac” (l. 36), to point out to the reader that the glistening mirroring of the light in the river makes an impression on him. Later on, he refers to the glistening effect of the water once more by describing it as a “complex / Of internestled metals, a moon-spasm” (ll. 42-43). That the river appears lively and calm to the speaker at the same time is further expressed when he mentions that the water is “spilling” (l. 37) at “the weir’s edge” (ibid.), and shortly afterwards describes it as a “smoothing peace” (l. 39) in the “[d]og-bark stillness” (l. 37). Maybe the speaker’s fascination with the river is linked to an awareness that “[t]he nature of rivers makes them perfect emblems of constancy-in-change: always different yet always there, hurriedly shifting great volumes of water yet never doing anything but that”

(Troupes 63). At several points in the last stanzas, the speaker also mentions more animals, like a “wood-pigeon” (l. 38), a “cow” (l. 42), “midges” (l. 48), “a big fish, / Bream-roll or evening salmon” (ll. 52-53), and a “spider” (l. 55), but their lively presence does not disturb the calm and peaceful atmosphere in any way. Every creature—either through its visual appearance, sounds, or movements—blends in perfectly, is set in relation to the river, and contributes to the intriguing combination of liveliness, on the one hand, and calmness, on the other hand, that has been associated with the river from the very beginning onwards. For example, a cow’s moo is said to move through the water (cf. ll. 42-44), the fish in the water “crashes / A crater of suds, and the river widens” (l. 53-54), and a spider sits “[b]etween glumes of over-leaning river grass” (l. 56). In the speaker’s eyes, every aspect of the surrounding landscape is seen as being in connection with the river in a certain way. The scene he beholds makes the speaker experience the ecological principle that, in an ecosystem, “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88) and he tries to convey this to the reader. Sagar, too, finds that the

response to the river is not photographic or painterly, since such pictures cannot hope to convey what concerns him most—the flow, the constant change, the power, and the voice and music of the river [...], and the interrelatedness with the weather and the whole ecosystem of which it is the life-blood and generator” (*Ted Hughes and Nature* 257).

Interestingly, almost at the end of the poem, the speaker feels to be just as much a part of the landscape and affected by the river as the creatures he includes in his account. He seems totally overwhelmed by the atmosphere and feels immersed in nature, as becomes clear in lines 44 to 49:

I lie here,
Half-unearthed, an old sword in its scabbard,
Happy to moulder. Only the river moves.

Feet prickling in my tight-sock gumboots,
Hair itching with midges, blood easy
As the river.

The fact that he refers to himself as “[h]alf-unearthed” (l. 45) shows that he regards the situation as slightly unreal; he is obviously surprised and finds it hard to believe that he suddenly feels so intimate with the river landscape. This is also underlined by the addition that he feels like “an old sword in its scabbard / Happy to moulder” (ll. 45-46). Even though it is not shown by the speaker’s behavior, because he has been able to connect to nature and to appreciate it, the sword might be an allusion to the potentially destructive behavior towards nature shown by man. Maybe he also agrees with the premise of ecology that human beings increasingly “*threaten*” (Zapf, “Literature as

Cultural Ecology” 90) the integrity of nature. The speaker, though, describes himself as a “sword in its scabbard” (l. 45)—he is immersed into nature, feels affiliated and protected by it, and will not become a threat to it either. It should also be mentioned here that, although the speaker’s prime motivation for coming to nature has been that of fishing, the poem does not reveal that he finally catches one (which could be construed as environmentally damaging behavior).⁷⁶ Perceiving the river and the surrounding landscape apparently gives him enough pleasure, and meanwhile he is no longer sitting in his fishing position, but lying on the ground, enjoying the atmosphere (cf. “I lie here”, l. 44). The speaker even goes so far as to say that he is “[h]appy to moulder” (l. 46), which shows that he relates so strongly to nature at that moment that he completely forgets about his human existence and wishes to become one with the landscape. In a way, he thus resembles the speaker in Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” who also attempts to fully immerse himself into nature by imagining flying away with the nightingale—maybe an early sign of a deep ecological mindset. The speaker, again, highlights the river’s importance in creating the unique atmosphere by stating that it feels to him that “[o]nly the river moves” (l. 46). In order to express that the sensation of the river has now affected him in his whole being, he tells the reader that his blood flows as “easy / As this river” (ll. 48-49), which is probably one of the poem’s most striking examples of expressing the bond between nature and man as in terms of deep ecology. Finally, we learn that the effect of nature on the speaker can now also be seen from the outside: He has described the feeling of connectedness to the river and the landscape by referring to his emotions several times, but it has now also become visible in the form of “midge bites itching and swelling” (l. 57).

As a conclusion, it can be said that the poem “River Barrow” by Ted Hughes functions as ecopoetry in promoting an engagement with nature that is different from just profiting from it by making use of it for one’s own advantage. Tongsukkaeng comes to a similar conclusion and says that, with its meditative parts, the poem reveals “a way to comprehend one’s psychological position in conjunction with the external

⁷⁶ There is evidence of Hughes’s split attitude towards fishing, although it was his “lifelong passion” (Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature* 32): Hughes once defended it as a “perfect hold-all substitute for every other kind of aberrant primitive impulse” (qtd. in Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature* 252), but later “admitted that fish suffer like any other hunted animal” (Sagar, *Ted Hughes and Nature* 252). The presentation of the speaker as fisherman in the poem also matches Hughes’s understanding of himself and others as fishermen, namely as people who do not only seek nature for satisfying their own needs, but who have a very close relationship to nature, characterized by a deep concern for the natural world. This is reflected, for example, in what Hughes once wrote about local fishermen: “All the river renovation down here has been initiated by fishermen—I mean the actual cleaning of waterways” (qtd. in Gifford, “Hughes’s Social Ecology” 87-88).

environment” (244). Scigaj even claims that “*River* will one day be recognised as one of the central literary masterpieces of the world [...] [and that] it should be required reading for all humans on our planet to help them attain responsible adulthood” (*Ted Hughes* 133). He regards the *River* collection as “thoroughly biocentric” (Scigaj, “Ted Hughes and Ecology” 169) and is convinced that “[m]any poems capture Nature’s energy so vividly that they approximate the animistic beliefs of tribal societies” (Scigaj, “Ted Hughes and Ecology” 174). Reddick, too, holds the opinion that *River* is Hughes’s “most satisfyingly balanced and unified ecopoetic volume” (15).⁷⁷ The speaker’s account of his experience in nature should serve as an example of how one can engage with nature in ways that go beyond utilitarian thinking, namely by appreciating its beauty and the strong positive effects it has on one’s well-being. Quite interestingly, for Hughes, too, fishing played a very important role, since it became [...] a religious activity, a way of connecting his own life to a larger non-human life” (Sagar, “Hughes” n. pag.). Susanna Lidström is also convinced that “Hughes’s depictions of a universal, interdependent and connected ecosystem [...] [are] expressed most explicitly” (142) in the *River* collection. It can therefore, just like the other two poems analyzed so far, be read as imaginative counter-discourse as formulated by Zapf. Throughout the poem, one learns that it is the special atmosphere of the river during sunset which deeply impresses the speaker—the particular mixture of calmness and liveliness he becomes aware of more and more in the course of the poem and which finally helps him to relate to nature. It is interesting to see that this mixture of liveliness and calmness was also found to be decisive for the positive evaluation of the ‘atmosphere of transition’ of autumn in Hughes’s “Autumn Nature Notes” and, partly also, for the reflections on the arrival of spring in “Spring Nature Notes”. At the level of form, this mixed character of the river water—its variability—could be said to find expression in the uneven length of the stanzas throughout the poem. Furthermore, the constant use of run-on lines, resembling the flow of water, fits the title and content of the poem perfectly.

6.4. Charles Tomlinson’s “Below Tintern”

The last poem that will be analyzed with a special focus on the positive descriptions and experiences of nature is Charles Tomlinson’s “Below Tintern”, which was published in his collection *The Shaft* from 1978. In contrast to the poems that were analyzed so far, it

⁷⁷ Reddick notes that “[a] significant reason why this vision of ecological wholeness develops in Hughes’s poetry in the early 1980s is that he and his son Nicholas were reading one of the seminal environmental books of the age: James Lovelock’s *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*” (213).

is quite short and does not reveal information on a great variety of different aspects of nature, but rather focuses on a single powerful image that makes an impression on the speaker and inspires him to think about it. While in Ted Hughes's "River Barrow", the speaker also concentrates mainly on the river as part of the natural landscape, the focus in "Below Tintern" is even smaller, since it is a reflection in the river water that the speaker finds worth concentrating on. It will be interesting to look into the captivating and absorbing power of this sight in nature in detail to find out about the reasons for the speaker's fascination.⁷⁸ Also, the way the speaker reflects on this image is proof of an examining of nature and a scrutinizing of its value for mankind that is typical of ecocritical thinking and worth promoting. It is proof of Tomlinson's "quiet meditative voice" (Hirsch 395) that is suspected to "reverberate on both sides of the Atlantic for a long time to come" (ibid.). Although he is maybe less known than other contemporary poets, his unique poetic technique makes him, according to some critics, "one of the most astute, disciplined, and lucent poets of his generation" (Hirsch 395).

In the first lines of "Below Tintern", the reader is immediately informed about the sight in nature that has caught the speaker's attention and which will be described in more detail in the course of the poem, namely "[t]he river's mirrorings [that] remake a world / Green to the cliff-tops, hanging / Wood by wood, towards its counterpart" (ll. 1-3).⁷⁹ Obviously, the speaker finds himself in a place in nature where he is surrounded by lots of flowering trees that stand very close to one another and are striking due to their vivid green color. The question, then, would be: Why is it the mirroring that attracts his attention and not the actual trees? To facilitate the understanding at this point, it should be noted that it is only at the end of the poem that one learns what the place exactly looks like, and that, besides the beautiful greenery, there are also signs of modern urban life. According to the last line of the poem, there must also be a street with cars driving by (cf. l. 16). Keeping that in mind, it should be easier to comprehend why the speaker focuses on the mirroring in the river: Since it only shows what is above him—gigantic green trees soaring into the sky—looking at the mirroring allows him to briefly blank out the street and the cars, so that he can enjoy pure nature for a moment. At the beginning already, it can thus be said that the poem

⁷⁸ Just as in Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" and other nature poems that refer to a place in nature in their titles, one can regard the place reference in the title as a means "to insist upon the reality of the poem's external circumstances, as if to say, although this is a poem, it has a basis in real experience, in the actual, sensible world" (Kern 25).

⁷⁹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Shaft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978. 26.

gains much of its power as ecopoetry from the overwhelming image of nature which presents a contrast to the urban. To help the reader comprehend this overwhelming feeling, the speaker attempts to describe the landscape accurately and in detail, which fits the general view that Tomlinson's poetry is special in its "painterly effects" ("Charles Tomlinson" n. pag.) and "examines the minutest fluctuations and nuances in the natural world" (Spiegelman 26). The speaker's reaction to nature thus corresponds with an ecological attitude, since he recognizes "the *diversity* of life and [...] the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations, which are each seen to have intrinsic value even in their apparently most insignificant forms" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 89). In this context, Willard Spiegelman also makes an interesting remark about Tomlinson:

Though his eye is alert to the whole world, he seems willing to wait for revelations. All persistence, he never importunes the natural world for vision, but rather witnesses its performance, attends diligently to its harmonies [...]. The result is a poetry that impresses its own intelligence on the reader without proclaiming it (27-28).

In the following, the speaker immediately is very precise about what exactly he finds so fascinating about the image he sees in the river. The green color of the trees seems to have a very strong impact on him, since he says that "[g]reen gathers there as no green could / That water did not densen" (ll. 4-5). Since green is often said to be the color of nature and is also associated with life in general, the speaker's attention to the color could show that he experiences the trees to be radiating a certain liveliness. On top of that, the mentioning of another source of life, the "water" (l. 5), clearly supports this interpretation: The trees are in full sap because they are well nourished by water. Another feature of the trees that stirs the speaker's interest is the denseness of the trees surrounding him. Rising high in the air and standing right next to one another, the trees also create a kind of semi-darkness (cf. "towering dimness", l. 7). That is why, next, in lines 5 through 7, the speaker asks himself why this is so alluring to him and why he thinks about this sight for so long: "Yet why should mind / So eagerly swim down and through such towering dimness?". Quite interestingly, he uses the word "swim" (l. 6) for two reasons here, namely to use a verb that fits the semantic field of the river, and also to express that his thoughts dwell on the mirroring in the water and that this deep reflection is almost like plunging into it—an immersion into the water by means of contemplation. The speaker immediately answers the question with another question, and says that one probably feels the need to think about the image "[b]ecause that world seems true" (l. 7). The fact that he regards the world he sees in the water, the natural

landscape surrounding him, as “true” shows that he apparently values it a lot and maybe even cherishes it more than the non-natural world he is used to from his everyday life. It looks like the mirroring in the river appears just as ‘true’ (and real) to him as the actual natural landscape around him. This also fits Merle Brown’s opinion about Tomlinson’s poetry that, “[p]oetic perception [...] is a form of awareness presupposing and depending upon a series of fundamental distinctions, [like] those between the real and the unreal” (277). The speaker does not measure ‘truth’ by deciding whether something does actually exist or is only mirrored, but he looks for a deeper ‘truth’, an inherent worth, that is obviously not to be found in the modern, urban world and is special to nature (both, to the actual physical landscape—if there were no streets—and to the reflection in the river). In his article on Charles Tomlinson’s poetic technique, Spiegelman, too, comes to the conclusion that “only through acknowledging the strange otherness of a scene, a place, or a meteorological phenomenon can one negotiate an understanding of that scene” (32).

After that, the speaker, again, turns to the narrowness or dimness of the trees which unmistakably has a mesmerizing and maybe even a slightly unsettling effect on him. Even if nature is where ‘truth’ can be found, he states that it is hard to grasp because the gigantic narrow standing trees—no matter how beautiful they are—also ‘fill the picture to its margins’ and do not leave much room for exploring anything else. Maybe the speaker is reminded of the non-natural world of his everyday life: the tall buildings and densely peopled urban places that can have a narrowing effect on people. He finds density in nature as well, because “[g]reen gathers there as no green could” (l. 4) and because there could not be “more solid castles in the air” (l. 9). Still, the fact that he refers to the trees as “castles” also highlights that, despite their looking mighty and gigantic, he primarily thinks about them in a positive way. What further draws the speaker’s interest and makes him spend more time looking at the mirroring is “[m]achicolations, look-outs for mind’s eye / [that] [f]eed and free it with mere virtuality” (ll. 10-11). Using another word from the same semantic field as the “castle” in line 9, he mentions the “[m]achicolations” (l. 10) to express that it is these gaps of sky between the tree tops that provide the image with a certain openness and ‘invite’ him to look further for the ‘truth’ and a deeper understanding of nature:

For they are true enough
 Set wide with invitation where they lie
 Those liquid thresholds, that inverted sky
 Gripped beneath rockseams by the valley verdure (ll. 12-15)

Through the choice of the word “thresholds” (l. 14), the speaker also conveys that the gaps showing the sky are rather small, but that it is exactly this openness they create (and the expectation that there is more—as in ‘behind the door’) which excites his curiosity. The speaker’s point of observation and its limitations presented throughout the whole poem can also be related to what Julian Gitzen regards as characteristic of Tomlinson’s writing, namely his “urge to curb our egocentric imaginations in the interest of acquiring accurate information about external nature” (335):

From his experience as both painter and poet, [...] he is intensely aware of the difficulties confronting those who wish to apprehend in undistorted fashion the ‘plentitude’ of fact in the natural world. [...] He recognizes, for example, that the position which we adopt for purposes of observation necessarily constitutes a restricted and arbitrary focus upon unbounded and undifferentiated phenomena, We cannot embrace everything at a glance; we must be satisfied with what our vision encompasses (Gitzen 335).

Unfortunately, at the end of the poem, the speaker’s act of contemplating about the mirroring is brought to an end—not because of his own decision, but due to an interference from the outside. As already mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, the speaker is finally caught up by the familiar non-natural world in the form of a car that drives along the nearby street in the landscape.⁸⁰ As a result, the “liquid thresholds”, the inviting openness and the mystery of nature that he was just about to explore further, is “[l]ost to reflection as the car bends by” (l. 16). However, it is not really ‘lost’ forever in the end, since the experience in nature has made such a lasting impression on the speaker. As Spiegelman rightly notes, “[a]s a poet of place(s), [Tomlinson] understands implicitly that place is an event in time as well as space” (33) because when “the place has changed, the image still remains” (Tomlinson qtd. in Spiegelman 33). Nevertheless, what is made clear here is that the “scene invites a simultaneous sense of nature’s richness and limit amidst the urban transformations men have wrought upon the face of things” (Marten 53).⁸¹ Judging from the final lines, the speaker probably agrees with the premise of ecology that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature.

⁸⁰ This fits Ian Brinton’s finding that Tomlinson’s poetry often gives an idea of his awareness of “the changing reality of the surrounding world” (105). This image might also be interpreted as revealing Tomlinson’s own worries regarding ongoing modernization, since Brinton further mentions that Tomlinson once expressed his worries regarding “plans for a motorway across the Cotswolds” (ibid.) in a letter to a friend.

⁸¹ In his article “Charles Tomlinson and the Experience of Place”, Harry Marten points out that this message is conveyed throughout Tomlinson’s oeuvre, since one can observe in his poetry quite often an “attraction to, and discomfort with, his English places” (52) at the same time.

As a conclusion, it can be said that, via means of the pastoral, the poem illustrates nicely how nature can function as a retreat from everyday life, inspires people to reflect on it, and becomes an important subject in our way of thinking and our worldview—especially if one is used to modern and urban environments where the existence of remnants of nature is rather limited. Therefore, if one thinks of Zapf’s model of literature as cultural ecology, the poem can be classified as another example of imaginative counter-discourse. “Below Tintern” is inspired by the same river (and landscape) that Wordsworth referred to with his “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, which shows that the place as such remains quite interesting and inspiring. In Tomlinson’s poem, though, the uniqueness and general message lies in the fact that it provides an example of an intense contact with nature that is established by focusing only on one aspect of it and arriving thus at a deeper understanding and awareness of nature. Bedient comes to a similar conclusion when he compares Tomlinson’s and Wordsworth’s poetic techniques as ‘nature poets’: “There is in him, it is true, a measure of Wordsworth ... [but] Wordsworth discovers himself in nature—it is this, of course, that makes him a Romantic poet. Tomlinson on the other hand, discovers the nature of nature: a classical artist, he is all taut, responsive detachment” (“On Charles Tomlinson” 173). This fits his own understanding of creating poetry “where space represented possibility and where self would have to embrace that possibility somewhat self-forgetfully, putting aside the more possessive and violent claims of personality” (Tomlinson vii). Nature’s ‘truth’ or worth is here only realized because of an act of intense contemplation that helps the speaker to set the natural world in relation to the non-natural world and could finally result in a better understanding of nature’s worth for mankind and corresponding measures to ensure its protection. It might serve as an example of “anti-Romanticism” (Hirsch 397), since it “refuses the projection of the self onto a mute natural world” (ibid.), but even though this element is missing, the meditative character still prompts a deeper reflection on the relationship between nature and oneself or mankind in general (even if not explicitly mentioned but only suggested in the poem). Edward Hirsch is absolutely right in saying that “[t]he poems begin with the visible, with the particular” (398), but that “the particular radiates outwards, growing into meaning [...] [and that] the meaning inheres in the relationship between the thing seen and the eye seeing” (ibid.). Perception, here, is thus a “ursprüngliche [...] vorrationale Art der Erkenntnis” (Lengeler 124-125) and “the poem a [...] rite of initiation” (K. O’Gorman 96) that “renews the process of our encounter with the world”

(K. O’Gorman 106). In this way, the poem functions as ecopoetry and could help to influence the way we approach nature. That modern and urban life includes actions that are disrespectful of nature, and that the non-natural often ‘gets into nature’s way’, is cleverly alluded to in the poem through the inclusion of the car at the end.

6.5. Ted Hughes’s “Daffodils”

The next two poems will be analyzed with special regard to their treatment of memory, meaning that the intention behind the analysis is to find out about the things or experiences in nature that have had a particularly strong impact on the speaker and have had a lasting effect on him, so that they are remembered clearly and in detail after some time has passed. Nature’s impact on our memory, that things or experiences in nature are vividly recalled by a person, is of central importance for teaching others the worth of nature, promoting a sensitivity towards the environment and leading to a more environmentally friendly attitude among people in the last step. This is especially true for the passing on of knowledge and experience from parents to children or from teachers to students and so on: For example, if, these days, a child learns about what his or her grandparents or parents remember of nature from the past, this can help him or her to relate to this experience or to look at nature in a similar way, even if nature might have a completely different significance now and among today’s youth. Learning about how nature is remembered from the past can definitely help one to broaden one’s mind, to look at nature differently by seeking similar experiences, and lastly to gain an understanding of the value of nature—not just for the individual, but for mankind. In fact, “[i]t is striking how often literary representations of nature appear [...] in the context of remembering. At the same time, memories of the past, in literature as in life, are commonly anchored in places, landscapes, or buildings” (Goodbody 55). Elaborating on what ecocritic Laurence Coupe has defined as the most important fields of research in ecocriticism, Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer mention the “Beschäftigung mit der Rolle von Erinnerung und Erinnerungskulturen für die Artikulation umweltrelevanter Haltungen und Wertsysteme” (18). Therefore, the next two poems that will be dealt with fulfill an important function as ecopoetry and, if discussed with younger people (as, for example, in a classroom context), could also lead to a stronger sense of responsibility towards nature. This is absolutely essential and needs to be reinforced, in order to also preserve the environment and natural resources for future generations.

The first poem that will be looked at with a particular focus on memory is Ted Hughes's "Daffodils" from his 1986 collection *Flowers and Insects* which, due to the title, already reminds one of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"—a poem that also concentrates on the act of remembering and is an example of Wordsworth's concept of 'emotion recollected in tranquility'. Although both appear very similar in presenting memories of daffodils, Hughes's poem is quite different in terms of content: While in Wordsworth's poem, the speaker's experience is positive throughout, in Hughes's poem, the speaker experiences a shift in his view of the daffodils. As will be shown in the following, the speaker is first happy about the beautiful sight of the daffodils on his lawn, and after having cut them and put them into a vase, he suddenly seems to be haunted by rather saddening and even menacing pictures of the daffodils—probably due to his awareness that, by plucking the flowers, he has 'destroyed' nature for his own pleasure.

At the beginning of the poem, the speaker describes how he became fascinated with the daffodils in the first place and how he saw them for the first time. We learn that the speaker "bought a patch of wild ground" (l. 1) once and that it surprised him when spring came and he "[s]uddenly [...] saw what [he] owned" (ll. 2-3).⁸² These last words are the first allusion to the daffodils that will be described in more detail in the following lines, but what is very interesting here already is the proprietary attitude of the speaker that is conveyed; he thinks of the flowers growing on his lawn as being owned by him because he has paid for the land. The first explicit reference to the daffodils comes in line 4, when he specifies the surprise on his lawn as a "[a] cauldron of daffodils, boiling gently". What appears familiar here is the imagery from the field of heat (cf. "cauldron" and "boiling", l. 4) that was also found to be used in the other nature poems by Hughes that were discussed earlier. The images of heat or even burning used to describe certain aspects of nature were found to be an expression of their striking luminosity (due to their color or as an effect of the sunlight) and this also seems to apply in "Daffodils": The radiant yellow color of the daffodils is obviously so impressive that the speaker feels the need to express the intensity of the color with the help of the image of a boiling cauldron. Again, just as in the other poems, the effect of the image is not 'alarming' or leading to a sense of danger because it is immediately mitigated afterwards—in this case with the help of the word "gently" (l. 4). Apparently, the bright yellow daffodils are smoothly swaying to and fro in the soft wind, which also

⁸² The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Flowers and Insects: Some Birds and a Pair of Spiders*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. 13-18.

explains the movement expressed in the image of the boiling cauldron. Immediately afterwards, the speaker stresses his impression of the daffodils by mentioning more images that came to his mind when he first saw them on his ground. So, he refers to the flowers as “[b]lown foam” (l. 7) and “[v]essels of light” (ibid.) and states that it appeared to him that “[t]heir six-bladed screws / [are] [c]hurning the greeny-yellows / Out of the hard, over-wintered Chlorophyll” (ll. 9-11). While the description of the daffodils as “[b]lown foam” (l. 7) and the addition that the flowers “raced under every gust / on the earth-surge” (ll. 8-9) support the image of gentle movement, the “[v]essels of light” (l. 7) and the mentioning of the chlorophyll as related to the process of photosynthesis (cf. ll. 9-11) stress the luminous appearance and striking color of the flowers. Maybe even more interesting about this part, though, is that the speaker reveals that he has written down these expressions (cf. “I wrote”, l. 7) and thus uses self-reflexivity as a device to draw attention to the development of his story about the daffodils. This shows that he must have been so deeply awed by the sight that he felt the need to capture it in words so that it can be remembered. Also, what was just found out for this passage can be related to William F. Brewer’s claim regarding memory that the “measures of phenomenal experience during recall show that autobiographical recalls with high memory confidence are virtually always accompanied by high visual imagery” (86).

In the next lines, the speaker reveals information about his personal situation and worldview at the time he bought the patch of ground, which is vital for the understanding of his behavior towards the daffodils in the course of the poem and with the passing of time. He says that, at this point in time, he “was still a nomad” (l. 12), that “[his] life was still a raid” (l. 13), and that “[t]he earth was booty” (ibid.) for him. Again, as in line 3, with the word “owned”, the speaker makes clear to the reader that he thought of nature as something that can be taken and possessed by him (cf. “raid” and “booty”, l. 13). The fact that he describes himself as a “nomad” (l. 12) and refers to his life as a “raid” (l. 13) also shows that the speaker has never really felt attached to a place in his past. With the benefit of hindsight, he also states that he has not fully appreciated the daffodils (and nature in general) at this time, by which he already indirectly announces that, in the account of his experience with the daffodils, there will be a shift in attitude towards the flowers (and towards nature in general): The speaker points out that he “had not learned / What a fleeting glance of the everlasting / Daffodils are” (ll. 14-16) and that he “[d]id not recognise / The nuptial flight of the rarest

ephemera— / [his] own days” (ll. 16-18). These lines convey the impression that the speaker must have thought of himself as more powerful and more ‘alive’ than nature (cf. “I knew I’d live forever”, l. 14), so that he felt it was right to treat nature in a disrespectful way (as explained later by him). At this time, he was not aware that the daffodils, which he appreciated for their beauty, but which he did not treat respectfully enough (as will be shown later), are actually just a small part of nature and that nature as a whole is far more powerful than himself and thus deserves appropriate respect. Thus, at this point in the poem, he still lacks an ecological attitude towards nature that goes beyond appreciating its beauty. Even though the daffodils can only be seen for a short time in spring, they stand for nature as such (cf. “a fleeting glance of the everlasting”, l. 15). Nature has existed longer than him and will even outlive him (cf. “[t]he nuptial flight of the rarest ephemera— / My own days!”), ll. 17-18). As can be seen from the following lines, to his own regret, the speaker did not appreciate the daffodils for their inherent worth at this stage, but only thought of them in terms of (financial) profit: “A dream of gifts—opening their rustlings for me! / I thought they were a windfall. I picked them. I sold / them.” (ll. 20-22). The dry enumerating of events with the anaphora built by the personal pronoun “I” fits the speaker’s ‘egoistic’ and ‘unemotional’ handling of the daffodils that lacks the adequate respect. Due to the way the speaker recounts his encounter with the daffodils, the poem clearly differs from Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; Wordsworth’s poem was found to stress the very positive emotional response to the flowers, the fascination they arouse in the speaker, and even, in parts, puts him and the daffodils at the same level—in an equal position—through the device of personification. While Wordsworth’s speaker gets ‘closer’ to nature, Hughes’s speaker demonstrates his distance to nature with his behavior. The speaker’s telling about his memory of the daffodils and how he treated them can also be linked to Gordon H. Bower’s observation that “[a]n interesting aspect of autobiographic memory is that it is intimately tied to conceptions of *self*—of who and what we are” (27). The speaker recalls his behavior towards the daffodils to distinguish himself from his former attitude and to make clear to the reader that he has changed his way of thinking about the daffodils.

It is then that the speaker finally begins to explain what has led to his change in attitude towards the daffodils (and towards nature in general). When he describes what he felt when looking at the daffodils after he had already picked and sold some, one can sense an increased sensitivity towards the daffodils. This is not only shown in the fact

that his attention is drawn to the daffodils again and that he speaks in a very detailed way about them, but is also striking in his choice of words. The speaker seems to be able to empathize with the flowers during the rain when he uses expressions of hurt and speaks of “soft shrieks” (l. 25), “jostled stems” (l. 26), and “wet shocks” (l. 27). Further, the reference to the daffodils as a “scared, bright glance (l. 30) proves that he becomes more respectful towards the flowers, even attributing feelings to them (cf. “scared”) in addition to the appreciation of their beauty (cf. “bright glance”). Seeing the daffodils in the rain is a decisive moment for him that finally makes him realize that he behaved unwisely every time he cut and sold them all for “sevenpence a bunch” (l. 42):

I brought a defter cruelty. So many times
Slid my fingers down her slenderness,
Felt for the source, her chilly fount,
The watery flicker she peered from,
And nipped her off close to the bulb. (ll. 31-35)

Obviously, the speaker now adopts an attitude towards nature that is in accordance with the main ecological principles, since he becomes aware of the daffodils’ “intrinsic value” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89) and seems to understand that nature is often “*threaten[ed]*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) by human beings. The associations with a female human being (the traditionally ‘weak’ gender), as achieved through the frequent use of the personal pronoun “her” or “she” (cf. l. 32, l. 33, and l. 34) and the image of the “girlish dance-frocks” in the description of the daffodils (l. 28), are also proof that the speaker is slowly beginning to acknowledge the flowers’ fragility and nature’s vulnerability in general. These examples definitely qualify for a deeper analysis in terms of the theory of ecofeminism, which would go beyond the scope of this thesis, though, and cause a shift in focus in this interpretation.

What has been most thought-provoking and influential in his change in attitude towards the daffodils (and towards nature in general) is a dream the speaker has during the night after selling the daffodils, which shows that the memory of the flowers and of his ‘destructive’ and profit-led behavior deeply haunts him. As Rácz rightly notes, this passage “reflects a partly Wordsworthian attitude. The dream presented here expresses ‘emotions recollected’, but not ‘in tranquillity’. Instead of the harmony of nature, stressed by Wordsworth, Hughes emphasizes the role of brutality” (94). So, the speaker mentions, for example, that the daffodils “stayed. That night, on [his] pillow, / [and that] [his] brain was a chandelier of daffodils!” (ll. 44-45). The haunting effect is further underlined in lines 48 to 50: “The soul of all those daffodils, as I killed them, / Had gone to ground inside me—there they were / packed”. That the speaker lends the

daffodils a “soul” is just another means to express that he no longer puts human beings above nature, but rather regards nature as equally ‘alive’, sentient, and worthy of being treated with respect. Having come to this insight, he now dreams of perceiving the daffodils in their minutest detail and with different senses: For example, with attention to their movement, he observes a “flame-stillness” (l. 51) which is in strong contrast to the swaying of the flowers when they still stood on the lawn. Moreover, he intricately studies the visual appearance of the flowers—the “scarf of papery crinkle [...] at / their throats” (ll. 55-56) that has an almost ‘suffocating’ effect, and especially their blossoms, which he describes as looking like “a taffeta knot, undone / And re-tied looser, crumpled” (ll. 58-59) but which are actually a “membrane of solid light” (l. 60). By this, the speaker probably wants to make clear to the reader that a thing’s real worth is often only revealed at second glance and more thorough examination—as here experienced by himself in his dream. This also fits David Lowenthal’s thoughts about memory, namely that “[h]indsight and overview enable us to comprehend past environments in ways that elude us when we deal with the shifting present” (7). Lastly, the speaker also refers to the smell of the flowers in his dream and defines it as “odourless, / More like a deep grave stoniness, a cleanness of stone, / As if ice had breath” (ll. 61-63). In his dream, he becomes aware that he has treated the daffodils almost like in an act of murdering, taking all their original, natural qualities from them; except for their bright color which, in addition to the luminosity that he has always liked so much about the daffodils, could also function as a kind of ‘warning’ here. The result is that “[the daffodils] began to alarm [him]” (l. 64) because of the sudden difference in appearance. That the color of the daffodils always mattered much to the speaker is also expressed in the following lines, when he voices his doubts that the daffodils he sees in his dream are the same as the ones that grew on his patch of land because they look so unrecognizable: “Were these / My free girls, my Saturnalian nunnery / With their bloomers of scrambled egg-yolk [?]” (ll. 64-66). Both the reference to the ‘color’ of Saturn (cf. “Saturnalian nunnery”, l. 64) and the image of the “scrambled egg-yolk” (l. 66) are means to point out the striking color of the daffodils again and to point to the color’s potential to earn admiration. Nevertheless, when comparing the words the speaker uses to describe the color of the daffodils, one can notice that they are still very different from those used by the speaker in Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; the mentioning of the “scrambled egg-yolk” (ibid.) is a rather mundane comparison, if one has in mind the image of the “golden daffodils” (l. 4 in “I Wandered

Lonely as a Cloud”) from Wordsworth’s poem. Since the speaker tries to picture the daffodils as known to him from the past, the choice of words could also be understood as linked to his ‘former’ attitude. Still, one can observe a development in terms of the appreciation of the daffodils in the words Hughes’s speaker uses to refer to them: Later on, he also uses the adjective ‘gold’ in his description of daffodils, but quite differently to “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, this choice of words is not caused by an atmosphere of ease and happiness, but rather by an atmosphere of threat.

When the speaker tries to “picture [the daffodils from his dream] out there—in the garden” (l. 73), the sense of admiration which the flowers usually inspired in him (to a great extent as a result of their color) suddenly changes into a form of awe, or better, serious fear. For example, he states that “[t]hese rigid, gold archangels somehow / Drank up [his] attempt. / They became awful” (ll. 74-76). A little later, one also learns that “[a]s [the speaker] sank deeper, each towered heavier, / Cathedral interior lit, / Empty or all-seeing angel stare / Leaning through [him]” (ll. 79-82). It is very curious that, although he is in a way afraid of the daffodils he sees in his dream, he never describes them (and their fear-arousing potential) in an exclusively negative way. The speaker refers to them as “awful” (l. 76), feels stared at (cf. l. 81), and reveals that they suddenly made him feel small because they “towered heavier” (l. 79) over him, but, at the same time, he also makes use of images which are associated with positive attributes and reverence. This is mostly achieved through imagery from the field of religion in line 74 (cf. “gold archangels”), line 80 (cf. “Cathedral interior lit”), and line 81 (cf. “Empty or all-seeing angel stare”). The fact that he refers to the daffodils as “archangels” (l. 74), basically angels of highest rank, shows that he thinks of the flowers as special (maybe even ‘holy’) and innocent. It can also be seen that he still appreciates the feature he has always liked most about the daffodils, when he associates their striking yellow color with “gold” (ibid.), which highlights the value it has for him. One more mentioning of the word “angel” in line 81 supports the interpretation just given. In this line, the positive and negative descriptions are immediately contrasted: The speaker feels stared at by the daffodils, but he cannot decide whether it is an “[e]mpty or all-seeing angel stare” (l. 81). On the one hand, it is intimidating and frightening because it seems “[e]mpty”, but, on the other hand, the speaker also relates it to a certain knowledge and insight (cf. “all-seeing”). This could be a means to express that the flowers have not ‘forgotten’ what he has done to them, that they are aware of his deeds, suffered from them, and ‘look’ at him with this awareness. Therefore, with this

expression, the speaker also goes one step further than just describing the flowers in terms of their outward appearance by attributing to them the abilities of experiencing, knowing, and remembering. Another positive image from the field of religion mentioned in this context is the “[c]athedral interior lit” (l. 80). Since a cathedral is a place of worship, this image could be seen as just another proof that the speaker has realized the actual worth of the daffodils in his dream and through the emotion of fear. If one compares the words by which the speaker describes the daffodils at the beginning of the poem and in this part, it is noticeable that the style “ranges from the trivial and the comic to the sublime” (Rácz 95). The positive images which are interwoven in the speaker’s expression of his fear, basically all images of innocence, significance and preciousness, are symbolic of the speaker’s ecological enlightenment (regarding the daffodils and nature in general). The fear the speaker experiences in his nightmare is clearly connected to his acts of ‘environmental destruction’—his cutting and selling of the daffodils which he now regrets. Through the fear he experiences in his nightmare, due to the fact that the tables are turned and he finds himself in the position in which the daffodils once were, he comes to understand their actual innocence, worth, and need for protection. The dream itself, the reappearance of the daffodils, is a sign of the power of nature and of how it affects us. In this sense, the dream is also nicely linked to the word “everlasting” (l. 15) mentioned at the beginning of the poem, where the speaker has already voiced his understanding that nature has existed longer than him and that it will also outlive him.

The poem ends with the speaker waking up from his dream which he refers to himself as a “nightmare” (l. 85) from which he “wrenched free” (l. 86) and which left him with “shivers / In the draughty wings of the year” (ll. 90-91). It is striking that the end, with its cold atmosphere (cf. “shivers”, l. 90, and “draughty”, l. 91), is in strong contrast to the warm atmosphere at the beginning of the poem (cf. “[a] cauldron of daffodils, boiling gently”, l. 4). The reader is left uncertain about how the speaker is going to proceed with his behavior towards the daffodils—so far, “[t]he return to nature [...] takes place at the level of the vision only” (Rácz 93). Still, the openness of the poem due to the dash at the end of the final verse, the strong contrast of the poem’s beginning and ending, and the speaker’s enlightenment through the dream, offer hope for a heightened consciousness towards the daffodils and the environment in general as well as for the adoption of adequate measures of protection. Thinking in terms of Zapf’s model of literature as cultural ecology, one could thus see all three dynamic processes

named by him at certain points in the text: The presentation of the speaker's careless behavior towards the daffodils (and nature in general) serves as cultural-critical metadiscourse, the new interest in and appreciation of the daffodils stands for the imaginative counter-discourse and the image of waking up at the end of the poem and its openness (indicated through the dash) might be said to stand for, or at least indicate, reintegrative interdiscourse.

Summarizing, it can be said that Hughes's poem "Daffodils" illustrates nicely how people often make use of nature for their own profit, without thinking about the innate worth of nature and the protection it deserves, which is reminiscent of the anthropocentric view of nature that was already addressed in the theory part of this thesis. The speaker differs in that he has always appreciated the daffodils (nature) and is later conscience-stricken when he reflects upon his deeds and his guilt. Even though the end is inconclusive, the development of the speaker in the poem shows that it is never too late for a change in thinking (and acting), especially when our environment is concerned. The vivid use of imagery in the poem, mostly in the description of the daffodils, serves to highlight the singularity and worth, and later also the 'feelings' or 'experienced burden' of the daffodils, which should help the reader to comprehend that nature is special and deserves respect. Ultimately, the poem also addresses ideas from the field of social ecology, since it should make everyone understand that man is not in a higher position than nature and that a philosophy of equality and wholeness is worth promoting—as in the sense of the theory of deep ecology. The persuasive power of the poem further derives from its structure: The development from the beautiful image of the daffodils in the garden, via the act of cutting and tying up to the images of the nightmare is so contrasting that it addresses the reader's emotions and provokes thought. The uneven length of the stanzas, the visual layout of the verses (some are offset) and the frequent use of dashes could definitely be seen as supporting the speaker's thought process, remorse, and inner unrest at the level of form.

6.6. Grevel Lindop's "The Beck"

The second and last poem that will be analyzed with a particular focus on the interrelationship of nature and memory is Grevel Lindop's "The Beck" from his 1991 poetry collection *A Prismatic Toy*. Just as in Hughes's "Daffodils", the act of remembering an experience in nature or a certain aspect of nature has a special effect on the lyrical I—it takes on the form of a kind of 'epiphany' and is thus imprinted in the

speaker's memory, determining how he keeps on reacting to the natural surroundings. The behavior following from this moment of 'enlightenment' through memory is proof of a strong ecological awareness, which is why these poems by Hughes and Lindop function as ecopoetry and could thus be used to foster environmental thinking and care, because they inspire people to look more deeply into the meaningfulness of experiences in nature and help to understand their long-lasting effects. Although Grevel Lindop is certainly one of the poets featured in this thesis who has not received as much public attention as, for example, Hughes, the recurring theme of nature in his oeuvre makes him an important contemporary figure to look at. On his website, he states Romanticism as an influence on his writing and says that he is "especially happy to talk about [...] landscape and environment" (Lindop, "About" n. pag.). The author's attachment and dedication to these themes is also proven by his publication of *A Literary Guide to the Lake District* from 1993.

In Lindop's "The Beck", the speaker begins the poem by immediately referring to the aspect of nature that has made a lasting impression on him and which is also the reason for the poem's title (as will become clear in the course of the poem).⁸³ He credits that what attracted his attention first in this place in nature "was the boiling of white water" (l. 1).⁸⁴ To help the reader comprehend why the beck he finds himself close to is so remarkable, the speaker uses several different images to point out its special features. As in some of the other nature poems that were analyzed so far, nature is perceived in its complexity—not only in terms of colors, sounds, smells, or movements, but in the interplay of these aspects: In the very first line, for instance, the speaker links color, movement, and sound in his first impression of the beck, when he mentions the "boiling of white water" that he further identifies as "a chant and turmoil in spate" in line 2. While he uses all these expressions to describe the beck as 'bubbling', probably due to its rapid stream, they also contain information about the effect this 'bubbling' has on the speaker. The fact that the water is boiling or 'bubbling' and is thus perceived as "white water" (l. 1) adds a certain mysteriousness to it. It is not clear, like when it is calm and one can see what is going on inside; the white 'foam' covers the water's surface and conceals what is beneath. Due to this feature, the water clearly has something attractive to it—the speaker's curiosity is aroused. Right afterwards, the speaker also brings in the

⁸³ Lindop states that the poem is a result of a view of nature from "overhanging Lingmell Beck in the Lake District, on the right as you walk up towards Sty Head from Wasdale [...] which merged with a dream afterwards" ("A Circumambulation" 68).

⁸⁴ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *A Prismatic Toy*. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991. 80.

aspect of sound, when he further describes the ‘bubbling’ as “a chant and turmoil in spate” (l. 2). As one might expect, the boiling of the water leads to an impression of restlessness and inquietude expressed through the word “turmoil”, but simultaneously it is also perceived as “a chant”, a pleasant, melodious sound. What seems incompatible at first, for it constitutes an oxymoron at the semantic level, is here deliberately chosen to convey the double-quality of the water and its indefinite (curiosity provoking) character. That the speaker pays attention to nature’s complexity is proof of his ecological attitude towards nature, since “complexity is one of [ecology’s] crucial concepts” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89).

It is quite interesting that, apart from the details about the beck, the speaker has not given away any information about the surroundings as such so far. During the whole poem, he focuses mainly on the water, and there is only one short passage, from lines three to eight, in which he mentions other aspects of nature; these are in close vicinity to the beck, though, or can even be said to belong to it. For example, in lines three and four, he states that the beck flows under “a scarlet-clustered rowan / that fluttered unceasingly, as if outside time”. Here again, the speaker combines the impressions of color (cf. “scarlet-clustered”, l. 3) and movement (cf. “fluttered unceasingly”, l. 4), and the fact that he mentions the tree at all shows that its beauty speaks to him in a way. After all, he even goes so far as to ascribe to it a certain unreality, saying that it seems “as if outside time” (ibid.). Nevertheless, the fact that the speaker then sets the motions of the tree in relation to the water and is immediately drawn back to the water afterwards shows that the beck is his main interest. So, he says that it is due to the water and its “beating of spray” (l. 5) that the tree seems “vibrant and motionless at once”. Quite interestingly, just as the speaker described the water in terms of its sounds, namely as “chant” and “turmoil” at the same time (cf. l. 2), the tree is now portrayed similarly in terms of motion: The words “vibrant” and “motionless” also seem incompatible at first, but should convey the unique atmosphere and impression that can be traced back to the water. Thus, this is also a means of conveying that the water has a special power and affects the surrounding nature, just as in the sense of the ecological principle “*everything is connected to everything else*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88). This is perfectly expressed in the following lines as well: The water’s power, liveliness, and freshness are underlined by the speaker saying that “the water [is] foaming as if new-uttered that moment / from the earth’s interior” (ll. 6-7) and that “the lichened rocks” (l. 7) seemed “alive too with the presence of water” (l. 8).

The speaker's growing curiosity regarding the beck is further emphasized when we learn about his desire to taste the water: "I lowered myself into the cleft and drank / from cupped hands with a sudden / fierce thirst, as if I had never drunk water before" (ll. 9-12). The water has inspired in him a sudden longing, almost craving (cf. "fierce thirst", l. 11), which shows that its power and lively character do not only have an influence on the surrounding nature, but also on him as a human being. The taste of the water is very special and unique to the speaker: He states that he had "never [drunk] such stunningly cold, piercingly pure, flavourless and [...] evanescent water [...] until that instant" (ll. 12-15). The uniqueness and particularity of the water is not only highlighted through the single qualities as such, but also structurally through the two striking, and in one case even alliterative (cf. "piercingly pure", l. 13), collocations of adverb and adjective which have a reinforcing effect. The water is described in terms of perfection by the speaker, with only one exception, namely his impression that it might be "evanescent" (l. 14). The evanescent character might be related to the perception of the rapid flow of the water that the speaker referred to at the beginning of the poem, but it is most likely just a means to point out its exceptionality that makes it seem too perfect to be real. On the other hand, maybe the speaker really wants to express that the quality of the water is too perfect to last, using this as an allusion to the issue of environmental pollution. Whether it is due to the one or the other reason that he thinks about the water as "evanescent", what is clear is that he holds the impression so dear that it leads to his wish to keep the memory forever, so that he can always look back on it—no matter when, where, or how busy: "I would think, I promised, / of that water reciting itself without pause / here, wherever I might be, however preoccupied, / tired or bored, I would remember this, / rock, rowan and water" (ll. 15-19). The use of the poetic device of climax in line 19, the successive listing of the three aspects of nature mentioned so far according to their size and importance to the speaker (with the water in last and most meaningful position), harmonizes perfectly with what is expressed content-wise in this part of the poem.

To mention another detail with regard to the connection between content and structure, it should be noted that, with the following line (l. 20), which is offset, there is an implied caesura that fits the change of topic at the level of content. In the upcoming part, the focus is still on the water from the beck, but in the form of a memory in a dream. What is interesting here is that the water is of a completely different nature than during the speaker's first encounter with it. After some months have passed (cf. l. 21),

he dreams of it as “a silent thread falling / from a mountainside above [him], only breaking / to sound and spray when [splashing] on the page of a book / [lying] drenched and open under its downpour” (ll. 21-24). The original quality of the stream, its lively “boiling” (l. 1), white foam, and “the beating of spray” (l. 5) can no longer be found because the water is barely noticeable (cf. “a silent thread”, l. 21). The alliteration formed by the words “sound”, “spray” and “splash” (all to be found in line 23) draws the reader’s attention to the exact aspects of the water that are missing in the dream. Nevertheless, clinging to the memory of the beck and knowing about the water’s real nature, the speaker is immediately driven to trace the water further to see where it comes from, even though it seems different to him. His decision to do so comes from a single experience that has been imprinted in his memory and thus works in a motivating way. However, from his attempt “to climb the tussocked grass and rock / to reach it” (ll. 25-26), the speaker wakes up (cf. “I woke”, l. 26) and faces reality again, seeing in front of him “unblemished pages” (l. 26) which, in his dream, seemed drenched by water. The fact that the speaker has dreamt of the water shows, once more, that the experience at the beck had a strong effect on him and that it is remembered even after several months have passed. That the water appears different in the speaker’s dream from how he had actually experienced it in nature might be symbolic of the liveliness and versatility of the water (and nature in general). Nature is not fixed and does not always stay the same—it changes, for instance, due to weather conditions and human interaction, and thus appears different from time to time and from place to place. Again, the speaker’s way of thinking about nature seems to be in line with the main ecological principles, because in ecological discourse, one premise is the “acceptance of evolution as a fact of natural [...] life” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88). What is most important is that one learns to grasp the meaningfulness and importance of nature and values the experience and insight gained from it, which, directly or indirectly, will have an influence on one’s actions. What the speaker experiences through the dream in the poem can thus be seen as similar to what Lindop regards as vital for his writing of poetry, on the one hand, and for a healthy life in general, on the other hand: “I believe that for the practice of poetry or any other art, or even for living a reasonably sane life, it is vital to have contact with the ‘deep imagination’—the place where our individual insight and creativity connect with universal archetypes and spiritual dimensions” (“About” n. pag.). Even though the speaker fails at reaching the water in his dream, as soon as he is awake again, he is immediately reminded of the original experience

through which he feels encouraged to seek for another one of this kind: “it was time to leave, to begin the next / ascent, unprepared as always, except for the taste / in my mouth of that water about which nothing can be said” (ll. 27-29). He still knows about the real nature of the water and still has “the taste / in [his] mouth” (ll. 28-29) which makes him long to go out into nature and experience it again. Nevertheless, this trip or “ascent” (l. 28) does not necessarily have to be taken literally—the attempt to search for the experience anew is basically about the speaker’s maintaining of his view of nature and his personal understanding of its inherent value, which is achieved via recollection and internalization. Without wanting to take the idea too far, one could also come to the conclusion that the speaker’s final awareness that “nothing can be said” (l. 29) about the water shows that he has ultimately understood that his impression of the water is connected to his very own experience of it, and that there are no fixed words to describe it, since everybody will experience its value differently and because it is subject to change.

Taking everything into account, it can be said that “The Beck” by Grevel Lindop nicely demonstrates the importance of realizing the inherent worth of nature (for example in an outside experience) and remembering it—holding up this memory and the resulting awareness and letting it influence one’s actions. Learning about the experience of the speaker, who has been able to grasp the value of nature (via his encounter with the beck) that has deeply impressed him, readers should be inspired to look for such a moment in nature which eventually will not only be remembered but also affect their behavior (towards the environment). Regarding Zapf’s model of literature as cultural ecology, one could thus see both, the imaginative counter-discourse (the description of the experience in nature) and the reintegrative interdiscourse (as indicated by “the next / ascent”, ll. 27-28), as existent in the text. At least, the poem is an incentive to enter into a relationship with nature and to realize that it needs to be remembered and taken into account when it comes to decisions in our everyday lives. Although “The Beck” might seem a bit anthropocentric at first, revealing, example after example, what nature has to offer to the speaker (best shown in the special quality of the water that satisfies the speaker’s thirst), it is actually much more about the promotion of an ecocentric worldview and the development of a serious concern for the environment (as shown by the long-lasting and influential memory). On a final note, it should be said that, with regard to its form, the poem shows similarities to other poems that deal with water as a topic: As was said for several other poems analyzed in this thesis so far, one

could interpret the frequent run-on lines as resembling the flow of the water that is thematized at the level of content.

6.7. Douglas Dunn's "Woodnotes"

Another topic that has turned out to be relevant during the selection of the nature poems to be analyzed in this thesis is that of identity. In order to find out about the role of identity with regard to nature, Douglas Dunn's poem "Woodnotes" will be examined. The poem was published in his poetry collection *The Year's Afternoon* from 2000 and addresses this issue quite frequently and much more explicitly than other poems. In fact, Kennedy counts it among the "stand-outs in the collection" (73). While the other poems analyzed so far definitely also attend to the issue of identity, because (positive) experiences in nature and one's memories certainly have an influence on it, in "Woodnotes" the subject has a more central role: It will be shown that the poem is still a description of nature at its very core, but that it differs from the other poems explored so far in that the speaker constantly raises questions about how the things he perceives in nature are related to himself and the other way round. Surrounded by nature, the speaker frequently points out to the reader that this setting helps him to see the 'real' of him and to understand what he is and what he is not. Basically, the poem develops into an exploration of the self—a search for one's true identity which seems realizable in and through nature. Since this search for identity also involves an abandoning of categorical thinking, of thinking of man and nature as separate, the poem can also be said to follow the idea of deep ecology in that it promotes a holistic world view and thus functions as a form of ecopoetry.

In the first stanza of the poem, one immediately learns that the speaker's fascination with the place in nature he finds himself in does not simply result from realizing the beauty and uniqueness of the place, but rather from becoming aware of how it affects him. The speaker reveals bits of information about the place he finds himself in, but instead of elaborating on it and giving away more details (as seen in the other nature poems analyzed so far), it is noticeable that he rather focuses on explaining in which ways the natural surroundings have an effect on him. Due to this concentration on the human being's emotions and behavior (the way the speaker reacts to nature) as in contrast to the place as such, the poem's beginning is quite unique and unusual for a 'nature poem'. It is in the very first line that the speaker reveals that he finds himself in a wood, and he immediately adds that, by "[l]ooking into [it], the mind gets lost / In

complicated sameness, on and on” (ll. 1-2) and that “[s]enses grow green and wooden” (l. 3).⁸⁵ The expression of the “complicated sameness” stands for the strange feeling the view of the wood causes in the speaker because he suddenly thinks that his mind and self are similar to it. That this impression does not just last for a brief moment, but is rather persistent, is conveyed through the words “on and on” in line 2. Through his perspective, his standing in nature and “[l]ooking into a wood” (l. 1), the speaker has been enabled to identify with his surroundings: He even goes so far as to say that his “[s]enses grow green and wooden” (l. 3), linking characteristics of nature with himself. This is a quite interesting technique to point out nature’s effect on oneself because it is basically a reverse of the device of personification that was found in many of the other poems analyzed so far. In contrast to highlighting one’s impression of nature’s liveliness and equality to mankind by making it appear ‘human-like’ through expressions of personification, the speaker here applies a kind of *depersonification*, which makes him (here: his senses) seem ‘nature-like’, and thus dissolves the boundaries between man and nature the other way round. The overall intention behind these first lines thus seems to lie in the expression of a unity between the speaker’s self—his mind and senses—and nature. Taking this idea even further, the speaker continues telling about himself seeing “[his] own ghost / Wav[ing] from ground-misted ferns” (ll. 3-4), which shows that he does not only think about nature as being a part of him, but also of himself as being a part of nature. The fact that he speaks of seeing his “own ghost” (l. 3) in front of him in nature further underlines the strangeness of the experience (cf. “complicated sameness”, l. 2) and can also be seen as a result of the unfamiliarly deep introspection it provokes. The sight of the apparition is caused by the speaker’s heightened senses and his strong inner conviction that there is a link between nature and himself. That the “ghost” is gone again “[i]n half the time it takes to blink” (l. 5) could also be interpreted as reality catching up with the speaker: It is impossible for him to see a reflection of him waving at himself—nevertheless, the mentioning of the apparition, the ‘dream-like’ image of him being part of nature, shows that the speaker dearly wishes for this bond with nature. At the moment the speaker realizes his own “sameness” (l. 2) to nature, he is overcome by mixed feelings: “Mind, leaf, / Life, mist, stop together in the soft clock / Within [him], caught on thorns of disbelief / And welcome” (ll. 5-8). The speaker is obviously shocked and surprised (cf. “disbelief”, l. 7) on the one hand, and happy about it (cf. “welcome”, l. 8) on the other hand. Language-wise, the linkage of the speaker and

⁸⁵ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *The Year’s Afternoon*. London: Faber and Faber, 2000. 38-40.

nature is quite cleverly achieved here through the enumeration of the words “[m]ind, leaf / Life, mist” (ll. 5-6), which alternate between aspects associated with a human being and aspects connected to nature, perfectly conveying the mixing of both. Additionally, these words are also linked to one another through their initial letters, with the one appearing in the word connected to a human (e.g. “[m]ind”, l. 5) later also appearing in the word connected to nature (e.g. “mist”, l. 6). Although the speaker is struck with surprise for a moment and everything seems to “stop in the soft clock / Within [him]” (ll. 6-7), a little later he is ready to embrace the impression and to look forward with excitement. The speaker allows for a further bonding with nature, conveyed through the sound of his heartbeat which penetrates the woods: “a life’s *tick-tock, tick-tock* / Delivers its involuntary beats / Into an unthinned forest’s olive light” (ll. 8-10). It is only at the end of the first stanza that the speaker gives away more details about the woods, especially with regard to light and weather conditions as well as to time of day. In addition to the “unthinned forest’s olive light” (l. 10), the speaker mentions that it is “[c]lammy with earth-locked rain” (l. 11), refers to the “high summer heat’s / Low airlessness” (ll. 11-12), and speaks of “dusk dwindling into night” (l. 12). Thinking further about these details, one can say that the image of nature conveyed here is different from the one that can usually be found in nature poems: It is not about the presentation of the most beautiful side of nature, but includes aspects that have something uncomfortable or unpleasant to them (cf. “clammy” and “heat”, l. 11). Also, the place in nature is not visited during daytime (as in many other nature poems), but at dusk. This might also explain why the speaker does not simply present a description of the natural surroundings in the poem, but rather concentrates on conveying how these surroundings affect him because this is what actually causes his fascination. Thus, despite including references to visual impressions, the poem is less about *seeing* and more about *feeling*. Right from the beginning of the poem, one can notice in the description of the felt unity between the speaker and his surroundings his ecological attitude towards nature, since he shares the “holistic world-view” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88) and understands that ““*everything is connected to everything else*”” (ibid.).

In stanza 2, the speaker goes on with elaborating on the apparition, which still haunts him, and the feelings it has aroused. He describes the feeling as a “selfish, inner, pleasurable fright” (l. 13); the oxymoron “pleasurable fright” highlighting his mixed feelings again. The apparition is further referred to as both a “man-shaped mist” (l. 14)

and a “[b]otanic fog” (l. 15) through which the speaker expresses that, for him, there is no boundary between man and nature, and that everything he experiences in the woods is a mixture of both, not allowing categorization. Next, he describes this “second-sight” (ibid.) as “[a] trick of light that says, [he], too, exist[s]” (l. 16). Thus, while the visit in the forest makes him and nature grow closer together, with him becoming more ‘nature-like’ (cf. “[s]enses grow green and wooden”, l. 3), the sight of himself in the ferns has a two-fold function: On the one hand, it expresses the speaker’s wish to feel like a part of nature, but on the other hand, it also makes the speaker aware of his own existence and shows him that he is and can only ‘become one’ with nature to a certain degree, quite similar to the nightingale in Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale”. Even more important to mention in this context is that the apparition does not only work as a reminder of the speaker’s existence, but more particularly of his mortality. From the second stanza onwards, the reason becomes clear for the apparition to be described as a “ghost” (l. 3) and for the whole experience being compared to a near-death experience with a positive overtone. This also fits the following remark by the speaker: Whatever incommunicable threat / Stood in the ferns and waved – knowable fate, / *Memento mori* or my spirit’s sweat / Evaporating – I saw my duplicate” (ll. 17-20). Being reminded of his own mortality by seeing himself as a “ghost” (cf. l. 3) in the woods, the speaker realizes his own small position in the world and gains an understanding that nature—in some ways—is more powerful than him because, for example, the forest will outlive him. In line 21, the speaker gives proof of his mixed feelings again, saying that he is “[a]bject but happy with the sight [he] saw” (l. 21), and then also reveals that this *memento mori* moment provoked by the apparition makes him look back on his past life: The reader learns that there is something the speaker regrets about his past because, all of a sudden, he “sniff[s] the stink of [his] remorse / Flow from [his] years and deeds, fault laced with flaw” (ll. 22-24). Maybe the speaker here regrets that he has thought differently about nature until he came into the wood and had this experience. The visit of the forest has made him long for a unity with nature and has helped him to gain a better understanding of it, but it is possible that he had a different opinion on nature in the past. The speaker’s new outlook on nature is reminiscent of the idea of deep ecology and a refusal of anthropocentrism, which might be in strong contrast to his former view of nature and behavior towards it that he alludes to through the words “deeds”, “fault”, and “flaw” (l. 23). The happening in the woods probably feels like a near-death experience to the speaker because he has learned to give up his old self and old identity

for becoming a new person who values nature, who experiences it more thoroughly and respectfully, and who strives for maintaining a relationship with it. The waving (cf. l. 4) of the apparition could thus also be interpreted in the way that the speaker's 'new self' is waving goodbye to the 'old self'. This would also fit the idea of identity formation through separation in a psychoanalytic sense because "the developing child builds a sense of who it is by distinguishing itself from what it is not" (Clayton and Opatow 5). G. E. H. Hughes, too, has commented on the aspect of identity in Dunn's poetry (by studying different poems, though) and concludes that "[i]t is easily recognised that our sense of what we are comes from our involvement in a world outside our selves" (8), which also corresponds with the impression one gets from "Woodnotes".

Perceivable in this moment of looking backward and forward is a striking silence which the speaker finds worth elaborating on in stanza 3. In his view, the silence is "like music that must not be played" (l. 25), as if it had to "be read with the body posed / At a forbidden instrument" (ll. 26-27). The fact that he compares the silence to music shows that it has a positive effect on him. In fact, it gives him real pleasure, leaving him with a special feeling that he finds difficult to express: "An abstract symphony releasing real / Ethical harmonies until they're signed / As what you cannot say but what you feel" (ll. 30-32). This feeling, marked by "[e]thical harmonies" (l. 31) probably stands for the speaker's newfound relationship to nature that has brought him important insights into the natural world and which will, from now on, determine the behavioral decisions he makes with respect to the environment. In fact, the speaker finally also says that the experience in the forest has led to a form of spiritual development and enlightenment: "And what I didn't know I got to know / And what I learned is what a dead man learns" (ll. 35-36). The reason for the speaker's mentioning of the "dead man" in line 36 is related to the enlightening effect of his experience in nature: Once the time for death has come, one is usually old and has a certain knowledge, experience of life, and wisdom; comparably to a near-death experience, the epiphany moment in nature has allowed the speaker to look back at his concept of nature in the past and thus helped him to attain a similar wisdom and insight (with regard to his understanding of nature). Further, the mentioning of the "dead man" (l. 36) fits the aforementioned idea of the death of his 'old self' (including his former look at nature) that allows for a 'rebirth' (marked by a new view of nature). One could thus say that the speaker's visit to the woods is comparable to what Kaplan and Kaplan define as a "deeply restorative experience" (197), since, despite the "'clearing the head' function" (196), it also "include[s]"

reflections on one's life, on one's priorities and possibilities, on one's actions and one's goals" (197). Further, the speaker's development also matches the claim by Roly Russell et al. that "the way in which we interact with our environment helps guide how we think and are—and thus impacts the core of our well-being" (476).

After this moment of contemplation and (self-)reflection, the speaker feels drawn back to reality in stanza 4: "And then I was back again, the forest's floor / Greener than ever in the hemmed-in vast / Confinedness of the wood" (ll. 39-41). Having found a new relationship to nature and a new way of thinking about it, the speaker now perceives nature more thoroughly and intensely than before. To him, the color of the grass in the forest is particularly striking at this moment, it is "[g]reener than ever" (l. 40), and with the mentioning of the "vast / Confinedness of the wood" (ll. 40-41), the speaker also alludes to the feeling of 'enclosure' that often results from the experience of one's own smallness in the midst of the forest, being surrounded by the large number of tall trees. The speaker now finds himself in the position in which he had just seen the apparition of himself shortly before, this probably being the cause for the following action: "I waved back / At where I'd been while being where / I'd seen him/me" (ll. 41-43). The fact that the speaker has now taken the place of the apparition shows that he has been able to get closer to nature and that he is no longer in the distance (both place-wise and mentally). The gesture of waving back at where he had been standing before—now done by himself and not by the apparition anymore—again underlines the speaker's wish to say goodbye to his 'old self' and to his former, more distanced look at nature. From his new position, the speaker goes on revealing other aspects about the place that prove his newly acquired sensitivity and attention to detail with regard to nature. For example, he next states that "[a] leaf dripped and a black / Defoliated tree creaked like [his] chair / But quietly so that only [he] could hear / (Or so [he] through) its phrases of dead wood / Dismiss themselves" (ll. 43-47). The speaker's sensation is heightened so that he even notices the slightest sounds; interestingly, although he feels that he is the only person far and wide who could hear these sounds, the additional statement in parentheses (cf. "(Or so I thought)", l. 46) also signals a bit of skepticism. This might be a result of the speaker's new conviction that nature, and everything surrounding him, is alive just like him. The consequential effect of the experience of silence and only a few very quiet sounds in the woods is a reinforcement of the speaker's new relationship to nature and his new (ecological) concept of it. Hearing the quiet sounds, he even feels like nature is speaking to him, guiding him to his 'new self'

or ‘new identity’, as the speaker says that “what [the sounds] meant was clear – / revise your life, and use your solitude” (ll. 47-48). Obviously, the atmosphere of silence and the solitude of the place have been essential in causing the moment of epiphany and allowing the speaker to reflect on his past and future with respect to his way of thinking about and behaving towards nature.

In stanza 5, one learns more about how the speaker thinks and feels about the experience in the wood and the changes it has caused in him. By saying that being in this place in nature somehow makes him feel “[e]xilic” (l. 49) and as if he were “shoved into a realm / Outside quotidian experience” (ll. 53-54), he makes clear to the reader that the atmosphere in the wood and the place as such are very different from what he is accustomed to in his everyday life, highlighting the exceptionality of the place. Being aware that the place is so different from all that he knows, the speaker feels slightly uncomfortable (cf. “The feeling hurt me”, l. 50), but, at the same time, he also welcomes this insight because it evokes in him, simultaneously, “a gratitude [...] and a big upsweep / Of thoughts [he] can’t describe but wish [he] could” (ll. 50-52). The whole atmosphere of the place communicates to him “the end of something, or of [him] / And what [he has] done, and what [he does], a stop” (ll. 57-58), which shows that the speaker really realizes that he is in the process of changing—of attaining new knowledge about nature that results in nature-conscious thinking and behavior. With this new ecological attitude and perspective of looking at the world, the speaker continues to reveal more details about his surroundings which also play a decisive role in the speaker’s realization of his ‘transformation’. For example, he mentions, in this context, the overwhelming “grey-green light and mist [...] / In a self-haunted, near-nocturnal rinse” (ll. 55-56), a “[c]ool darkness [that] shivered in [the] leafless tree” (l. 59), and “[a] drip formed on a fern” (l. 60) which he watches drop. One could interpret the last aspect, the dropping of the water, as a signal of movement and progress, indicating the speaker’s own advancement in terms of his newly found identity in nature. The final stanza of the poem, at least, seems to support this interpretation and carries it even further.

In stanza 6 of “Woodnotes”, the speaker continues commenting on the dropping of the water from leaf to leaf, showing that, just as before, he is extremely attentive to detail (even noticing the tiniest sounds) and that there is always a willingness to reflect on these details and to attach meaning and importance to the things he perceives. Again, this is a proof of his ecological attitude, since he values “the *diversity* of life and [...]

the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89). So, for instance, he states that he can even hear that “there is rhythm” (l. 63) in the “[w]ater descending from / One leaf to another in the laddered air” (ll. 61-62). Obviously, the speaker listens very carefully to the dropping water, as if there were some hidden meaning in it. It is this rhythm which makes the speaker sink more into contemplation and finally conveys to him the impression of having understood the ‘essence’ of all life in nature. From the rhythm of the dropping water, the speaker concludes that the “[w]ater is careful, and leaves are careful too, / Helping each other on the leaf-cupped cliff” (ll. 66-67), ascribing, again, attributes to nature that prove the speaker’s comprehension of nature’s liveliness and maybe even his belief in its ‘social character’ (cf. “careful”, l. 66, and “helping”, l. 67). He immediately points out to the reader that the dropping of the water symbolizes to him what nature really is all about: “That is existence, down from the high blue / Through the green, and into the supporting earth” (ll. 68-69). Through paying attention to the details in nature and reflecting upon them, the lyrical I has been successful in grasping the ‘real nature’ of the natural world; however, only by making an attempt to break up the hierarchical categories of ‘man’ and ‘nature’, and due to his open-mindedness towards developing a new relationship to the natural environment. Interestingly enough, it is nature that is associated with “existence” in the end, while the whole poem is full of examples revealing the speaker’s doubts of his own existence (e.g. the apparition) and his experience of his own being is even comparable to a near-death situation at certain points. Maybe this shows that, ultimately, he has found nature to be far more ‘lively’ and to be the real expression of existence: The wood will probably outlive the speaker, and due to water, as a life source, trees and plants will keep on growing, if they are left to do so. Although visiting nature has led the speaker to new insights about nature and existence, he does not presume that he has understood everything: “To work this out would show me as a fraud – / All life’s design as birth and then rebirth. / It takes more than religion to make God.” (ll. 70-72). He seems to accept that existence in general and the existence he has found in nature are probably too complex to be fully understood. The moment of enlightenment has brought new insights about nature and existence, but it does not suffice for grasping these concepts in their entirety (cf. “It takes more than religion to make God”, l. 72). The reference to God in the last line of the poem could also be a sign of the speaker’s conviction that the marvels of nature are, in a way, also linked to a higher power—that all this cannot simply have come out of nowhere, but

that a higher power must be responsible for it and that its 'presence' can be felt in nature.

As a conclusion, it can be said that, despite its pastoral elements, Douglas Dunn's poem "Woodnotes" is not, in the first place, a praise of nature and its beauties, as it is common in many other 'nature poems', but rather a demonstration of how one can find a deeper understanding of and connection with nature. It thus serves as an example of environmental psychologists' belief that people go out into nature because they "seek growth" (R. Gifford 320). As Robert Gifford says, for people, "[i]t is an opportunity to develop themselves and learn what the environment has to teach them. This growth can be in skills, knowledge of the woods, self-knowledge, self-actualization, or in one's spiritual domain" (320). As shown in the poem, it can be achieved by spending time in the natural environment and showing a willingness to learn from the experience as well as to give up hierarchical thinking with regard to the categories of 'man' and 'nature', as in the sense of a holistic world view. This conclusion goes well with Kennedy's saying that the whole collection *The Year's Afternoon* "is a meditative collection, mostly subdued, down-at-the-mouth, and (like most books of verse nowadays) self-centered" (70). Although there is definitely a stronger focus on the self in the poem than in Tomlinson's "Below Tintern", "Woodnotes" is as much about the observer as about the observed because it is only due to the nature of the place that the speaker's ecological development is made possible. The consequence for the reader is to "replace the poet as viewer of the landscape" (Burnside 207):

T]he poem of place speaks of the relationship of the individual to a specific place at a particular point in time, and invites the reader to share this relationship. The lyric invites its reader to identify, not with the poet, or with the poet's experience, but with the space in which that experience unfolds (Burnside 206-207).

In "Woodnotes", it is clear throughout the poem that, by exploring the place, both physically and mentally, the speaker realizes his own 'smallness' amidst nature and understands nature to be the essence of all life—this being central for all efforts of saving the environment. By presenting the enlightening moment in nature along with the 'death' of the speaker's 'old self/identity', which causes the birth of a 'new self/identity', one is reminded of man's mortality and of nature's strength in outliving a human being, just as of the fact that it is always possible, and of course desirable, for people to change their mindset and behavior regarding nature for the positive. The educative function of the poem and its power in conveying to the reader an idea of the speaker's feelings in nature (which is why it qualifies as ecopoetry) fits Dunn's idea of

the craft of poetry: “What I want to suggest is that because poetry is concerned with the rendering of emotion and intelligence, then, from a moral point of view, the craft of poetry is very deeply implicated in the ethical quality of these renditions” (99).

6.8. Ted Hughes’s “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’”

A completely different and particularly contemporary attempt of helping readers of literature to enter a new relationship with nature and of becoming aware of its innate worth and need of protection is achieved through poems dealing with the topic of environmental pollution in a natural setting. Instead of presenting to the reader, in a celebratory tone, the beautiful aspects of nature, with the aim of broadening the reader’s mind regarding nature’s diversity and inherent beauty (as is common for ‘nature poems’), poems that focus on environmental pollution appeal to the reader’s environmental conscience from a totally different perspective, but with a similar purpose: By revealing examples of environmental destruction and pointing out the gradually declining appreciation of nature (mostly due to the thirst for progress), they make the reader aware of the dangers of such a development, comprehend the importance of the environment for all life forms on the planet, and, in the best case, show a motivation to take appropriate measures and thus help to protect the environment in the long term. Ted Hughes himself states that “[i]t’s extremely difficult to write about the natural world without finding your subject matter turning ugly” (qtd. in Twiddy 263), but that he tries with his poems to take “what is depressing and destructive [...] into a realm where it becomes healing and energizing” (ibid.). In fact, some critics regard Hughes as “[t]he contemporary poet who has most rigorously and consistently examined the way Western culture has become alienated from the natural world” (Roberts and Gifford 173). The efficiency of the poems in doing so probably results from the drastic images of destruction that address the reader’s emotions in a very direct and straightforward way. These images are thus perfect examples of the cultural-critical metadiscourse as defined by Zapf in his theory of literature as cultural ecology, and can also be seen as related to the powerful metaphor of apocalypse as a means of consciousness-raising in environmental literature. Although the city poems from the Victorian Period have shown that environmental pollution was already a topic of interest which was picked up in poetry back then, the contemporary poems dealing with this topic show that there has been a shift from presenting pollution in the realms of the city to revealing the actual signs of environmental destruction as experienced in

nature. The first poem that will be analyzed in this context is Ted Hughes's "1984 on 'The Tarka Trail'"—a two-part poem from the author's poetry collection *River*, first published in 1983.⁸⁶ As already mentioned in the introduction, Hughes had a very close relationship to nature, and to rivers in particular (due to his fishing activities), which has been decisive in his motivation to write a poem about the pollution of one of the rivers he visited and the adoption of political actions related to this issue.⁸⁷ The following analysis will thus show that "1984 on 'The Tarka Trail'" is not just a perfect example of ecopoetry that functions in an alarming way, but also a highly informative text with potential to stimulate action about environmental pollution. Thus, Gifford is probably right when he says that "really communicating to readers the scope of the environmental crisis we face today depends on integrating the talent for literary writing with a real knowledge of environmental science and real experience of environmental activism" ("Rivers and Water" 76).

Right at the beginning of the first part of the poem, the speaker makes clear to the reader that there is something wrong with the river that he is going to talk about, by referring to its color which is striking to him. While a shade of blue is the color that is usually associated with water, he states that the river he looks at "is suddenly green – dense bottle green. / Hard in the sun, dark as spinach" (ll. 1-2).⁸⁸ The reference to the green color immediately evokes associations with foulness and dirt, and the speaker's additional remark that the color seems very dark (cf. "dense bottle green", l. 1, and "dark as spinach", l. 2) also highlights that the water does not look fresh and clear, but rather obscure and filthy. Likewise, the fact that the water does not really flow, but is more or less stagnant and 'heavy' or thick (cf. "Hard in the sun", l. 2, and "spinach", *ibid.*) also proves that the water quality of the river is problematic. Adding to the unfortunate sight of the river is the fact that it appears very dried-out, as becomes clear from the speaker's mentioning of the "[d]rought pools bleach[ing] their craters" (l. 3). One further learns that what can be seen from the ground of the river in these spots where there is not much water is quite unsettling and alarming: "The river's floor is a

⁸⁶ A little later, *River* appeared as a revised version in *Three Books*.

⁸⁷ As Gifford writes, Hughes has always had a great concern for rivers, since he already experienced the "pollution of the rivers of [his] childhood—first the Calder in West Yorkshire and then the Don in South Yorkshire" ("Hughes's Social Ecology" 84). When Gifford "asked Ted Hughes to tell [...] the story of his 'greening' as a poet, he linked his reading of an article about marine pollution in the journal *The Nation* in 1959 when he was in America, and then Rachel Carson's exposure of the damage done by pesticides, *Silent Spring* (1962), with his experience of the rivers of his childhood ("Hughes's Social Ecology" 86).

⁸⁸ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Three Books: Remains of Elmet, Cave Birds, River*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993. 118-121.

fleece – / Tresses of some vile stuff / That disintegrates to a slime as you touch it / Leaving your fingers fouled with a stink of diesel” (ll. 4-7). Obviously, the problem with the river is a serious pollution of the water by diesel fuel products, and in order to highlight the seriousness of the situation, the speaker makes use of several judgmental expressions of repulsion and outrage caused by the sight (cf. “vile stuff”, l. 5, “slime”, l. 6, “fouled”, l. 7, and “stink”, l. 7). From the first stanza already, it becomes clear that the condition of the river is critical in many respects: Its impairment can be felt visually, olfactorily, and by touching it.

In stanza 2, the speaker further investigates the causes of the water pollution and clarifies straightforwardly that the problem is man-made, revealing his agreement with the premise of ecology that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature:

The river’s glutted – a boom of plenty for algae.
A festering olla podrida, poured slowly.
Surfactants, ammonia, phosphates – the whole banquet
Flushed in by sporadic thunderbursts
But never a flood enough to scour a sewer,
Never enough to resurrect a river. (ll. 8-13)

The only ‘flood’ that the river experiences every once in a while (cf. “sporadic thunderbursts”, l. 11) is a flood of “[s]urfactants, ammonia, [and] phosphates”—wastewater produced by man which gets into the river and is extremely harmful for all forms of life in the river and limits plant growth (cf. “a boom of plenty for algae”, l. 8). The speaker refers to this harmful mixture with the words “festering olla podrida” which fits quite well in this context, since the Spanish dish literally means ‘rotten pot’ and also typifies the idea of the ‘pot-pourri’ of the waste products. The sad insight at the end of the stanza is that the situation will not change for the better and might even become worse, since the bursts of wastewater cannot clear the riverbed for fresh and uncontaminated water, since they are “never enough to scour a sewer, / Never enough to resurrect a river” (ll. 12-13), and, of course, because they are man-made and a ‘resurrection’ of the river would require a change in man’s behavior.

The next stanza includes even more examples that describe the river’s critical condition and the speaker’s reaction to it: So, he states, for instance, that “[a] bottleful is like sap, a rich urine” (l. 14) and refers to the river as a “ditch-carcass, a puddled horror – / Bile draining from rags, the hulk of ribs” (ll. 20-21). It is increasingly made clear that the speaker is not just shocked and appalled by the impressions resulting from

the sensational experience of the river (the sight, the smell, etc.), but rather by the realization of man's role in this context and the awareness that he is indeed looking at a 'dying' river. By bringing in words which are connected to the human body (cf. "bile", l. 21, and "ribs", l. 21), he makes use of personification and thus makes the river appear just as sensitive to harm and as 'mortal' as a human being. The speaker also finds it important to mention that "[d]own near the estuary" (l. 16), the water "goes into the mains" (ibid.), pointing to the fact that, after all, everyone will have to suffer from the water pollution. It is also striking that the speaker emphasizes the river's helplessness and subjection to the situation through his remark that "nothing can help the patient" (l. 17), by which he makes clear, once again, that it is only man who can act and do something about the river's pollution.

In stanza 4, one learns why the speaker has come to the river in the first place, namely for the purpose of fishing (as indicated by the "fishing ladder" in line 23), and the description of an experience with his fishing partner Charlie makes his account even more personal, credible, and strong in getting the message across to the reader. It is the discovery of a mussel which first leads to a brief moment of joy and curiosity, but then, abruptly, reminds both of the severity of the pollution problem. The mussel is first described with the help of expressions that underline its inherent worth and beauty (cf. "pearly gates", l. 25, "curtained uvula", l. 26, "Queen of the River", l. 26, and "silken chamber", l. 27), due to what the fishermen expect to find inside, but when they open it, the sight of what is inside immediately causes a change in the speaker's choice of words. He speaks of "[a] yawn of putrid phlegm" (l. 28) and a "stench [that] hit [them]" (l. 29). It is also added that his friend Charlie was so shocked by it, that he "yelled / And flailed it from his fingers as if it had burnt him" (ll. 29-30). In the other poems analyzed so far, animals were often mentioned to point to "the positive aspects of human bonds with animals" (Lawrence 50), but here we can see that poetry "also speaks to the darker side of our interactions with them—exposing the tragedy of cruelty toward our fellow creatures" (ibid.). Although the sight of the mussel has not led to any kind of physical hurt, one could interpret this reaction in the way that it has caused emotional pain, since Charlie too has come to the painful conclusion that the river is dying: "'God! The river's dead! Oh God! / Even the mussels are finished!'" (ll. 32-33). The mentioning of the mussel is indeed quite effective in underlining the message of the poem: The fact that even such a small living being, which also has a protecting shelter, is affected by the pollution of the water shows that the problem is extremely deep-seated and further

reflects the speaker's awareness of the ecological principle that, in an ecosystem, "everything is connected to everything else" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 88).

This deep-rootedness and the severity of the situation are further explained in the following stanzas of the poem which the speaker begins by saying that "[t]he tale of a dying river / Does not end where you stand with the visitors / At a sickbed, feeling the usual / Nothing more than mangled helplessness" (ll. 34-37). He here speaks of himself and his fishing friend, who feel rather helpless in this situation, but who are nevertheless aware of the pollution's level and the need for adequate reaction. They both know that one "cannot leave this hospital" (l. 38) and it is particularly this choice of words from the field of the hospital (cf. "sickbed", l. 36, and "hospital", l. 38) in stanza 5 which gives proof of the fishing friends' concern and willingness to care with regard to the river. In order to further point out why this issue needs to be tackled and cannot simply be ignored, the speaker becomes more explicit regarding the string of consequences related to the water pollution: For example, he refers to "Peter, the good corn farmer" (l. 39) who "with his three plus / Tons of quality grain to the acre [...] [h]eaps the poisons into you too" (ll. 39-43). The direct address of the reader through the personal pronoun "you" (l. 43) is a clever device of evoking compassion and concern on the part of the reader and to express, once more, that everyone will suffer from the consequences in the long run, even if it is not immediately felt or seen. This clearly echoes Hughes's view which he once explained as follows:

Most people I talk to seem to defend or rationalise the pollution of water. They think you're defending fish or insects or flowers. But the effects on otters and so on are indicators of what's happening to *us*. It isn't a problem of looking after the birds and bees, but of how to ferry human beings through the next century. The danger is multiplied through each generation. We don't really know what bomb has already been planted in the human system (qtd. in Gifford, "Hughes's Social Ecology" 86).

The contamination comes subtly and in order to convince the reader of it, he refers to more examples, hereby giving proof of his own comprehensive understanding and realistic assessment of the situation. The speaker first refers to the "upriver neighbor" (l. 44) of farmer Peter who "[w]ades through slurry and silage" (l. 45) and adds that, in contrast to his father, who "[m]ilked a herd of twenty" (l. 46), "he milks ninety – / Oozing effluent 'equal to the untreated / Sewage of a city the size of Gloucester'" (ll. 46-48). With the help of the exaggeration in these lines, he wants to stress the seriousness of the consequence of such agricultural behavior, but then, on the other hand, he also makes clear that the farmer Peter and his neighbor are clearly

“overwhelmed” (l. 44): They have probably not deliberately decided for these environmentally unfriendly procedures out of conviction, but may have been forced to give in due to economic competition and pressure coming from big companies (cf. ll. 41-42). At this point, the poem can also be said to address questions of social ecology because it shows that environmental problems may have their origins in social structures, hierarchies, capitalism, or political decisions. In a way, the message conveyed in this passage is also similar to Hughes’s view of the human-nature relation which, according to Lidström, includes the idea that, “[a]s humans separate themselves from a close connection with the natural environment, they damage their own inner nature as well as their surroundings” (142). The speaker’s dissatisfaction with the irresponsibility on the part of the farmers can clearly be felt, though: In stanza 8, when he elaborates more on the farmer Peter, the accusation is expressed via means of irony, as, for instance, when he calls him a “clean corn farmer, nature protector” (l. 49), but immediately afterwards reveals his environmentally unfriendly behavior. Of course, he is exactly the opposite of a “clean corn farmer”, since, as the speaker states, he “[h]as measured his medicines towards that maximum yield / Into your dish for years” (ll. 54-55). Furthermore, it is said that farmer Peter “returned / Over his corn (which now, near ripe, seems burned / oak-dark with some fungus) thirteen times / Between the drill and the reaper” (ll. 56-59) to point out to the reader that he is not growing his corn naturally. In a last step, he takes this argument to the extremes by, once again, addressing the reader (or, to be more precise, the people who eat the food grown by farmer Peter) and making him or her feel betrayed as well:

Three hundredweight of 20-10-10 to the acre,
 A hundredweight and half straight Nitram.
 Pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, the grand slam –
 Each times twenty gallons to the acre
 Into your dish, with top-ups. And slug-pellets
 A bonus, with the rest, into your cup
 (Via the lifeless ditch – meaning your tap).
 Now you are as loaded with the data
 That cultivate his hopes, in this brief gamble
 As the river is – (ll. 60-69)

The speaker confronts the reader with an overload of very detailed information on the yield-increasing measures taken by farmer Peter, listing names (cf. “Nitram. / Pesticides, herbicides, fungicides”, ll. 61-62) and numbers (cf. “Three hundredweight”, l. 60, and “twenty gallons”, l. 63) one after the other, so that he or she will feel overwhelmed and thus, in effect, even more shocked. By adding credibility to his accusation through informative value and addressing the reader’s emotions so directly,

the speaker is not only successful in making him or her aware of the fact that he or she is a victim to the farmer's procedures as well, but—because of this achieved moment of shock—also in encouraging him or her to reflect on the farmer's behavior. By the end of the passage, one should come to the conclusion that, as much as the paragraph is loaded with information about farmer Peter's environmentally unfriendly procedures, as much as everyone already suffered from these methods. Ultimately, the reader (or better, the consumer of farmer Peter's food) is put at the same level with the river: "Now you are as loaded with the data [...] [a]s this river is —" (ll. 68-69). The use of the dash at the end of the passage fulfills the function of making the addressee pause for a moment and reflect on the statement.

Interestingly enough, in the final stanza, the speaker comes to farmer Peter's defense again, but only in so far as to say that he, too, is a victim caught in this vicious circle (cf. "as he is too, / He can't escape either", ll. 70-71). Farmer Peter's and his wife's agricultural actions are determined by economic competition and financial pressure and they probably see no other solution than giving in and accepting yield increasing measures—even if there are negative consequences for the environment (and, lastly, for all living beings). The last stanza nicely illustrates the felt helplessness on part of the farmer couple: "He can't escape, nor can his lively young wife, / Who laughs if you ask them why they do what they do / (Her voice ventriloqual, her shoulders jerking on their strings) / 'But the children have to be educated.'" (ll. 71-74). Nevertheless, the wife's final remark that "the children have to be educated" (l. 74) shows that she is aware of the problem and thinks that change is possible only through education of the younger generation, especially by contributing to the development of environmental consciousness and responsibility.

After this first part of "1984 on 'The Tarka Trail'", which has just been analyzed, the poem continues with a second part that could generally be characterized as an elegy for the river. The elegiac character, of course, fits well with the idea of the 'dying' river and the vocabulary from the field of the hospital that was mentioned before. It is here that the name of the river that the speaker refers to is given for the first time: According to the poem's title, the river must be situated near the Tarka Trail and because of the mentioning of the word "*Taw*" in line 78, it is most likely that the speaker refers to the River Taw. With the following lines, he probably refers back to the times before the water became contaminated: "Taw meant simply water. What was her true name" (ll. 78-79). That the speaker refers to the River Taw would also go well with the

mentioning of the word “Nymet” (l. 75) at the very beginning of this part of the poem. It is, in fact, an ancient name for the River Yeo in Devon, England, which is a tributary of the River Taw (cf. Hooke 46). As “Nymet” is actually an old word for a sacred place (cf. Hooke 46ff.), it could be used here to point to the ‘sacred’ character of the river—its being worthy of protection. Back then, when the water was still free from waste, it could really be referred to as “*water*” (l. 78) and the speaker suddenly remembers the good old times: For example, he thinks of the fish that could be found in the river (cf. “Of eel-wreaths, [...] sea-new salmon”, ll. 86-87). Through rhetorical questions, like “Where is she now?” (l. 90), he clearly expresses that he misses this ‘liveliness’ of the river. He knows the answer to this question, because all this ‘liveliness’ is gone now, and thus states that the river, as he remembers it, is “[a] fairy / Drowned in the radioactive Irish Sea” (ll. 91-92). For him, the river, as known to him, is not ‘real’ anymore, but rather a dream-like idea (cf. “fairy”, l. 91). His sharp criticism is further expressed when he continues that “[h]er womb’s been requisitioned / For the cloacal flux, the accountancy curse / Of the Express Dairy Cheese Factory –” (ll. 95-97), pointing out, once more, that the river is a victim of industrial production and decisions of people in power who ignore the negative consequences for the environment. It is striking that the river is no longer gender-neutral in the second part of the poem (as it was the case in part one), but feminine, as can be seen from the frequent use of the pronouns “she” and “her” as well as from words like “womb” (l. 95). This goes well with the elegiac, more personal, tone and shows that the speaker thinks of the river in terms of a human being with feelings, a certain vulnerability, and a need for protection. Again, a poem that might be interesting to discuss also for scholars of ecofeminism.

Next, the speaker, however, also indicates that hope is not completely lost yet—although he has said that the river that was familiar to him is no longer there, he feels that the ‘soul of the river’ is not totally gone: After using the pronouns “she” and “her” with regard to the river, the speaker now makes use of an even more explicit device of personification and states that the river “[m]ourns on the town bridge [...] / Over her old home, now her grave” (ll. 100-101). With the help of this personification of the river and the mentioning of the mourning, the speaker clearly appeals to the reader’s empathy and wants him or her to commiserate. That the speaker does not really know what to do and feels helpless himself is underlined by the constant shifts between his references to the river’s ‘death’ and the mentionings of its ‘will to live’, as can be seen from the following passage: She rots / But still stirs – a nightly, dewy spectre, / Nameless

revenant / In her grave-shroud, resurrected / By her maternal despair / For her doomed parr” (ll. 103-108). Words like “rots” (l. 103) and “grave-shroud” (l. 106) remind the reader of the idea of ‘death’, while expressions like “still stirs” (l. 104), “resurrected” (l. 106) are reminiscent of the speaker’s hope for recovery and revitalization. The speaker’s personification of the river is taken to another level here as well, since the river is not only personified or feminized, but is now also ascribed a maternal role, characterized by parental care: “She wipes their [the fish’s] lips / of the stuff that weeps / From her curdled dug since it became / The fistula of a thousand farms” (ll. 108-111). The presentation of the river as a mother who loses her child is probably intended to further heighten the reader’s empathy.

Since the second part of “1984 on the ‘Tarka Trail’” began with thoughts about the river’s names (cf. first stanza of the second part), which then led on to a discussion about the river’s real character (cf. stanzas 2 to 8 of the second part), the speaker’s return to the initial question of naming in the final stanza creates a closed form: “Now she truly can be called: Sewer. / (More truly: The Washer at the Ford. / As in the old story. / The death-rags that she washes and washes are ours.)” (ll. 112-115). The final return to the expression “[s]ewer” (l. 112), which was already used at an earlier point in the poem (cf. l. 12), implies the speaker’s very negative impression of the current state of the river—in fact, he believes that it is not a river anymore, as it is nothing more than a wastewater canal. With the final remark in parentheses, he even becomes more pessimistic regarding the river’s—and the people’s—future: By correcting himself and concluding that the river should rather carry the name “The Washer at the Ford”, the speaker refers to a mythical figure of “Irish, Scottish, and Welsh oral tradition” that functions as a “death omen” (“Washer at the Ford” n. pag.). Addressing the reader directly just one more time (cf. “The death-rags she washes and washes are ours”, l. 115) at the very end of the poem and conveying, in this bitter way, that man, after all, will be the victim, is a very clever choice, since the reader will automatically reflect on the things said and think about his or her own position, responsibility, and the necessity to take action.

As a note on the form of the poem, it should be said that the irregular length of the stanzas in the first part could be interpreted as representing the chaos with regard to the river (the contamination, the waste, the drought pools, etc.). Part one also includes a large number of dashes, which could be used to express the shock the speaker experiences while recounting the unfortunate developments. The dashes also give the

reader time to pause and think. In the second part, on the other hand, there is a consistent use of quatrains, which fits the elegiac character, but since the rhyme and the iambic pentameter usually found in the elegy are missing, part two still signals that things are ‘out of order’. Nevertheless, the frequent run-on lines, simulating the former flow of the river, nicely reflect the content: In certain ways, the ‘real’ river can still be felt. It is stated that it “[m]ourns on the town bridge” (l. 100) and “still stirs” (l. 104) and this ‘existence’ is also conveyed via *enjambments*.

Summarizing, it can be said that Ted Hughes’s “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’” is a perfect example of a new-generation ‘nature poem’ that sheds light on the ‘ugly’ side of nature (environmental pollution and destruction), with the aim of leading to a new ecological awareness that might bring about individual and collective action in terms of environmental protection. It is therefore a perfect example of what Gifford says about Hughes’s poetry, namely that it “has challenged our urbanised, post-industrial, denatured society by making, first, images and, later, myths, that would reconnect our own natural energies with those at work in the external natural world” (“Gods of Mud” 129). Although, this form of ecopoetry speaks very directly to a reader’s emotions, the success of such poems does not only lie in the shocking images and descriptions: These are not included for the reason of accusation or lament, but rather for the purpose of education. This is because learning is the prerequisite for environmentalism: It is only through developing a capability of empathy and a certain knowledge about how nature has actually changed over the last centuries that one can develop a more environmentally friendly lifestyle and influence those of others. The poem is thus a good example of what David W. Gilcrest regards as central to “the making of the ecological text” (12) and most worth discovering, namely “the kinds of artistic persuasives, and in particular logical and emotional appeals (traditionally, *logos* and *pathos*), found in ecological poetry” (ibid.). Ted Hughes, who often went fishing himself and has also been politically active with regard to water protection, thus seems like just the right person to share his knowledge and own experience with his readership, making a contribution to contemporary ecopoetry with a highly informative and educational value.

6.9. Philip Larkin’s “Going, Going”

The next poem that will be analyzed with regard to the presentation of environmental pollution is Philip Larkin’s “Going, Going” which was originally “commissioned by the

Department of the Environment for its publication *How do you want to live?* (1972)” (Press 141) and intended to convey a strong environmental message. When Larkin wrote the poem in 1972, it first appeared under the title “Prologue” with a few instances of Larkin’s harsh criticism being deleted because it was “too near the truth” (Lee n. pag.) and therefore probably too shocking or offending to the public. However, a little later, Larkin included the poem in its original form in his poetry collection *High Windows*, retitling it “Going, Going”. Unlike Hughes’s poem about environmental pollution, which was just analyzed, “Going, Going” is not actually set in nature, where one is immediately confronted with the examples of environmental destruction, but it instead presents a theoretical examination of the issue. Moreover, the poem differs from Hughes’s poem in that it constantly juxtaposes the idea of environmental degradation to images of advancing modernization. Therefore, the poem’s persuasive power does not lie primarily in its method to convince the reader of the seriousness of environmental destruction (through shock and compassion), but rather in demonstrating the link between ecocide and man’s incessant thirst for progress.

It is right at the beginning of the poem that the speaker already makes clear that his original belief in nature’s everlastingness has been lost: He says that he “thought it would last [his] time – / The sense that, beyond the town, / There would always be fields and farms, / Where the village louts could climb / Such trees as were not cut down” (ll. 1-5).⁸⁹ The use of the past tense (cf. “thought”, l. 1) is proof that his belief that nature would last forever (or, at least, longer than he would exist) belongs to the past and no longer holds.⁹⁰ In this passage, the speaker not only sets the tone for the following stanzas, but he also introduces the pattern that runs through the rest of the poem, namely a contrasting of nature and city (or town). Although, content-wise, these very first lines are mainly concerned with the realization of the loss of nature, the speaker alternates between references to nature and references to the town at the level of language: From the recognition of the “town” in line 2, he goes on to the mentioning of the “fields and farms” in line 3, until he brings in the “village louts” in line 4, and finally tells about the “trees” in line 5. This scheme of alternation already hints at the connectedness of town or city life, on the one hand, and the loss of nature, on the other hand, which the speaker addresses throughout the whole poem and which proves that he has “always been aware

⁸⁹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Collected Poems*. Ed. Anthony Thwaite. 5th ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989. 189-190.

⁹⁰ As Bate notes, Larkin was “prescient about the loss of England’s flower-rich hay meadows: since the Second World War, no less than ninety-seven per cent of their acreage has gone” (*The Song of the Earth* 6).

of an encroaching urbanization of the countryside” (Storey 237). Further, the reader learns from this stanza that, in the past, when the speaker still believed that nature “would last [his] time” (l. 1), he was already aware of the difference between these two places, but still convinced of the possibility of their coexistence: For example, from his mentioning of the fact that, in nature, there were still trees to be found standing, one can tell that, in other places (as, for instance, in the town), trees were cut and early signs of environmental destruction did already exist. Still, back then, these signs were probably rather small in number and not as alarming, which is why the speaker was still optimistic with regard to the future of the environment. That he values nature as a beneficent place and alternative to the town is also expressed through the alliteration in “fields and farms” (l. 3). The highlighting effect of the alliteration could be traced back to the speaker’s fascination with nature and the resulting need to express how special it has always seemed to him.

Connecting the first and the second stanza through an *enjambment* in line 6, the speaker continues his line of thought by referring to the construction of buildings in places in which one could formerly only find wild nature. He states that he “knew there’d be false alarms / In the papers about old streets / And split-level shopping, but some / Have always been left so far (ll. 6-9). The fact that he makes use of the past tense again (cf. “knew”, l. 6) underlines, once more, the speaker’s awareness that he was wrong about his estimation (and hope) regarding the future developments of nature. At some point in the past, he was convinced that nature could ‘put up’ with the construction of “split-level shopping” (l. 8) that would mean a destruction of parts of nature and the “old streets” (l. 7). This is why he took the announcement of such construction plans in the newspapers as “false alarms” (l. 6) and tries to explain his (former) optimistic attitude by saying that, in the past, there was always hope remaining because nature never seemed to vanish completely (cf. “but some / Have always been left so far”, ll. 8-9). Also, the speaker has thought for a long time that one could just escape from the town or city for a retreat into nature whenever one had the impression of being too ‘constricted’ and felt the need to be in contact with the natural world again: According to him, the general attitude was as follows: “[W]hen the old part retreats / As the bleak high-risers come / We can always escape in the car” (ll. 10-12). Besides the irony of using a car (which is in itself a danger to the environment) for a retreat into nature, the idea of escaping is reminiscent of not acknowledging the seriousness of the situation. Throughout the years, the speaker has lived with the conviction that nature is still there,

although it was actually vanishing right in front of his eyes. In this time, he has obviously not been successful in realizing that the situation requires (re)action, but the use of the past tense in the verbs of line 1 and line 6 as well as the negatively connoted expression of the “bleak high-risers” (l. 11) indicate that he now assesses the situation differently. John Bayley is definitely right in concluding that, in a way,

Larkin’s absorption of the past is itself a device for turning it also into the present. All the topoi of early nineteenth-century romanticism—the remote enchantment, the unattainable vision [...] are realised in his accurate account of today’s [...] deprivations, the sense of ‘our falling short’ (63).⁹¹

In stanza 3, the speaker continues explaining his former attitude: He states that he firmly believed in the ‘power’ of nature, saying that he thought that “[t]hings are tougher than we are, just / As earth will always respond / However we mess it about” (ll. 13-15). The speaker also includes the reader at this point, addressing him or her directly through the use of the pronoun “we” (cf. l. 13 and l. 15) and thus pointing out the collective responsibility for developments affecting the environment. As a symbolization of his old belief that, in the end, everything would turn out well, the speaker includes a matching image, saying that if one “[c]huck[s] filth in the sea [...] / The tides will be clean beyond” (ll. 16-17). This image, however, at the same time, illustrates the naïvety of such thinking: Just as someone is wrong about the sea being clean, only because the garbage can no longer be seen, the speaker has been blinded by false beliefs. He might have had the impression that nature would never disappear completely (cf. ll. 8-10), but in fact, there were already enough signs that it was well on its way to doing so. It is only now that he begins to realize that he was wrong all the time, which can be seen from the question he then asks himself: “But what do I feel now? Doubt?” (l. 18). Mark Storey, in this context, notes that the question here might be given as a question “not because [the speaker] is searching for an explanation behind his newfound pessimism, but because he is questioning us as to what exactly he *should* be feeling” (237). If it is a means of addressing the reader and prompting him or her to make up his or her mind about the situation, it would, at least, reinforce the overall intended effect of the poem which is also directed towards the reader’s reflection.

Wondering why it can be that he had been so mistaken all the time, he takes into consideration the factor of age in stanza 4 (cf. “Or age, simply?”, l. 19) and points to the problem that environmental threats are assessed differently by younger and older generations. Maybe the speaker now thinks that, at an earlier point in time, he was just

⁹¹ In fact, Larkin once stated in an interview that “[d]eprivation is for [him] what daffodils were for Wordsworth” (qtd. in Finch 53).

too young to grasp the developments in their entirety and seriousness. He points out that it is not much different today and that the younger people are already too involved in modernization and capitalism to care about things now considered of low priority, like nature: “The crowd / is young in the M1 café; / Their kids are screaming for more – / More houses, more parking allowed, / More caravan sites, more pay” (ll. 19-23). The repetitions of the word “more”, conveying a certain insatiability, go well with man’s unstoppable thirst for progress that is expressed via images here. To stress that the economic system and “the universal prevalence of greed” (Press 142) are often behind the destruction of nature, just as it is argued by social ecologists and eco-Marxists, he includes another image that should illustrate this idea:

On the Business Page, a score
 Of spectacled grins approve
 Some takeover bid that entails
 Five per cent profit (and ten
 Per cent more in the estuaries): move
 Your works to the unspoilt dales
 (Grey area grants!) (ll. 24-30)

Through his mentioning of the “spectacled grins” (l. 25), the speaker expresses his harsh criticism of the hypocritical and egoistic behavior of businessmen who ignore their behavior’s consequences for the environment. Andrew Swarbrick is correct in his observation that “[a]t first, the elegiac tone holds back the polemic, but then impatience breaks through. The lament for a pastoral England threatened by commercial greed turns into an intolerant attack on caricatures” (141). It here becomes clear more than at any other point in the poem that the speaker does not only lament the visible transformations of the landscape, but also the way modernization influences people’s attitudes and behavior: As Robert Lance Synder rightly notes, “he explores the dilemma of the individual subject caught up in the throes of a metaphysical quandary that admits of no satisfactory or apodictic solution” (141).

It is only now that the speaker has grown older and has gained an understanding of all this that he is fully able to comprehend the developments concerning the environment. In stanza 6, he straightforwardly voices his view that nature will vanish more and more if everything goes on like this: It seems, just now, / To be happening so very fast; / Despite all the land left free / For the first time I feel somehow / That it isn’t going to last” (ll. 33-37). Interestingly enough, the speaker, once again, hints at the fact that the decrease of nature is not always seen and felt, but happening nonetheless (cf. “Despite all the land left free”, l. 35), thereby mocking his own former ‘blindness’ to the

problem and his misjudgment. By including this aspect, one more time, at this point in the poem, he stresses that it would be fatal not to act and to wait until the last visible bits of nature will be gone.

In the following, he goes even further and presents the expected consequences in the form of a dramatic future scenario—with the required portion of criticism: The speaker is convinced that the bit of nature that still exists around him will not last for much longer, since he says that “before [he] snuff[s] it, the whole / Boiling will be bricked in” (ll. 38-39). The alliteration formed by the words “[b]oiling” (l. 39) and “bricked in” (ibid.) has a highlighting effect and attracts the reader’s attention, which alerts the reader to the concept of ecocide. The whole passage is thus built on the powerful ecocritical concept of apocalypse.⁹² Besides conveying to the reader a certain temporal urgency to take measures against the destruction of the environment, the speaker also aims to shock through the revelation of what will be left: Everything associated with ‘wild’ and ‘untouched’ nature will be gone, “[e]xcept for the tourist parts – / First slum of Europe: a role / It won’t be so hard to win, / With a cast of crooks and tarts” (ll. 40-43). Here, again, the speaker points to the fact that the decisions affecting the environment—whether concerning the construction of buildings or, the opposite, land preservation—are mainly driven by financial incentives. To get this idea across, he says that only the “tourist parts” (l. 40) will survive in the end because they are profitable. Expressing his inner refusal of such profit-led measures, the speaker harshly criticizes everyone involved, referring to them as “crooks and tarts” (l. 43) and accusing them of contributing to the development of the “[f]irst slum of Europe” (l. 41).

The last two apocalyptic stanzas of the poem have an extremely final and definite tone, leaving the reader almost hopeless and depressed, but also ‘shaken awake’:

And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
There’ll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.

Most things are never meant
This won’t be, most likely: but greeds
And garbage are too thick-strewn
To be swept up now, or invent
Excuses that make them all needs.
I just think it will happen, soon. (ll. 44-55)

⁹² Through the apocalyptic vision, Larkin wants to convey to the reader that, when nature suffers, mankind will suffer too. Thus, the passage displays “one of the major Larkin themes, that even the 20th-century urban man is part of nature” (Abermann 16).

The speaker now seems more convinced than ever that none of England's beautiful scenery will remain in the long run, which reflects his development in awareness and the heightened perception of the threat: "Die Vergänglichkeit des eigenen Ich wird zunächst als tröstlich empfunden, als ihm das Schlimmste nach menschlichem Ermessen nicht mehr zu Lebzeiten bevorsteht. Desungeachtet aber überstürzen sich die Ereignisse, und die Perspektive wandelt sich zur vollendeten Zukunft" (Krahé 68-69). Everything that people typically love about England, like natural reserves (cf. "The shadows, the meadows, the lanes", l. 45) or historical architecture (cf. "The guildhalls, the carved choirs", l. 46), will most certainly be gone, according to the speaker. The fact that the scenic aspects that will be lost (cf. ll 45-46) are given in the form of an enumeration underlines the dramatic effect, making the reader realize that every single aspect mentioned here could soon have disappeared. To take the idea even further, the speaker then states that these aspects will only remain captured in stories, photos, paintings, and other cultural artifacts in "books" (l. 47) or in "galleries" (l. 48). This way, he adds a certain myth-like or fairy-tale-like character to these aspects with the intention of stressing the idea that, in the future, some people will remember the good old times via these means, while others, who have grown up later, will probably ask themselves if what they see and read is (or better: was) 'real' at all. What John Brannigan has found out for the function of nostalgic presentations in some examples of contemporary 'condition-of-England' literature can also be said to apply to "Going, Going": The beautiful aspects of the past, or those that will soon belong to the past, are not merely mentioned for the purpose of "mourning", but rather also for being "restorative"—in coming as a help to re-negotiate the present. This, then, could turn the "literature of farewell" into a "literature of beginnings" (cf. 93-99). In the end, to harshly contrast the things that he expects to be lost, the speaker says that "all that remains / For us will be concrete and tyres", venturing a less picturesque (and shocking) prognosis for the future, and alluding, once more, to the ceaseless progress of construction as well as to the issue of mobility, especially the steady rise in cars.⁹³

In the last stanza, the speaker makes clear that he is aware that the loss of nature and the developments addressed were not necessarily deliberate (cf. "Most things are

⁹³ In his examination of Larkin's "Going, Going", Storey establishes a link between the speaker's presentation of England in the past and at present that might also be connected to his view of future England: "He presents us with a romanticized view of England's past that he identified as being part of a postwar cultural myth, but creates an equally fictional contemporary England, a 'grotesque parody', to act as its counterpoint" (238). This is why he believes that one "might start to question how seriously we are supposed to take it" (ibid.), although he clearly acknowledges that "there is a feeling of authentic and tender melancholy that is difficult to dismiss" (Storey 238).

never meant. / This won't be, most likely", ll. 50-51), but that they are simply a consequence of closing one's eyes to the negative consequences of one's decisions and actions—a result of focusing too much on profit and advancement at the cost of the environment (cf. "greeds / And garbage are too thick-strewn / To be swept up now", ll. 51-53). The alliteration formed by the words "greed" and "garbage" serves to highlight the aspects that the speaker finds to play a decisive role in the developments described. Therefore, the poem ends with the speaker's conclusion that it will not take long until his predictions become reality: "I just think it will happen, soon" (l. 55), with the addition of the adverb of time ("soon") at the very end helping to make the statement more concrete, close, and alarming to the reader.

Taking everything into account, it can be said that "Going, Going" by Philip Larkin is very successful in raising environmental awareness, since it confronts the reader with the issue of environmental pollution in a unique way: It does not just address the problematic state of the environment at the moment (or: at the time when it was published), but the poem also presents a critical outlook into the future. Thereby, it gets to the heart of the matter, since environmental pollution often results from a too *now*-centered attitude which ignores consequences that may follow later, in the future, or concern the life of future generations. As Gro Harlem Brundtland, former prime minister of Norway and Director-General of the World Health Organization from 1998 to 2003, has emphasized, "we are the only species that has the capacity to look beyond ourselves—to care about our posterity and to think in inter-generational terms" (253). Presenting the problem not just as existing, but addressing also the long-term consequences regarding our future and those of our descendants, the poem functions almost like a 'wake-up call'. This is also due to its technique of shedding light on man's deeds and revealing the original motivation behind decisions and actions that affect the environment (like profit and greed) in the form of cultural-critical metadiscourse as imagined by Zapf. The speaker displays an ecological attitude in so far as that he agrees with one of the main premises of ecology, namely with the view that human beings increasingly "*threaten*" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 90) nature. It is only through realizing this connection that one will understand that the first step to changing things for the better and preserving nature is a rethinking of our own behavior. "Going, Going" makes it clear, better than any other poem, that it is *our turn* to do something, if we want to prevent the predicted scenario. The form of the poem can also be interpreted as underlining the message that is conveyed: It is clearly divided into sestets with an

abc abc rhyme pattern (with only one exception, namely stanza 6), and the (almost completely) consistent continuation of the stanza form and the rhyme pattern could be said to communicate a certain feeling of flow, advancement, and progress—just as at the level of content, where the speaker mentions man’s unceasing thirst for progress on the one hand, and the ongoing negative developments regarding the environment, on the other hand. Thus, while reading the poem, one will also automatically have the impression that ‘time is running out’, which, again, fits the speaker’s final statement. After all, it should be said that what strikes one when reading the poem, namely that “Philip Larkin is one of the few modern poets who write in a simple straightforward manner, understandable even for the non-academic reader” (Abermann 15), does not make the poem less powerful in the message it conveys, since “the textual simplicity of his poems is only the surface below which one can find multiple layers of meaning and interpretation” (Abermann 16). Storey, too, regards the poem “as far more veiled [...] than it might first seem” (237).

Regarding the contemporary nature poems in sum, one will immediately notice the similarity to Romantic nature poetry in the ways they present the beauties of the natural world and the positive effects of visiting nature on people’s well-being. Just like the Romantic nature poems, a great part of the contemporary nature poems explored in this chapter functions as what Zapf has termed imaginative counter-discourse. The closeness to nature poetry written during the age of industrialization is especially striking in the ways the contemporary poems include ideas, techniques, images, and messages that can be related to the main principles of ecology, which emphasizes their importance as ecopoetry again. The ecological principles reflected in the poems are familiar: In almost every contemporary nature poem analyzed, one can find descriptions that seem linked to the theory of deep ecology which is based on a holistic world view and the idea that “*everything is connected to everything else*” (“Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88). In fact, the associations with the holistic world view are achieved in a similar way as in the Romantic nature poems, namely by means of personifying nature and, in reverse, by making humans appear more nature-like or at least closer to nature. Other ecological principles one is reminded of when reading the contemporary poems are the “recognition of the *diversity* of life” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89), the

notion that “nature is not simple but complex” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89), and the “acceptance of evolution as a fact” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 88), which is connected to “the view of reality as a constantly changing and self-transformative *process*” (ibid.). Hughes’s “Spring Nature Notes” and “Autumn Nature Notes” can be taken as examples here. In parts, though, the contemporary nature poems were also found to take on a completely different form and function as cultural-critical metadiscourse, namely when they acknowledge the ecological view that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature. This could be seen from brief mentionings of or allusions to man’s potential to harm nature in all of the texts and is expressed most clearly through the poems concerned with the issues of environmental pollution and degradation—Hughes’s “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’” and Larkin’s “Going, Going”. It is in this form that the poems also show parallels to other ecocritical theories, like the theories of social ecology, eco-Marxism, and environmental justice. Thus, although—when comparing the Romantic views with more recent ones—nature generally seems to be perceived in a similar way and the contemporary presentation of its positive effects on one’s well-being often conforms with the depiction in former times, the ‘modern’ view also clearly distinguishes from the Romantic position. It is no longer just the ‘beautiful’ side of nature that is recognized, but also its ‘ugly’ parts—the look at nature has become more realistic and appropriate. Likewise, one should have noticed that the focus is no longer exclusively on praising the beauties of nature and pointing out the various benefits for human beings, but rather more on teaching respectful dealings with the natural world. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the contemporary poems do not only deal with the most ‘scenic’ aspects of nature, but further also pay attention to seemingly unspectacular details—only to stress the inherent worth of nature and “the *uniqueness* of its individual manifestations” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 89). As a conclusion, one can thus say that the contemporary nature poems, with their ‘new’ approach, express an attitude that fits the times, is distinctly biocentric, and is reminiscent of what Gifford has identified as “‘post-pastoral’” (“Gods of Mud” 132).

7. ‘Mixed’ Poems: Dissolving Boundaries between Nature and City

The next category of poems that will be analyzed is that of contemporary poetry which deals with both nature and the city, especially with their points of contact. Thus, this chapter presents a transition to the following and final analysis part of this thesis that looks at the depiction of the city in contemporary poetry. Although we probably all have an understanding of what can be termed ‘nature’ and what can be said to be a ‘city’, it is not always possible to only see these two definitions of space as separate, contradicting, or even incompatible. Whether it is in the midst of the city or at its outskirts, somewhere there are usually bits of nature that can be found, and it can also be observed that, in urban planning, there has recently been an increase in attempts of bringing the city and nature together—by creating spaces of ‘urbanature’. How exactly these mixed environments are experienced will be shown through the analyses of two poems that have proven particularly appropriate for this purpose.

7.1. Grevel Lindop’s “From a Flat City”

The first one of these poems that will be examined is Grevel Lindop’s “From a Flat City” which was published in the author’s collection *A Prismatic Toy* in 1991. It is basically about a person living in the city who gives voice to his or her longing for nature and expresses the danger that people ‘forget’ about nature when they are not visually confronted with it. This, too, is a form of ecopoetry, since it shows how people cope with the two-split environment that is so characteristic of our modern times. Everyone is increasingly confronted with the differences of nature and the city as well as with their (at first glance) ‘strange’ or at least unfamiliar merging. This is why learning about what it means to adapt to these spatial circumstances and trying to see both nature and the city as complementary (instead of simply favoring the one or the other) is what really creates a sustainable future that brings into harmony environmental responsibilities and the aspirations of urban (or better and more encompassing: modern) civilization.

Right at the beginning of Grevel Lindop’s “From a Flat City”, the urban setting is introduced through references to aspects that are often associated with the urban sphere and which distinguish the city from areas characterized by ‘wild’ nature. For example, the speaker mentions a double-deck bus (cf. “top deck of a bus”, l. 1) and a “Big Wheel

at a fairground” (l. 2).⁹⁴ Interestingly, though, as becomes clear in the following, the introduction of the urban setting only serves as a transition to the speaker’s actual concern in the poem, namely bringing back to people’s consciousness the surrounding countryside, especially the hills (cf. l. 7). The speaker deliberately mentions urban aspects like the “top deck of a bus” (l. 1) and the “Big Wheel at a fairground” (l. 2) that offer a heightened perspective with a view beyond the realms of the city. Also, simultaneously, he expresses the rarity of such a view (of nature), since it is possible to see the surrounding nature only from certain points of view. Moreover, he adds, that once the view is made possible through such high-level positions, it is only very subtle, like “a pencil-smudge / or a brush-stroke” (ll. 3-4). Thus, he points out that, even from these angles in the city, it is not possible to catch a clear sight of the countryside, since there are many obstructions in the way. As an example, the speaker names the “stacked / concrete blocks of the Hulme estate” (ll. 4-5) and “the meat-pink / brick of cavernous textile-mills” (ll. 5-6). The wording here also shows that he is very critical of large public housing constructions in the form of tower blocks, industrial buildings, and probably of the spatial surroundings and developments in the city in general. This criticism is conveyed especially through such words as “stacked” and “concrete blocks” (ll. 4-5), by which the speaker presents the public housing scheme as ‘carelessly’ or tastelessly built with the aim of housing an unreasonably large number of people. The description of the textile mills as “cavernous” (l. 6) and the reference to their “meat-pink brick” (ll. 5-6) further supports the speaker’s critical attitude. Obviously, his impression of the textile mills is very negative because he regards them as a “cavernous” (l. 6) place, probably because of the substandard working conditions in these buildings (bad light, bad air, etc.) that the workers suffer from each day. This would also explain the mentioning of the “meat-pink brick” (ll. 5-6) that is reminiscent of a carnivorous, ‘man-eating’ creature, which is reminiscent of the depictions of factories and workplaces in some of the Victorian city poems that were analyzed. It is thus comprehensible that the speaker highly values the view of nature from within the city—both the rarity of the experience and the hopes connected to it are summarized in his statement that, whenever he suddenly sees the hills in the distance, it feels to him “as if they were paying a rare, auspicious visit” (ll. 7-8). The word “auspicious” (l. 8), in particular, makes clear that the speaker dearly welcomes the view of nature and that it also raises his hopes regarding the future, possibly because he belongs to those who

⁹⁴ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *A Prismatic Toy*. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991. 72.

understand that the natural environment is essential for human well-being, and generally, for all life on the planet.

Next, the speaker explains that he longs for a more comprehensive access to nature and that seeing the sky (which is a part of nature) is not sufficient for this. By saying that it is “[n]ot the prisoner’s square / of sky [...] what we crave” (ll. 8-9), he gives voice to his opinion that, in the city, surrounded by tower blocks, the sky (even though natural) has a very constricting effect on him, making him almost feel like imprisoned. Continuing his criticism, he adds that the ‘contact’ with the sky has already been achieved anyway (cf. “we’ve that already”, l. 9), indirectly referring to the construction of tower blocks raising high into the sky. To further express his view that the sky is different from other aspects of nature that can be found beyond the city, the speaker goes into more detail about the sky, describing it as “a luminous, entrancing sky that hangs / its clouds above us, delicate and massive, / like a woman leaning over a sleepy lover” (ll. 10-13). Here, the speaker’s ambivalent opinion about the sky is exposed: Of course, he is aware that it is a part of nature and therefore something originally positive, but he also wants to communicate that, when in the city, the sky can feel oppressive. This double character is nicely expressed through positive descriptions, as achieved with the adjectives “luminous” (l. 10) or “entrancing” (l. 10) just as through the comparison to a “woman” (l. 12) and her delicacy (cf. “delicate”, l. 11). On the other hand, it is said that the sky “hangs its clouds” (ll. 10-11) above the city and the adjective “massive” (l. 11) is used in this context. The oxymoron formed by “delicate and massive” in line 11 basically comprises the essence of the speaker’s message that is expressed from lines 10 to 13 here: At heart, he knows about the positive quality of the sky and its belonging to the natural world, but he also feels the need to say that, for people living in the city, surrounded by concrete blocks, it does not offer the desired access and connection to nature, but rather has an overwhelming and claustrophobic effect. This interpretation also corresponds nicely with Lindop’s personal view of his home city Liverpool that, at least when he was younger, often “seemed to be a maze without an exit” (“A Circumambulation” 67).

What the speaker longs for, instead, is offered immediately afterwards: “It’s earth we long for – earth heaped up like clouds, / drifted like smoke, smeared like approaching rain, / combed into escarpments or piled with forest” (ll. 13-15). Playing with the aforementioned aspect of the sky, he states that his idea of earth could replace the clouds and rain one is used to from the city sky. Instead of the familiar clouds and

rain, he wishes for “earth heaped up like clouds” (l. 13) or “smeared like approaching rain” (l. 14). Briefly, he longs for an alternative and more encompassing view of nature than watching the sky has allowed him so far (if it had done so at all). It is quite interesting that he introduces the earth in terms of images connected to the sky (cf. “clouds”, l. 13, and “rain”, l. 14), but this behavior could probably be traced back to the fact that, in the city, the sky has been the only point of reference to nature for too long. The craving for the earth further symbolizes a connection to the ground, a down-to-earthiness in the literal sense of the word, namely also with regard to the idea of progress. Rather than simply building more and more skyscrapers, the speaker calls for a more rational concept of progress that also includes an appreciation and protection of the natural environment. The speaker also points out that he is not alone with this wish, as is shown in the use of the possessive pronoun “[o]ur” (l. 16) in the following remark: “Our imagination dwells in hills, but the plain / and the industrial haze deny them” (ll. 16-17). Becoming more precise with regard to his criticism of the polluted air and cityscape, he further adds that “it’s / an achievement if you can make out Beeston Hill / from the eighteenth floor of the University Maths Tower” (ll. 17-19). The intention behind this is to unveil that, when confronted with increasingly urban and decreasingly natural surroundings, it is possible that nature passes more and more into oblivion, and that even those who deliberately search for the view of nature are not always granted what they look for, due to urban circumstances (like dense construction or air quality).

This is exactly why the speaker is all the more surprised when he, “one morning, from his daughter’s bedroom window, / between the shoulders of two redtiled roofs / [...] caught sight of a neat triangular peak / distinct from the clouds, apparently grassgrown, the sunlight / just dusting one edge” (ll. 20-24). Although city details are still present in the picture (cf. “two redtiled roofs”, l. 21), the sight of the hilltop from his position in the city fascinates the speaker immensely. One learns that it is so positively overwhelming that he even would have liked to “take a compass-bearing, find a map, / identify the hill and one clear day / climb it” (ll. 26-28). The experience as such as well as the thoughts and ideas it has aroused in the speaker are proof of his longing for a more frequent and more direct ‘contact’ with nature, especially for city residents. Thus, one could say that the event acts like a gleam of hope—hope that, besides him, other city dwellers will also become aware of the beneficent quality of nature and adopt a more environmentally appreciative attitude with regard to future urban planning and

the modern way of life in general. His conviction that a 'return to nature', or better, a reconciliation of our modern lifestyle with nature must happen soon is indirectly emphasized in the final lines of the poem. Here, the speaker says, that if he had climbed the hill, he would have looked out for his daughter "run[ning] to the glass and star[ing] unseeing back / towards the hills she doesn't know are there" (ll. 31-32). The mentioning of the daughter's ignorance about the hill's existence should clarify that the younger generation has lost the relation to nature because they have grown up in an urban environment without direct 'contact' to nature. Here, the equation of not seeing and not knowing (with regard to nature and its quality), which can be found throughout the whole poem, is made very explicit and has a thought-provoking function. After all, it is the younger generation that can bring about change, which is why it is all the more important to take the speaker's wish seriously.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Grevel Lindop's poem "From a Flat City" is generally an expression of criticism regarding the still widespread ignorance about nature, especially when it comes to ideas of progress and decisions about modern (urban) life that influence our spatial surroundings and ultimately also affect one's personal well-being. The speaker in the poem presents himself as an ecological thinker, because he is aware that "the increasing expansion of economic, technological and scientific rationality" (Zapf, "Literature as Cultural Ecology" 90) poses a threat to nature. By giving voice to his own longing for nature in the midst of the city, the speaker intends to speak for a large group of people desiring a more frequent 'contact' with nature in their everyday lives and a general growth in appreciation of the natural world. The pastoral character of the text is reflected in the constant contrasting of the city and nature, examples of what could be identified as a combination of cultural-critical metadiscourse and imaginative counter-discourse as part of Zapf's concept of literature as cultural ecology. According to the speaker, what has turned out to be most decisive in leading towards a common 'forgetting' about nature is the sad insight that people obviously do not care because they are no longer visually confronted with nature. Taking up this idea as the basis for his poem, Lindop has successfully addressed one of the major difficulties today's environmental movement has to face: A disconnection from nature, which, in effect, means that, for many people (especially in urban surroundings), nature is not part of their daily life and thus not on top of the agenda. This is, of course, particularly true for younger people, who have grown up used to urban environments—a detail that is also addressed by the author. Thus, all in

all, the poem is a call for bringing back the natural environment to people's consciousness and opting for more 'presence' of nature—even if this begins in one's mind.

7.2. Mark Goodwin's "I Turned"

The second poem to be analyzed with regard to its mixed subject matter of nature and city is Mark Goodwin's "I Turned" from his poetry collection *Else*, which was published in 2008. It perfectly captures the 'in-between state' that some people feel when confronted with surroundings that show characteristics of both nature and the city, and, especially, when traveling back and forth between urban environments and the natural world. Reflecting on his motivation for writing "I Turned", Goodwin states that "[s]ince childhood, [he] [has] been, like many others, amazed by being in one place knowing there are other countless unseen places existing at the same time. And where, and how exactly does one place end and another begin? Poets are drawn to such borders" ("Mark Goodwin" n. pag.). Further, the experience of the contrast between nature and the urban sphere as well as the intermixing of both (as, for example, as the result of urban planning) is likely to lead to a feeling of 'confusion', which is also communicated by the speaker in the poem. Whether this 'confusion' is felt consciously or not, "I Turned" basically speaks to everyone of us, since we are all increasingly confronted with similar situations—the challenge of 'combining' our modern, largely urban lifestyle with nature's needs and our responsibility towards the environment. Finding the right balance, is, after all, one of our society's major tasks these days. By addressing this topic, one could say that the poem intends to make readers aware of the 'confusing' effect of our spatial surroundings and the underlying 'conflict', and, hopefully, in a second step, to inspire people to react accordingly. This would mean to promote a reconciliation of modern (urban) advancement and the environment in all domains of life, as the basis for a sustainable future.

The poem begins with references to the place the speaker finds himself in and information on the time of day, the combination of which makes it possible for the reader to imagine the speaker's situation and to 'follow' him on his journey when reading on. By introducing the setting right away, the speaker also makes clear that it is of central importance in the poem. It is the very first lines of the poem that tell the reader that the speaker is wandering around at night on the outskirts of the city, where the urban meets the rural: "The lit city's rim is / interrupted: rural pushes / prongs of

night through / Leicester's north-western / membrane" (ll. 1-5).⁹⁵ He seems to be in a position from which he can see the city with all its lit buildings from the distance while being on the very edge of the city, where the surroundings are getting noticeably more rural. Here, on the north-western outskirts of the city and where the rural periphery begins, the speaker perceives a 'strange' or, at least, unfamiliar phenomenon: The string of lights provided by Leicester's lit buildings (cf. "lit city's rim", l. 1) suddenly becomes "interrupted" (l. 2) because it mixes with the rural darkness. Through this experience, the speaker is made aware of the 'in-between' position he finds himself in at this point and, at this particular time of day, it is the lighting conditions which contribute to this cognizance in the first place. It is also quite interesting that the speaker does not present the outskirts of the city as a place where the urban is immediately replaced by the rural. It really is more of a mixed, not clearly defined environment with both, the impression of the city's lights and the interruptions of rural darkness. The fact that the speaker uses the words "interrupted" (ibid.) and "membrane" (l. 5) also shows that he thinks of the urban and the rural sphere not as totally apart, but as connected. Especially the "membrane" conveys a state of belonging together, of a relationship of interchange or even dependency. Without intending to take the idea too far, one could argue, at this stage in the poem already, that the speaker knows at heart that there is the need for a more comprehensive mindset with regard to modernization and advancement. The choice of words could be taken as an indirect expression of his knowledge that progress is only possible and will only lead to a sustainable future, if the city and the (natural) environment are given the same amount of attention in such matters and if the coexistence of both is promoted. This knowledge, however, is mostly undermined by the speaker's feelings in this situation that are a result of his habit of living in the city.

One learns more about the speaker's emotional state when he compares walking in this peripheral area to walking along "a corridor" (l. 6). Even though he does not express his feelings directly here, it is possible that he experiences a certain alertness, curiosity, and maybe even claustrophobia. One just has to imagine walking a long dark corridor with lots of closed doors without knowing what is behind them. Wandering around on the outskirts of the city, in the rural darkness, and surrounded by "a hawthorn hedgeline" (l. 7), the speaker might feel similarly: He is neither in the familiar city anymore, nor completely in the rural environment, but exactly 'in between' both, or as he puts it: "I am on / edge" (ll. 8-9). While the association to the "corridor" (l. 6) could

⁹⁵ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *Else*. Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008. 50-51.

simply be traced back to the hawthorn hedgeline next to him and the surrounding darkness, the feelings mentioned above might still apply to his emotional state: The ‘in-between’ place creates a certain suspense and alertness in the speaker—a curiosity for what can be found beyond. In short, the image of the “corridor” (l. 6) conveys the speaker’s mixed feelings of being neither inside of something nor outside of it and of walking a path that may appear ‘constricting’ in a way because of the general atmosphere of uncertainty. The author himself defines the image of the “corridor” and being on “edge” in similar terms:

The city-rim is the cultural tightrope of our very late, flailing capitalist civilisation. To walk & imagine in these liminal lands is to occupy a wound of transition; still raw, and ugly & beautiful in equal measure because of that rawness. Walking this corridor, one can imagine deep & recent histories co-happening: a city-density on one side of a rurban membrane is where peoples of all kinds have mixed to escape ‘the wilderness’; the rural other is where most people used to dwell (in the true sense of that word) [...]. One side is of the Fathers, the other of the Mothers. One side is mostly dark at night whilst one remains lit. Walking in these zones of ‘between’ I’m reminded that no living cell lives without a membrane that is porous (“Mark Goodwin” n. pag.).

The ‘in-between’ character is further emphasized in the following lines; first, again via means of lighting conditions, and then, through sounds: The speaker presents his position in more detail when he says that he himself is “in the shadows; city lights / [...] to [his] right, to [his] left. / In front earth’s dark” (ll. 10-12) and now also refers to what he hears by mentioning that “[s]ome blackbird’s startled; / sirens reply” (ll. 13-14). The place the speaker finds himself in is characterized by a constant intermixing of impressions connected to both the city and the surrounding nature. Visually, it is striking to him that the rural darkness mixes with the city lights, and, acoustically, he perceives the sound of the blackbird, on the one hand, and the noise of sirens from the city, on the other hand. To point out that he really experiences the surroundings with all his senses, the speaker finally also refers to the place in terms of motion: He states that “[t]he rim / is still in the world / of hard objects; yet rotates / like a circular saw / or some space station” (ll. 14-18), which, once again, underlines that the ‘in-between’ situation has a slightly ‘confusing’ effect on him and almost feels a bit ‘unreal’. The speaker’s confusion can also still be felt in the next lines where he refers to his own movements:

I was walking
in the city rim, I turned,
I was walking
along the city rim, I turned. (ll. 19-22)

The switching between the prepositions, which is highlighted through the parallelism built by the lines, shows that the speaker is not exactly sure where he is and exactly

what he is doing; at the beginning of the poem, he speaks of being “on the city rim” (l. 8) and now he is not sure whether he is walking “in the city rim” (l. 20) or “along the city rim” (l. 22). In both cases, though, he feels the need to turn (cf. “I turned”, l. 20 and l. 22). The confusion that has overcome the speaker in this ‘in-between’ sphere is thus also linked to a sense of disorientation and lack of direction. He just simply does not feel ‘at home’ at this place, probably because it feels so unfamiliar and strange to him. When, not really sure about what to do next, the speaker “follow[s] a prong of rural out” (l. 23) and asserts himself, for the first time, that he must have entered “a space between” (l. 24) due to another series of mixed and contrasting impressions:

I’ve one boot in grass,
speckled with cow-shit;
one eye alert for bird

vibrations,
or a hare’s trace. I’ve

one shoe on tarmac. A whir
of headlights sparkles
around the roundabout

of one eye’s
iris. (ll. 25-34)

The speaker is presented as if split in two: With one foot he stands in nature (cf. “grass”, l. 25, and “cow-shit”, l. 26) and with the other in the city (cf. “tarmac”, l. 30), and, at the same time, with one eye, he looks out for birds and a hare (cf. ll. 27-29), while the other watches the “headlights sparkl[e]” (l. 31). The experience of the intermixing of the urban and the rural sphere, conveyed through the different symbols (cf. “grass”, “cow-shit”, “birds”, “hare’s trace”, “tarmac”, “headlights”), must seem so surreal to the speaker that he does not really know what to make of it. The general confusion is further underlined by the mismatched footwear (cf. “boot”, l. 25; “shoe”, l. 30). According to Goodwin, even if it feels unreal, irritating or unsettling, it is exactly this impression of being ‘split into two halves’ which is essential in becoming aware of the modern man’s inner desire of being part of both worlds, rather than deciding for the one or the other. He bases this belief on his own experience:

Often when I walk a city-rim, and especially that of ‘my own’ city, I imagine I’m given the honour of ghostliness. At any threshold, or any arguable ground, if thought about for too long, all things & divisions begin to dissolve, and that includes the traveller doing the imagining. (The trick is not to dissolve too much, not imagine too excessively, and so be able to step back again into one’s own substantial life.) In (or is it on?) the imagined rural membrane I can be double, indeed stretched multiple, not just one kind of person—I can have one boot in the vital & ancient shit and one shoe in the frail city so many humans before me, from all kinds of worlds, have worked so desperately hard to make (“Mark Goodwin” n. pag.).

The irritation felt by the speaker is, then, for one last time, reflected in his statements in lines 34 to 37: The speaker switches the preposition with regard to his position again and now states that he is “*on* the city rim” (l. 35; emphasis added) and he also refers to it as “perfectly still / as it spins” (ll. 36-37). The paradoxical combination of the words “still” (l. 36) and “spins” (l. 37) proves that the speaker is not able to handle the sensory input and organize the thoughts the impressions arouse in him.

The last information about the speaker’s reaction to the ‘in-between’ place is given in the final lines of the poem, where—almost as if fleeing—he “hurtle[s] / off / into damp-grass tracts / gestating menhirs as [he’s] pulled / in / by the city’s / glistening dense / interior” (ll. 37-44). The aforementioned disorientation shown in the speaker’s constant turning (cf. l. 20 and l. 22) has already revealed that he feels ‘strange’ in this unfamiliar environment, but the final rapid return to the city proves even more that he longs too strongly for the familiar setting. That the act of turning is essential in the poem can already be guessed from the title, which is programmatic for the speaker’s final behavior: Searching his way through the ‘in-between’ sphere, marked by “damp-grass tracts” (l. 39), on the one hand, and “gestating menhirs” (l. 40), on the other hand, he feels drawn to the city—its power of attraction being reflected in the adjective “glistening” (l. 43). The city is not only lit because of the light in the buildings, but its illumination also stands for everything that is known and familiar, in contrast to the dark and unknown rural sphere. The fact that the speaker is finally drawn back to the city could be interpreted in the way that he is representative of those people who are too much focused on the city (and progress and modernization in general) and thus ‘forget’ about the natural environment, or, at least, about the reconciliation of urban places and modern life with the natural world. This focus on the city is also revealed in the speaker’s choice of words when referring to the ‘in between’ place: He constantly names it the “city’s rim” throughout the whole poem, which shows that the city is always his reference. Moreover, it is only at the very end of the poem, when the speaker is back in the city, that he says “I’m here” two times (cf. l. 44) and thus affirms his existence. On the contrary, while wandering the outskirts of the city and experiencing the mixed environment, he was obviously ‘beyond’ himself—disoriented and irritated. The speaker in the poem could thus be taken as an example of people who are living a modern, urban lifestyle and have slowly ‘forgotten’ about nature—meaning that they pay less attention to nature’s needs and are not yet thinking that a reconciliation of the natural world and the urban sphere is possible. However, it is the ‘mixed’ environment

that the future lies in, and the author probably wants to convey the message that it is wrong to shy away from the idea of ‘intermixing’ (including a cutting down of society’s demands regarding advancement at nature’s cost and an increase in respecting nature’s claims), even if it may seem ‘strange’ at first glance.

All in all, it should be noted that Mark Goodwin’s “I Turned” nicely demonstrates the urgent need to do away with the skepticism with respect to ‘combining’ the built and natural environments and making people feel comfortable with the concept of a ‘mixed’ living environment. The idea behind all this is that urban growth and modern progress in general do not need to destroy nature—a reconciliation of both is possible once an increase in environmental awareness is achieved and the environment gains a more prominent place in people’s everyday decisions and actions. Especially in a time in which urban populations swell (and will probably keep on doing so in the next decades), an integration of environmental, social, and economic demands is what must be striven for in order to achieve sustainable interactivity and coexistence—prerequisites for everyone’s well-being after all.⁹⁶ While, on the one hand, it can be understood as cultural-critical metadiscourse, it can also be seen as fulfilling another function from Zapf’s model of literature as cultural ecology: The poem does not present success regarding the problem, but points to its solution, which is why it, at least implicitly, functions as reintegrative interdiscourse as well. By presenting the speaker as someone who is so much involved in city life that he cannot handle seeing it mix with the natural world, which he has pushed to the back of his mind for too long in favor of urban progress, the author criticizes the still far too widespread reluctance to reconcile urban development with the protection of the environment, and expresses his worry that there is still a long way to go to achieve the desired reorientation. The fact that the speaker’s confusion (when confronted with the ‘in-between’ place) is also reflected in the chaotic and disordered form of the poem, due to the absence of a clear stanza structure or rhyme scheme, emphasizes its strong message even further.

As a conclusion regarding the ‘mixed’ contemporary poems, one can say that their ecocritical strength is of a particular sort. One should have noticed that, in the poems analyzed in this chapter, the focus is neither exclusively on the depiction of nature nor

⁹⁶ According to Florian Lederbogen et al., who draw on figures from the Central Institute of Mental Health in Mannheim, “[b]y 2050, 69% of humans will live in urban areas” (498).

on the depiction of the city—they are rather concerned with the ‘in between’ and intermixing of both. As a consequence of this lack of detailed portrayals of nature or the city (like they were found in the other poems analyzed), the poems also show fewer parallels to ecocritical theories or concepts. They can be said to function as cultural-critical metadiscourse, imaginative counter-discourse, and reintegrative interdiscourse—as explained above—but they do not reflect the ecological principles or ideas from the different ecocritical theories to the extent known from the other poems looked at so far. It was stated that certain passages can be related to the ecological view that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90) in nature, but the poems’ actual importance as ecopoetry results from something different: from their special character as such. That is to say that the ecocritical function of the poems mainly lies in their feature of pointing towards the mixture of the natural and urban, which is what we are inevitably confronted with as time goes on. The poems tell about a ‘special’ form our environment takes on that is increasingly felt by many people all over the world, caused by nature making way for cities on the one hand and bits of nature finding their way into cities on the other hand (like through urban planning or wild animals showing up in places they would normally shun). Thus, the poems’ main ecocritical strength is due to their approach of pointing out to the reader that nature and the city cannot always be seen as a contrast and suggesting that a sustainable future lies in a compromise of both—not in favoring the one or the other. That it may take some time to get used to this thought is clearly demonstrated by the irritated speaker in Goodwin’s “I Turned”; further, Lindop’s “From a Flat City” clarifies that, first and foremost, education of the younger generation regarding this idea should be striven for, so that they can learn from it for the future.

8. The Depiction of the City in Contemporary Poetry

The ‘mixed poems’ that were just explored nicely lead on to the next step—the analysis of the contemporary city poems. The chosen texts offer insights into new, particularly ‘modern’ ways of perceiving the city as well as into the causes for these novel impressions, which will help to get a more complete idea of the aspects related to ‘urban anxiety’. Nevertheless, one will also notice that the perception of the city in more recent times is sometimes not that different from the impression people had during the nineteenth century—these connections making clear one more time that skepticism towards the city and modernization in general has its roots in the age of industrialization already. It is by becoming aware of this connection between former and present times—made possible by the approach in this thesis—that a certain persistence, seriousness, and urgency regarding the effect of urban surroundings on people’s well-being is realized.

8.1. Bill Griffiths’s *A Book of Spilt Cities*

The first contemporary lyrical text with a focus on the city that will be analyzed is Bill Griffiths’s *A Book of Spilt Cities* from 1999 which differs from the other poems that have been looked at so far not only in terms of its content, but also in its form, since it is basically a poetry sequence of book length, as indicated in the title. The reason why it is worthwhile including the text in the analysis is the poem’s straightforward reference to both the topic of the city and the topic of the psyche—the two great underlying aspects of this chapter which aims at discovering the origins of the phenomenon of ‘urban anxiety’ and the often resulting development of a more nature-focused attitude. A back-to-nature impulse and a more environmentally friendly perspective do not just result from learning about the beauty and benefits of nature that might have slid into obscurity with the advance of modernization and urbanization, but also from realizing the harms that we do to nature *and* to ourselves, if we keep on following the dictates of a thirst for progress. Therefore, the poems dealing with the city and ‘urban anxiety’ complement the nature poems in helping to lead to a new view with respect to the natural and built environment—one that is directed towards sustainability. Although it is, of course, wrong to present cities as exclusively negative, harmful, and destructive, it is understandable that authors choose extreme and shocking images as devices to function like a ‘wake-up call’ and make people recognize things that have long been ignored. In *A Book of Spilt Cities*, Griffiths has decided for a radical approach to what

Zapf has termed cultural-critical metadiscourse: He portrays the city, London in this case, as psychologically ‘ill’ and lets the reader follow how it gets ‘psychoanalyzed’ in the course of the text. It is thus a look at the very core of the city’s problems and their interrelatedness with the issue of well-being, the exploration of which can definitely contribute to a reassessment of the urban space and ultimately to a re-evaluation of the influential power of spatial surroundings in general, even though some critics regard the work as “quite complicated” (Rowe qtd. in Griffiths, “Interview” 189). Griffiths’s poetry, with its “Poundian experiments, soundtext and concrete verse, differ[s] tremendously from what had been canonized as ‘good’ poetry or simply as ‘English’ poetry, deviating from the prevailing model of the short lyrical piece, teachable and paraphrasable” (Teixeira de Medeiros 122-123). Nevertheless, as will be shown, “the poem’s distancing from the standard communicational model does not mean that poetry has distanced itself from people or their lives; quite the contrary” (Teixeira de Medeiros 124).

Now, what exactly are the reasons Griffiths presents the city as ‘ill’ or, as he puts it in the title, ‘spilt’? Since *A Book of Spilt Cities* is divided into three main parts (with many sub-parts), a chronological analysis of the different sections will be presented in the following to illuminate the causes step by step and to give a comprehensive picture at the end.⁹⁷ Appropriately enough, the first part is titled “The Trauma of the City” and serves as an introduction to the city’s ‘psychological condition’, which, eventually, seems to affect the city’s residents as well, as it is shown to spring much from the urbanites’ own conception and transformation of the city. The first information about the city that is given in part one might be the result of looking at it from an initial distance with the aim of getting an overview. Its general ‘form’ and ‘appearance’ are described, so that the reader can get a first impression of the place. Therefore, the situation is reminiscent of an encounter between a psychoanalyst and his or her patient —not yet clearly knowing what bothers the person, the psychoanalyst first gets an idea of the patient’s general appearance and character by entering into a conversation with him or her, and then slowly gets to know him or her better until the psychoanalyst

⁹⁷ Due to the text’s length and density of information, it will not be analyzed in its entirety in this thesis. Still, the chronological procedure and analysis of information from each of the three parts shows the intention of offering a general overview of the text’s message. It should also be noted that the focus will be on the first part, since it contains the passages that seem most relevant with regard to the aim of this thesis: This is the description of the city’s ‘illness’ and the expression of its need for a ‘treatment’. Part two sheds light on the concept of sprawl and the development of the suburbs, and part three provides an insight into teachings at university; both, the suburb and the ideas at university, are presented as having an enormous influence on the city as such, which is why selected information from these chapters will be drawn on in this analysis, even if the focus will be on part one.

develops an understanding of the patient's condition. Likewise, in the very first lines of part one, the city is presented in more overall terms until, at a later point, the details are given away. In line 1, it is said that it is "[a] sprawl" and this image is further developed in the following lines, in which the sprawl is defined as the result of "glowly roads / an' crushy quarters / an debris, muggy smoke-in – / sluggish sluggish circles" (p. 5, ll. 7-10).⁹⁸ It is like looking at the place from far away or from above and seeing its general 'shape' and dimensions. By the word "sprawl", the steady extension of the city is referred to that also brings with it certain problems, as the reader gets to know in the same breath from the "crushy quarters" (p. 5, l. 8) and the "debris" (p. 5, l. 9). The city grows, but while it does so, there are, at the same time, scenes of destruction and decline. Moreover, the references to the weather conditions and air ("muggy" and "smoke-in", p. 5, l. 9) as well as to the atmosphere ("sluggish sluggish", p. 5, l. 10) help to draw a rather sinister first impression. One of the things the speaker seems to regard as the origin of the problematic form the city takes on is the "clash of wills: / noble / courtly v. / costly / and profitable" (p. 5, ll. 11-15). This might be a reference to discussions about urban planning which the speaker finds to go in the wrong direction because they are characterized by "hammered meetings, / taut faces, / [and] blank black concrete" (p. 5, ll. 16-18). The plain succession of these adjective-noun pairs, the one immediately being followed by another and all of them being negatively connoted due to the adjectives, reinforces the sinister first impression of the city. The expressions could further be interpreted as bearing a deeper meaning: The meetings might be referred to as "hammered" (p. 5, l. 16) because the debating people seem 'benumbed' to the speaker—probably due to their ignorance towards how their decisions affect the development of the city. This would also fit what Williams says about the urbanite by taking up an idea that was formulated similarly already in Simmel's classic essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life": The urbanites' forms of behavior often show that "[t]he adoption of the willed state of the 'blasé' becomes the only way to survive" ("The Anxious City" 9). Also, the "taut faces" (p. 5, l. 17) and the "blank black concrete" (p. 5, l. 18) could stand for an atmosphere of tension and depression that can be felt among the people. Next, the look at the city is again one of distance, as at the beginning, and the speaker refers to the suburbs through which the city seems to spread more and more, illustrated by the image of the "fring-ed finger-suburbs" (p. 5, l. 34) which

⁹⁸ The page numbers and lines given in parentheses refer to the version of the text as printed in *A Book of Spilt Cities*. Buckfastleigh: Etruscan Books, 1999. 5-92. Due to the extreme length of the lyrical text and for reasons of clarity, the lines have been counted separately for each page.

operate
endless / extend
the major
nerve centres
the labouring ganglions
strewn and tossed up (p 5, ll. 36-41)

Quite interestingly, these lines are not only meant to help the reader picture the sprawl, but also to depict the city as a human brain (cf. “nerve centres”, l. 39, and “ganglions”, l. 40 on p. 5)—one that seems out of control (cf. “endless / extend”, l. 37, and “strewn and tossed up”, l. 41 on p. 5) and is thus malfunctioning, though. Therefore, starting from the very first lines already, the speaker manages to draw a picture of the city that tells the reader that something is wrong: Only from looking at the city, as described by the speaker, one knows about its ‘inner’ problems. To pick up the psychoanalyst/patient comparison again, it is like seeing a patient’s sad face expression, and knowing that he or she must be hurt inside.

After these first introductory lines, the speaker immediately comes straight to the point and asserts that “[t]he city is in a state of trauma” (p. 6, l. 5). This is further explained a few lines later, when it is said that the city is “past a terror / Present a confusion” (p. 6, ll. 20-21) and that it is “[n]o wonder everyone is in alarm” (p. 6, l. 23). The reference to the “terror” (p. 6, l. 20) of the past could be a means to express that the city (and its rapid development) have already shocked and terrified people when industrialization, urbanization, and modernization began. Also, certain aspects of city life might have been worse during these times than today (like working conditions, sewage systems, epidemic illnesses). Still, the speaker wants to point out that the city has not so much changed for the better, since it is still “a confusion” (p. 6, l. 21) at present. He also makes clear that it is not just his personal view, but that this feeling is widespread among the city’s inhabitants because everyone is upset and alarmed (cf. p. 6, l. 23). However, one also learns that the speaker blames the people themselves for the problematic situation of the city. At one point, the people in the city are referred to as the “limbs of population” (p. 6, l. 6)—another example of ascribing ‘human shape’ to the city by the way. In this context, the speaker reveals his criticism of the way the population influences the city through their actions that are regarded as ‘stupid’ and ‘irrational’, as can be seen from his statement that the population “with molecule-thin edge logic / demand[s] audience of the Ego” (p. 6, ll. 10-11). The mentioning of the “Ego” (p. 6, l. 11) with respect to the city reveals that the speaker does, in fact, lend the city a soul and believes that the city, too, has some form of psyche. The additional

BOWELLED OUT / BARELY BEATING HEART” (p. 8, ll. 10-14) which cause that “ONLY THE LIVING RIM SUSTAINS” (p. 8, l. 15). The speaker might want to say that, due to the urban sprawl and the city’s expansion (cf. “CENTRES BOWELLED OUT”, p. 8, l. 13), the city center has lost much of its original character and liveliness (cf. “BARELY BEATING HEART”, p. 8, l. 14), since more and more people are *living* in the suburbs and only *working* in the city center. This also goes well with Trevor Rowley’s finding that “[u]rban defusion [is] not just a matter of a move to the urban fringe, but the decentralization of many urban functions” (5). The intention behind the capitalization of this passage is probably to highlight the message and get its seriousness across to the reader. After all, the speaker wants to point to his understanding that, to a great extent, the “horror of the city” is “self-made” (p. 9, l. 20). He makes clear that it is not about turning back to a past state, but about the city dwellers realizing the role they play in this “urbanic braincore shock” (p. 8, l. 20). Even though he referred to the image of the city drawn by the speaker in Wordsworth’s poem via the “hymn” (cf. p. 7, ll. 6-33), he feels the need to stress that a better future cannot be achieved by turning back to an ideal of bygone times and wants to convince the reader that the situation of the city in the past was just as bad (in a different way, though): “[Y]ou do not want to travel into the past / when there was a hocking ’n gobbing ev’rywhere / [...] an’ more infants used as springs to work the great valves / an scrawny adults forever sobbin’ ’n dyyin’ / ’n birthin’ ’n sheetin’ ’n slayin’” (p. 9, ll. 29-36).

In a next step, the speaker addresses the reader directly and tries to convince him or her of the necessity of joining him in his position of ‘psychoanalyst’, so that the audience, too, is able to see into the real problems of the city:

We are the
 Scientists, only observe:
 Unethical to alter what we see:
 observe the human in deprivation
 in catastrophe
 and captivity
 in isolation (specially built)
 and under varied (calibrated) levels of stress (p. 12, ll. 27-34)

By saying that it is only possible to “observe / Unethical to alter what [one] see[s]” (p. 12, ll. 28-29), the speaker clarifies, once more, that the terrible state of the city is self-made (cf. “specially built”, p. 12, l. 33 and “calibrated”, p. 12, l. 34) and that the scientist cannot change the situation except for making the patient (the city and its inhabitants) realize this self-inflicted ‘pain’ and inspiring an appropriate reaction. Therefore, in the following, the speaker clearly pronounces his procedure of

'psychoanalysis', taking for granted that a method designed for human beings can be adapted to a geographical entity—a city:

It will be necessary to analyse and endupe,
to psycho-sedate,
probe
regress the great city's mass,
clean it of image and identity,
scour it to calmness.
once more to its core.... (p. 13, ll. 18-24)

Matching the therapeutic instructions that can be found at several different points (cf. p. 8, l. 21), the speaker then demonstrates certain 'soothing techniques' (cf. p. 13, l. 25 up to p. 14, l. 24) that should "facilitate release of repression" (p. 5, l. 3), which was defined as a goal of the 'psychoanalysis' at the very beginning of the text. It is a device of showing that the city deserves, in fact, some kind of 'treatment' and that something must be done to help it 'recover'.

A little later, there is a passage that is reminiscent of a question/answer exchange or even a role play in a session with a therapist (cf. p. 20, l. 14 to p. 23, l. 35). Although it is not clear whether the questions are directed towards the city or towards its inhabitants (probably towards both), the whole interviewing serves to give the reader a better insight into the suppressed problems. For example, when the 'patient' is asked to take over the role of "the bum of the city" (p. 20, l. 27), it is revealed that the city is seen as "[a] place to produce rubbish" (p. 20, l. 29) where people "bake and fix / and hammer and scribble / until everything has the human scent on it" (p. 20, ll. 32-34). Besides the criticism of the city's pollution through human beings, there is also a criticism of the power structures that can be felt: "We too are worked and eaten, / bulled into strain of / all the systems of control / and aim to produce / that enlarges our own / place of winning" (p. 21, ll. 13-18). Obviously, the problems of the city have also arisen from the pressures of the achievement-oriented society. A third main factor that is expressed as a contribution to the city's 'condition' in this passage is the developments that have come with the sprawl and the emergence of suburbs (cf. "the pre-dictated organic growing of the ring", p. 22, ll. 20-21). It has not just caused massive transportation problems (cf. "On the long curling elephant of a road thru London / there are ribbands of cars", p. 22, ll. 3-4), but it has also led to a decentralization with "commerce and buying and office centred / into giant zones of housing" (p. 22, ll. 22-23), leaving the city behind a bit 'impoverished'. Kathryn Milun also refers to "empty space" (xi) as the "most anxiety-triggering forms of urban space" (ibid.) and says that "today, the 'stage' for this inscrutable display is the blank expanses of urban

freeways that circle through the center of our cities and the big-box architecture of the suburban shopping mall so saturated with commodities that its emptiness is only experienced viscerally” (xi). While pollution has been mentioned at the very beginning of the poetry sequence already, the issue of the urban sprawl and the achievement-oriented society are still to be looked at in more detail with the help of the following two parts.

With the beginning of the second main part of *A Book of Spilt Cities*, which focuses on the development of the suburbs, one gets an insight into what city life looks like at the outskirts and learns what consequences this form of decentralization has for the city. One aspect of criticism that can be felt at the very beginning of this part is the speaker’s dislike of the general artificiality of the suburbs and the accumulation of cars. According to the speaker, the artificiality of the place stems much from the fact that the surroundings seem too ‘arranged’, almost plastic-like (cf. “We have made things plastic”, p. 30, l. 16).¹⁰⁰ Apart from the general appearance, the environment also does not look naturally mixed as one might be used to from the city center, where different groups of people live together in a more diversified way. The suburbs appear quite ‘made-up’, particularly because they appeal so strongly to families and therefore indirectly inhibit, for example, single persons from settling there (cf. “be married / to participate”, p. 31, ll. 26-27), since they would feel ‘out of place’. As the speaker states, the “[b]elief in it is to breed” (p. 32, l. 15), and therefore the suburb’s layout promotes isolation and segregation instead of a sense of community. Due to the strange and unnatural homogeneity that is created this way, the suburbs do not seem like a part of the city, as belonging to it, but rather like an enclosed settlement that is almost completely isolated from the city’s inner dynamics. The only sign of ‘linkage’ to the city is the car which can be seen everywhere in the suburbs: The speaker states that there are “so many cars / snarling and limping round / each others’ arses” (p. 30, ll. 18-20), clearly demonstrating his dislike of the suburbanite’s (almost mandatory) automobile ownership through his pejorative choice of words (cf. “snarling”, “limping”, and “arses”). When the speaker goes on telling about his impression of the suburbs, he next mentions that even what is originally natural there is turned into something ‘unnatural’

¹⁰⁰ This should not lead to the idea that, with regard to the future of our environment, we have to give up everything that is ‘artificial’ or that it stands in the way to our well-being. It should have become clear so far from the interpretations that a moderate approach is what has to be striven for, since “the conviction that we must reorient our entire economic base toward ‘natural’ rather than artificial products [...] simply does not hold up to scrutiny” (Lewis 799). As Buell formulates it, it is all about “put[ting] ‘green’ and ‘brown’ landscapes, the landscapes of exurbia and industrialization, in conversation with one another” (*Writing for an Endangered World* 7).

because it becomes 'shaped'. In this context, he ironically refers to the "lawn-mower" (p. 45, l. 5), which is in wide use in the suburbs, as a "tame[r] of Nature" (p. 45, l. 4). It symbolizes the widespread will to create a living environment that is designed in every respect (through monotonous repetition), which is harshly criticized by the speaker, since he is convinced it will lead to wrong uniformity:

the surge of the new azoic prairie
the mechanical country
the plain / playing fields
gardens / grass
sportsland / spareland
roadtrim / recreational (p. 45, ll. 29-34)

By the term "azoic prairie", which is in itself a contradiction, the speaker wants to make clear that the 'natural' loses all of its 'naturalness' and 'liveliness', if human beings have too much of a hand in it. The result of all this is a different unity with regard to nature: One where every place that is characterized by something 'natural' finally looks the same, but has lost all of nature's original qualities. In the speaker's view, the actually desired 'real' contact with nature or a balanced coexistence of the built and natural environment does not seem closer, but rather less achievable in the suburbs. This is also why the suburbanites' claim that "ev'ry child is to be put out in the fresh air for at least a half / hour each day" (p. 47, ll. 2-3) seems overly hypocritical to the speaker. And, what is more, regarding the critical reality of the relationship between city and nature, private gardens might be regarded as self-deception: Leonard Lutwack correctly reminds us that "[t]he garden, with its well-watered trees and pruned plants, represents the reassuring compromise of life contained—and oasis in the desert" (48). Moreover, the speaker reveals that he sees in the people's ways of shaping their environment not a desire to be in real contact with nature at all, but rather a will to live out their personal fantasies by treating "each house like a cosmos / where you can create planets / act god and mortal, miracle and halfman / be your own state and governor and proof" (p. 47, ll. 19-22)—a method serving the aim of representation after all. Quite interestingly, the speaker also believes that all these attempts of creating a certain 'order' in the suburbs will finally result in the opposite, namely a deep confusion and loss of a sense of belonging or attachment to place, as conveyed in the remark that "oddly / individually / a street will lead to Russian Orthodoxy / or a golf course. / You are lost" (p. 46, ll. 20-24). Hereby, he refers to the *cul-de-sacs* and the dead-end streets that are so typical of suburban life and act as a reflection of the constructed nature of the place and the resulting impression of isolation which the people could realize with time.

One of the reasons the suburbs have become what they are is presented in the third main part of *A Book of Spilt Cities* which illuminates the roots of the performance society in the education system. It is titled “The University” and basically serves to reveal that people’s values are strongly connected to what they are taught throughout their lives. If one grows up with the view that wealth and prestige are worth striving for (cf. “wealth is what you work for / for the right sort of wealth is the shape of God”, p. 81, ll. 13-14), it is no wonder this results in a capitalistic attitude and corresponding behavior. The quote given in parentheses here also demonstrates the persuasive force of this principle, since it is formulated like a religious dogma, and religion is one of the most important systems of belief about the meaning of existence. Through taking up the issue of capitalism in the explanation of the city’s ‘condition’, the poem also echoes the arguments of theories like social ecology and eco-Marxism. In this way, *A Book of Spilt Cities* mirrors the view of the city that was already expressed in poetry by Baudelaire and Eliot, namely that “material progress” will result in “a cycle of desire, doomed to escalation” (Lehan 76). Griffiths wants to convey a similar idea of the city as the two poets who “saw modern man caught in an essentially self-destructive urban process: the commercial city became the modern equivalent of Dante’s Inferno” (ibid.).

Following the motif of the powerful means of education in this part of the poetry sequence, the speaker finally voices his own (educational) advice in the coda through a reference to antique poet Claudian’s poem “De Crystallo cui Aqua inerat”. Addressing the wealth-oriented people the right way (with a poem about a gem), he probably hopes to gain their attention and, more importantly, to succeed in teaching them about real ‘wealth’. Claudian’s poem is basically about a gemstone that has a liquid core and it tells about the fascination that the stone could preserve the fluidity inside, even though it had been subject to outside forces. The altered version in the coda follows the message of the original, but after reading *A Book of Spilt Cities*, one will notice that the speaker has endowed the ending with a kind of double-meaning. When he says that “at the orb-centre is a significant flowing circuit / (something alive) / that is its value” (p. 91, ll. 21-23), one is immediately led to relate this to the way the speaker described the city center at the very beginning of the poetry sequence. Because of the state of ‘mental illness’ he ascribes to the city, it is not ‘functioning’ properly and lacks an atmosphere of liveliness, which could be seen as the opposite of the “flowing circuit” (p. 91, l. 21) and “something alive” (p. 91, l. 22) at the gemstone’s core. It is thus likely that the coda has an allegorical function, with the speaker comparing the gemstone to

the city—the city center being its liquid core and the hard shell representing the suburbs. He thus tries to convey that, if the city center remains ‘functioning’ and its original nature is preserved within the dynamics of urban sprawl, “that is [...] value” (p. 91, l. 23). Close to the end, when the speaker refers to the gemstone’s appearance, one will become aware of more parallels to what was addressed by the speaker at an earlier point in the text already:

Do not underestimate such a round rock (uneven, unground)
it is more than the glory of a king.
It is noway less than the prettiest liveliest pearls out of the East Sea.
And yet it is predictably shapeless ice also, a rough mineral specimen
without even any art-carving.
But counted as the total of treasures, to be comprehended. (p. 92, ll. 15-20)

Here, the speaker indirectly criticizes the suburbanites’ desire to ‘shape’ things and render them artificial because he says that the gem’s prettiness is also largely due to its imperfect form (cf. “uneven, unground”, p. 92, l. 15) and lack of adornment (cf. “shapeless”, p. 92, l. 18, “rough mineral specimen”, *ibid.*, and “without even any art-carving”, p. 92, l. 19). He thus speaks against the suburbanites’ idea of representation, by claiming that real wealth is to be understood differently. Just like the stone’s preciousness results from its intriguing quality of keeping the core liquid and lively under the tough surface, the city’s outer layers, too, must keep the inner part functioning. Via this ending, the speaker intends to convey that this insight is the real method of ‘healing’ the city from its ‘condition’ and helping it gain back its normal status.

Taking everything into account, it can be said that Bill Griffiths’s *A Book of Spilt Cities* has allowed to look at the modern developments of the city from a different perspective—philosophically as well as geographically. It is not only from within the city, but often from high-angle perspectives, with an overview of the city in its full dimensions, that the reader can follow the speaker’s observations and gains an impression of what is presented as the main problem of modern London: the dynamics and consequences of decentralization.¹⁰¹ By interweaving the idea of psychoanalysis and comparing the city to a patient in need of psychological treatment, the author has chosen an approach to urban poetry that signals the seriousness of the city’s problematic state. This way, the city calls for an empathic and goal-oriented examination like a human

¹⁰¹ There might also be a connection between the experience of the city described in Griffiths’s text and the author’s personal view of London, where he lived for a while: In the “Interview with Will Rowe” published in *The Salt Companion to Bill Griffiths*, edited by Will Rowe, Griffiths reveals that “[he] was increasingly unhappy living in London in the sense of Central London, Metropolitan London, even cultural London—and notably in Thatcherist London” (187).

being undergoing psychoanalysis. The city's 'condition' or 'illness' is not only described in detail at the level of content, but it is also reflected in the poem's form which is quite experimental and appears very strange and chaotic at points, due to the "amputated phrases" (Sinclair ix) as well as the "[s]ick half rhymes and blood-pulse rhythms [that] mimic the loud fugues of paranoia" (Sinclair xi). As one learns throughout the poem, the city is *spilt* because of the urban sprawl, but this, then, is the reason the twin word *split* applies as well, since the inner and outer part of the city are shown to be divided—this being one of the main causes of the city's 'condition'. However, it becomes clear that is not the process of decentralization alone that has led to this state, but that education also plays a central role in forming people's values in life, and ultimately also in how they deal with their spatial environment. The educational ending of the poetry sequence in the form of an allegorical intertextual reference additionally emphasizes this insight and alludes to the idea that change begins in people's minds.

8.2. Roy Fisher's *City*

With Roy Fisher's *City*, first published in 1961, one is invited to look at the city from yet another perspective: It does not deal with metropolitan London, but with one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution in the English Midlands, Birmingham, which has become the second-largest British city.¹⁰² Since the author "lived in Birmingham until his late 40s, [...] much of his poetry is deeply engaged with the geography of that city" ("Roy Fisher: 1930-2017" n. pag.). Although "[o]n the one hand his writing is deeply rooted—Fisher acknowledges his almost Wordsworthian attachment to the city of his birth—on the other hand it refuses certainty and belonging" ("Roy Fisher: b. 1930 d. 2017" n. pag.), as will also become clear from his work *City*. Through a mixture of verse and prose, the text offers an idea of the urban experience during the city's post-war transformation and redevelopment: Barry regards the text as

the most powerful literary account we have of the almost nationwide experience in mid-century Britain of urban loss and destruction, a loss brought about by a combination of bombing during the Second World War, and wholesale 'redevelopment', 'slum clearance', and (as we might call it) 'motorisation' in the 1950s and 60s, followed by deindustrialisation in the 1970s and 80s (*Contemporary British Poetry* 197).

The speaker is not simply an observer, telling about the place from an outsider's position, but experiences the city himself, so that, when following his detailed and

¹⁰² *City* was "[f]irst published as a chapbook in 1961 by Turnbull's Migrant Press, then reissued in revised form in a trade edition, *Collected Poems 1968*, from the Fulcrum Press in 1969, where it appeared as the poet's first mature work (preceded by a section of 'Early Poems')" (Robinson 95).

emotional account, it almost feels like accompanying him on his trip through Birmingham.¹⁰³ Thus, one could say that it is the personal factor and ‘immediacy’ of the account which are so successful in making the poem affect the reader personally as well, no matter whether he or she is actually acquainted with the place. Furthermore, Fisher is regarded by certain critics as “the quintessential city poet” (Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 9) and it is said that “[n]o British poet has described the appearance of a mid-twentieth century city with more memorable precision than Fisher” (Gregson 188). Last but not least, *City* has been a forerunner regarding the examination of the city as a “city of the mind” (Fisher qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 240), shedding light also on how it is “apprehended by the mind” (ibid.), instead of looking at it solely in geographical terms. Fisher explains this as follows: “Most of the *City* writing is meant to be about a city which has already turned into a city of the mind. Where the writing is topographical it’s meant to do with the EFFECTS of topography” (qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 240).¹⁰⁴

Roy Fisher’s *City* begins with a very bleak introductory prose part that conveys an image of the city after its destruction through the war, setting the general atmosphere and mood for the depiction of the city that is going to follow. One learns that, in one of the streets leading to the center of the city, “all the buildings have been destroyed within the past year” (p. 14, ll. 1-2), leaving the place behind in smithereens.¹⁰⁵ As was shown before with the help of the poems from the Victorian Period, in industrial times, ‘urban anxiety’ often resulted from the perceived density (of the buildings) and their claustrophobic effect. In post-war Birmingham, the ‘fear of the city’ is obviously caused by the exact opposite, however with a similarly disturbing power: It is the vastness and

¹⁰³ Since the poem focuses on an individual’s experience, “the imagery is primarily intended to be subjective, that is, to convey feelings and tensions within the perceiver, rather than rendering the percept accurately and normatively” (Barry, “Language and the City” 237). That the reaction to the urban surroundings is not conveyed as absolute and universal (with which one would either agree or disagree as a reader), but only suggested to exist in a certain way (namely as presented by the speaker), might help the reader to better identify oneself with the urban experience and become aware of similarities in one’s own life.

¹⁰⁴ For Fisher’s role as an author, this also means that what he offers with *City* is an “interplay between an elaborate fictiveness and a descriptive realism” (Sheppard 49) because his own experience of the city has already been followed by reflection and is then again transformed “by the language used in presenting it” (Barry, “Language and the City” 240). However, as Fisher states himself, it is important to him “to take from a thing [here: a place] [...] sufficient properties to exist verbally in [his] poem and at the same time to be answerable to the reality should anybody go look at it” (qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 241). This shows that, although what is presented in *City* is a “city of the mind” (Fisher qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 240), it does not hinder the audience from identifying with it.

¹⁰⁵ The page numbers and lines given in parentheses refer to the version of the text printed in *Poems 1955-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. 14-30. Due to the length of the text and its mixture of verse and prose, the lines have been counted separately for each page.

flatness of the city that strike the speaker and convey to him an atmosphere of emptiness, ruin, and loss. All that remains are “the streets [...] among the rough quadrilaterals of brick rubble, veering awkwardly towards one another through nothing” (p. 14, ll. 4-6). In addition to the scene of destruction and desolation, the speaker also refers to the nightly (cf. “tonight, p. 14, l. 7) lighting conditions which seem to support the frightening effect due to the “yellowish flare, diffused and baleful” (p. 14, ll. 7-8). The realization that “the entire place has been razed flat” (p. 14, l. 16) and the image of the empty streets make the speaker reflect on the actual meaning of the place he finds himself in. When he refers to the streets as “purposeless” (p. 14, l. 14), his choice of words proves that it is basically not a place to be called city anymore—that the streets do not lead anywhere and thus also make the observer feel lost and disoriented inside. While the place the speaker walks through is flat and empty, in the distance, up on the hill, there is one road left “stacked close on either side with warehouses and shops” (p. 14, ll. 18-19) and out of the “impenetrably black” (p. 14, l. 20) area below, “the great flat-roofed factory shows clear by its bulk [...] with solid rows of lit windows” (p. 14, ll. 24-26). It is quite interesting that the only buildings standing visible and illuminated (cf. “brilliant”, p. 14, l. 18, and “lit”, p. 14, l. 26) are such that are associated with the consumer society or factory work—both aspects that have often been related to ‘urban anxiety’ and which might also be shown to play a prominent role in this context in Fisher’s text.

Having offered the reader an image of what became of the city after the war, the speaker next ‘travels forward in time’ and refers to the first signs of redevelopment that can be perceived. Still, these signs do not seem to contribute to an improvement of the speaker’s impression of the place because they are assessed in a negative way and create an atmosphere of unease—differently, though, than at the beginning of the text. For example, when he mentions that one can now already see “half-built towers / Over the bombed city” (p. 16, ll. 14-15), he indicates that the process of rebuilding has begun, but makes clear, in the same breath, that the new buildings will not necessarily lead to a better future: The new half-finished buildings are said to “[s]how mouths that soon will speak no more, / Stoppered with the perfections of tomorrow” (p. 16, ll. 16-17), which could be interpreted as an anticipation of the incessant thirst for progress and advancement that is to follow with the newly built structure of offices and industry. Particularly the expression the “perfections of tomorrow” (p. 16, l. 17) has a slightly ironical taste to it and could be taken as an indication that the speaker does not look

very optimistically into the future. He probably pictures the things that will be designed to make life easier and foster economic growth, but simultaneously thinks about the string of (negative) consequences connected to them. Philip Gardner rightly notes that the image conveyed here is one of “a nineteenth-century industrial creation altered and emptied by the war, and not yet ready to put on the post-war identity decreed for it by planners” (314). The cruel image of the “foetus in the dustbin” (p. 16, l. 24), appearing a few lines later, ties in here and might be a means of foreshadowing that the pursuit of advancement and progress will, at some point, even claim the lives of people, or, at least, take a heavy toll on them. Besides the emerging buildings and towers that are described as “caress[ing] the sky” (p. 17, l. 15), which, as an image, is basically the epitome of the idea of progress, the speaker also refers to the accumulation of cars as a negative influence on his view of the city:

The rows of trucks
Extend: black, white,
White, grey, white, black,
Black, white, black, grey,
Marshalled like building blocks (p. 17, ll. 16-20)

The rows of cars do not only remind the speaker of “building blocks” (p. 17, l. 20) because they appear similarly constricting, but they are further presented like an army, through the enumeration of the colors and the choice of words (cf. “Marshalled”, p. 17, l. 20), which gives an impression of how intimidated or even menaced the speaker must feel. The monochrome image of the cars, lacking bright gay colors, emphasizes this effect even more. Obviously, some things have changed already with the phase of redevelopment, but the strange mixture of the city’s rapid re-awakening and growth on the one hand and the neglect and decay on the other hand deeply confuses the speaker, as he reveals in the following: “In the century that has passed since this city has become great, it has twice laid itself out in the shape of a wheel. The ghost of the older one still lies among the spokes of the new” (p. 17, ll. 22-24). While the city grows and leads to the development of roads and buildings beyond its original ‘boundaries’ (cf. p. 17, ll. 24-27), in other parts of the city, old roads and buildings are left behind neglected. The speaker states that, with the vision of urban growth, these streets have almost become forgotten because they are not considered a relevant contribution to the city’s development: According to the speaker, “[t]hey look merely like side-streets, heartlessly overblown in some excess of Victorian expansion” (p. 17, ll. 30-32) and are thought of as “not worth lighting” (p. 17, l. 38) because the “houses have not been turned into shops” (p. 17, l. 39). Corresponding with the fact that these streets represent an old ‘life

phase' of the city, the people living there are also "mostly very old" (p. 18, l. 3), standing for the past and not for the future of the city. This portrayal of the city perfectly fits philosopher Anne Cauquelin's definition of the modern city: She holds the view that "both destruction and construction are aspects of equal importance" (qtd. in Larsen 221) because "[e]very city is always both a ruin and an emergent phenomenon, it constitutes a state of permanent transition" (ibid.). Nevertheless, Sean O'Brien is right in saying that this passage "makes the reader pause to ask if this can really be England [because] [i]t sounds almost more like nineteenth-century Europe" (113).

The text continues with three separate verse parts before it changes into prose again. In these parts, the reader is partly presented a flashback to wartime events, and partly given new insights into certain parts of the city. It must be noted, though, that it is not certain whether the persona stays the same throughout the whole text, especially within these verse passages. It is likely that it is the aforementioned speaker's voice all the time, but this is left a bit ambiguous. If it is the same speaker, then he must be telling about his younger self in the flashback passage dealing with the war experience. The account of the loss of four relatives in the blitz (cf. "This bloody episode of four", p. 19, l. 16) and the shocking firsthand experience of the bombing (cf. "I had heard the bombs / [...] With bright soft flashes and sounds like banging doors", p. 18, ll. 24-26) must have influenced the speaker strongly in his outlook on life—and his outlook on the city. Being still confronted with the traces of the war, it is comprehensible that the city appears so frightening to him and is described so negatively.

When he next comes to tell about the northern part of the city, he immediately makes clear to the reader that he has never been there, but that he has a certain image of it in his mind:

There must be dunes with cement walks,
A twilight of aluminium
Among beach huts and weather-stained handrails;
Much glass to reflect the clouds (p. 19, ll. 28-31)

In the speaker's imagination, the place is characterized by a mixture of the 'urban' or 'man-made' and the 'natural', since there are "dunes" (p. 19, l. 28) and "beach huts" (p. 19, l. 30) right next to "cement walks" (p. 19, l. 28), "aluminium" (p. 19, l. 29), and "glass" (p. 19, l. 31). He further describes this place as "[t]he edge of the city" (p. 20, l. 1) where there is "[a] low hill with houses on one side and rough common land on the other" (p. 20, ll. 1-2). It seems that this place embodies, for the speaker, the urban sprawl, since it shows how aspects connected with urban areas have spread out to

formerly unbuilt regions that are still marked by a terrain of wild nature. The fact that he defines the area as a place “[w]here [he] can never go” (p. 19, l. 25) shows that it is exactly this ‘side by side’ situation of the ‘man-made’ and the ‘natural’ (even if it is only imagined) that has such an unsettling effect on the speaker because it symbolizes relentless urban growth to him. To point out that this is not just his personal view, he claims that the absurdity of the place is also reflected in the place itself: “The society of singing birds and the society of mechanical hammers inhibit the world together, slightly ruffled and confined by each other’s presences” (p. 20, ll. 5-7). This passage is also a perfect example of why the city in Roy Fisher’s text is not just a city in geographical terms, but rather “a city of the mind” (Fisher qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 240): It gives an idea of how the subjective experience of a place can have such a deep impact on a person that, when reflecting on it, it influences also the mental picture of parts of the city that have not even been seen—it stimulates reflection. Or, as Clive Bush puts it, “[t]he landscape of Fisher’s poetry almost always includes a meditation on the nature of representation itself and the operations of mind” (107). Thus, “there is a deliberate ambiguity about whether what is presented is the product of direct observation or of one mental activity or another—remembering, imagining, or dreaming” (Gregson 174-175). In the subsequent verse part, in which the speaker refers to a pond, the aversion to the mixture of the ‘urban’ or ‘man-made’ and the ‘natural’ is revealed one more time. Apparently, whenever urban development reaches out into nature, as represented by the “taut and staring wire fences” (p. 20, l. 11) around the pond, the bleak atmosphere of the city is passed on to this place, as can be seen from the speaker’s negative perception of the area with “the pallid water” (p. 20, l. 8) and “[t]he ashen sky” (p. 20, l. 12). The conveyed image fits the idea expressed by John Barrell and John Bull that “[t]he separation of life in the town and in the country that the pastoral demands is now almost devoid of any meaning” (qtd. in Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 30) because “[i]t is difficult to pretend that the English countryside is now anything more than an extension of the town” (ibid.). Maybe Fisher tried to depict here what he also experienced himself: “I don’t seem to be able to go to any bit of country without finding traces of mining and industry and people’s lives in it” (qtd. in Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 200).¹⁰⁶

The following prose part, then, continues with what Zapf calls cultural-critical metadiscourse: The speaker explains in more detail what he dislikes about how the city

¹⁰⁶ Bush identifies the “doubting [of] the nature/anti-nature opposition” (113) as one of the characteristics of Fisher’s poetry.

has turned out to be and why he believes that the plans for its redevelopment do not improve the general urban situation. As Peter Robinson notices, at this point, “the eye of the poet moves closer into the streets; the larger narrative dimensions of historical change [...] are replaced by an eye-level encounter with the everyday in its ‘unseen’ variety. Briefer, disoriented descriptions shift from one apparently inexplicable event to the next” (109). One aspect that is very striking in this context is the “[b]rick-dust” (p. 20, l. 14) which could be interpreted as an allusion to the attempts at rebuilding that are basically omnipresent (cf. “A place of walls made straight with plumbline and trowel”, p. 20, ll. 15-16). That the newly-built part of the city is more of a deceptive facade, though, because it does not lead to a better atmosphere, is cleverly indicated with the help of the image of “[b]listered paint on cisterns and girders, cracking to show priming” (p. 20, l. 17). Also, the fact that “men spit on the paving slabs” (p. 20, l. 18) and “little boys urinate” (ibid.) on it shows that the place is not appreciated that much. What stands out most to the speaker is the human activity that can be felt everywhere—in fact, he thinks of the air in the city as “human breath” (p. 20, l. 15). Barry concludes about Fisher’s poetic technique at this point that he

continues to record what he sees, with vividness and accuracy, but [...] also shapes the material in a writerly and craftsmanlike fashion [...] and does not scruple to make some of the items recorded emblematic of the deeper, pervasive realities of the place (as, for example, when the brick-dust is said to possess a ‘dry epic flavour whose air is human breath’ and is thereby made an emblem of the human cost of large-scale urban decay and 1960s-style renewal) (“Language and the City” 235).

Commenting on the city’s architecture, the speaker admits that it has changed in its general appearance, but not really in its effect: In contrast to the “arrogant ponderous architecture [...] [that] dwarfed and terrified people by its sheer size and functional brutality” (p. 20, ll. 32-33), “the white blocks and concrete roadways of today” (p. 21, l. 4) might seem like a “fairground” (p. 21, l. 4) or a “clear dream” (p. 21, l. 5) at first glance (cf. “just before walking”, ibid.)—the word “dream” “imply[ing] illusion” (Needham n. pag.). In the speaker’s view, at closer inspection, when looking behind the facade, one will realize that the new architecture is “the creation of salesmen rather than of engineers” (p. 21, ll. 5-6). This might stand for his belief that the attempts at rebuilding are not aimed at making the city more livable and sustainable, but that the whole scheme is directed towards boosting commerce and profit instead of people’s well-being—a way of thinking linked to the ideas of social ecology and eco-Marxism. To further explain this view and give more examples of the ‘half-hearted’ redevelopment of the city, the speaker mentions that the urban growth has also led to a

neglect of the natural world: In the past already, “goods yards, the gasworks and the coal stores were established on tips and hillocks in the sparse fields” (p. 21, ll. 17-18) and “the meagre river [...] now flows under brick and tarmac” (p. 21, ll. 20-21). Now that he sees the city expanding more than ever, the speaker probably fears that it will continue at nature’s cost. The absurdity and senselessness of the architecture that has been set up with urbanization and modernization is once more emphasized via the image of the neglected railway station which is no longer in use and only serves as a “goods depot” (p. 21, l. 24). It is said that it is left standing because people “are too frightened of it to pull it down” (p. 21, l. 30). This serves to prove that the cityscape is characterized by a strange mixture of a will to create something new (although doomed to failure), and simultaneously by a decision to simply not care about remnants from the past and the effect they have on people—an inappropriate two-sidedness that the speaker finds resulting in a rather ineffectual concept of (re)development.

In the following, the speaker continues with his technique of switching quickly between commenting on the urban atmosphere at night and during the day. Concentrating first on an aspect that strikes him in the early morning (cf. “dawn”, p. 21, l. 34), he mentions that one can see “[o]n the first bus nightworkers sleep” (p. 21, l. 35). The unnatural rhythm of work and the implied weariness could be a means to convey to the reader that the way the city is organized or designed towards future development is not durable and does not look very promising. This idea is also supported by the image of the “thousand golden offices, untenanted” (p. 22, l. 3) following a few lines later. According to Gardner, in this part, Fisher’s tone is “a curious yet moving detachment” (314) and he is convinced that this tone needs the complementary prose parts to take on a certain “hardness” (ibid.) that fits the described surroundings. He finds that

[i]t is the prose passages, with their sombre sequence of clauses [...] [which] transmit a sense, sharp and elusive at once, of the transfiguring of the ordinary, and an uncertainty about that transfiguring, which [he] take[s] to be Fisher’s most valuable ‘subversion’ of the reader’s way of looking at the world (Gardner 314).

Barry, too, acknowledges “the great power of the prose sections” (“Language and the City” 234).¹⁰⁷ That the city lacks something essential is further demonstrated through the speaker’s account of having mistaken an “engine-driver” holding a “small brown paper parcel under the arm” (p. 22, l. 8) for an embracing couple (cf. p. 22, ll. 4-5). His belief that “what [he] had first seen was in fact [the engine-driver’s] own [...] fancy” (p. 22,

¹⁰⁷ The ‘directness’, ‘brutality’ and ‘power’ of the prose passages might also be traced back to the fact that they were first only “diary observations, private, not intended for publication” (Lester and Fisher 22).

ll. 10-11) shows that the speaker thinks that he is not the only person to think that something important is missing, judging from the people's appearances. Apparently, the city lacks an atmosphere of love and affection which results in the speaker unconsciously displaying his longings in the form of hallucinations. Taking the idea of the negative effect on the city even a bit further, the speaker also brings in the experience of encountering a man who had just attempted suicide (cf. p. 22, ll. 26-33) to point out that the city's atmosphere might, in fact, lead to a deep despair. The speaker sees one of the causes for the city's dysfunctional character in the "governing authority [being] limited and mean: so limited that it can do no more than preserve a superficial order" (p. 22, ll. 34-35). He probably wants to express that, although one can see a desire for development in the city, in practice, it is not thought through to the end. This is also why he concludes that "[t]his could never be a capital city for all its size" (p. 23, ll. 3-4), basing this inference on the insight that "[t]here is no mind in it, no regard" (p. 23, l. 4). Having such a negative impression of the city, it is no wonder that the speaker feels the negative influence to be reflected in the citizens' appearance: He recounts the experience of a stroll through the city during which he saw in the city-dwellers "no individuals but a composite monster" (p. 23, l. 10). The metaphor of the "monster" reveals the terrifying quality and the bitter insight that the people's original character can no longer be perceived due to the process of assimilation. The fact that they are referred to as "a mass of necks, limbs without extremities, trunks without heads" (p. 23, ll. 11-12) gives some indication of how troubled, distraught, and 'incomplete' (in a psychological way) they appear to the speaker. Still, it is striking that the speaker's reaction, so far, does not go beyond simply commenting on what he sees. He "lacks volition" (Sheppard 51) to do something against the perceived chaos, since "sense-data render[s] him disarmingly paralytic, and reduc[es] him to a state of misanthropic voyeurism" (Fisher, Erwin, and Rasula 36).

It is only in the next verse part that the speaker, in a slightly pastoral way, reflects on his own place in all this and how he can escape from suffering the same fate as the other city-dwellers. This moment of self-reflection is stimulated by the sight of symbols of nature (cf. "Four Lombardy poplars", p. 24, l. 12) at the edge of the city. They seem to express to the speaker some kind of wisdom because he sees that "[c]larity is in their tops / That no one can touch" (p. 24, ll. 14-15), but at the same time, they also remind him of the human neglect and disregard they have to endure when "they are felled / Brushwood to cart away" (p. 24, ll. 16-17). Thus, this moment of enlightenment makes

the speaker realize that the loss of a ‘connection’ to nature supports the aforementioned change in the people and is ultimately also strongly linked to the (wrongly-directed) development of the city. What is indicated here thus fits the view of Clayton and Opotow who believe that “proenvironmental action will be facilitated when social environments (both physical and conceptional) are designed to nurture a feeling of connectedness to nature and an awareness of the local impact of global environmental issues” (20). The speaker comprehends that he “need[s] to withdraw / From what is called [his] life” (p. 24, ll. 19-20) in order to be able to connect with nature again and show understanding for it (cf. “To know these tall pointers”, p. 24, l. 18). The question he asks himself in this context shows that he at least sees a possibility of improving his outlook on life through bonding with nature: “Why should studying / These lacunae of possibility / Relax the iron templates of obligation / Leaving me simply Man?” (p. 24, ll. 24-27). He fears that, if he will not try it, he might “becom[e] / A cemetery of performance” (p. 24, l. 31), which can be interpreted as another expression of his conviction that everything that is done in terms of the city’s development at the moment does not really lead to any success and does not bear any life-enhancing quality.

The subsequent account of the speaker’s attempt at planting trees together with other city-dwellers conveys, however, that everyone is already too ‘involved’ in the dynamics of the city to reconnect with nature and reconcile their concept of development with the natural world: The detailed explanation of how the trees were planted with much caution and care (cf. “It was done with care” p. 25, l. 17, and “Our tree was to be very beautiful”, p. 25, l. 27) proves the strong will behind the act, but the fact that it is not real trees that are planted, but rather imitations of trees in the form of “steel stakes” (p. 25, l. 1) decorated with parts of “a great flock mattress; two carved chairs; cement; chicken-wire; tarpaulin; a smashed barrel; lead piping; leather of all kinds; and many small things” (p. 25, ll. 24-25) signalizes its failure.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, the failure of planting a real tree—of rebuilding what has been destroyed (cf. “felled”, p. 24, l. 16)—also echoes the failure of redevelopment with regard to the city. Robert Sheppard has a similar understanding of this part, saying that “[t]he tree is modeled upon human form, as opposed to the inhuman austerity of the redeveloped city” (65).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Fisher’s understanding of the city as a “city of the mind” (see footnote 104) and “the distortions of representation” (Gregson 176) are found to be reflected, once more, in the imagery of this passage by Ian Gregson: “[T]he language of the poem is analogous to the mattress, chairs, cement and so on available to the tree-makers in that, like all language, it is entirely different from what it is supposed to represent” (ibid.).

¹⁰⁹ The ‘failure’ described here can be related to the idea expressed by Michael Bennett and David W. Teague: “We prize the ‘rural splendors’ that we have fled, even more now that they no longer fit into

In this context, the speaker also asks himself for the first time if he is the only one who has such a negative impression of the city because the people around him still seem to enjoy life and feel love for each other (cf. p. 25, ll. 28-30), differently than expected from the experiences he mentioned so far. He suddenly fears that he is the only reasonable person left—the only person who feels that what happens is wrong and will lead to a geographical and psychological mess: “I feel [...] it is I who am left, shivering and exhausted, to try and kick the lid back into place so that I can go on without the fear of being able to feel only vertically, like a blind wall, or thickly, like the tyres of a bus” (p. 25, l. 29 to p. 26, l. 3). Judging from this statement, the speaker obviously feels like he is in the process of becoming just like the city and giving up all his humanity, if he accepts the developments to go on like this and ‘succumbs’ to the mood of the city.

Another look at the city’s atmosphere at nighttime turns out just as depressing as before. To describe it, the speaker uses strange comparisons and metaphors that reveal what feelings the sight of the place arouses in him, like, for example, that “there are shadows that are sulphurous, tanks of black bile” (p. 26, ll. 9-10). Since black bile was associated with melancholy in medieval physiology, he probably uses this image to communicate to the reader the degree of sadness and disgust he feels at this moment. Again, the ‘deceiving power’ of the city is referred to through the “glitter on the roadways” (p. 26, l. 10) which is shown to be nothing more than “the deceptive ore that shines on coal”—another allusion to the thriving coal industry and the negative consequences (bad working conditions, harmful emissions, pollution of the environment, and deaths).¹¹⁰ The gloom and melancholia of the situation as well as the heavy-heartedness they lead to are also reflected in the picture of the “sky descend[ing] with its full iron weight” (p. 26, ll. 15-16), simulating the psychological pressure felt by the speaker. All these impressions make the speaker reflect, once more, on his thoughts about the city and the ‘truth’ that lies in them, for he still seems to be unsure whether the

our day-to-day existence. However, like other sometimes disaffected urbanites and many ecocritics, we must be careful not to idealize these places and clear out the original soil and trees to make room for the imaginary spaces we need in our very different current environment” (9-10). By this, they probably intend to express the need for a new view of nature in our times that is not directed towards the past, but rather towards the future. What they call “imaginary spaces” is the realizations of ideas about how nature and the urban can coexist, which is what could also be regarded as the solution to the failure of urban redevelopment presented in the poem and the resulting emotional response of the speaker.

¹¹⁰ Interestingly enough, the area around Birmingham (especially the northwest) is today still referred to as the ‘Black Country’, due to its history. As I learned in a conversation with a local, much through the help of Carl Chinn, a ‘Brummie’ writer, historian, and columnist who has basically dealt with Birmingham and the ‘Black Country’ for his whole life: He dedicated several books to the area, wrote a weekly column for the Birmingham Evening Mail, and broadcasted a special program on BBC.

city is really experienced so negatively by the rest of the people living in it as well or whether it is just his own image of the city—a “city of the mind” (Fisher qtd. in Barry, “Language and the City” 240). This uncertainty overcomes him when he realizes that “[t]he imaginary comes to [him] with just as much force as the real, the remembered with just as much force as the immediate” (p. 29, ll. 8-9). Still, whether the described terrors are imagined or spring from reality, the fact that the urban experience inspires him to reflect on it shows the speaker’s sensitivity and psychological vulnerability to the happenings in the city. Not really able to admit his actual fears (cf. “what is strange is that I feel no stress, no grating discomfort among the confusion”, p. 29, ll. 10-11), although he has given proof of them several times with his choice of words, he acknowledges, however, the correctness of his conclusions about the city and that he “should not be [t]here” (p. 29, ll. 11-12).

The fact that the speaker immediately switches back to reporting on his negative impressions of the city in one of the last verse parts of the text proves that he cannot let go of the troubling thoughts. The reference to a park in the city which, to the speaker’s regret, is not visitable, due to its awful condition, signifies, once more, the environmentally destructive force of the urban growth and the resulting wish to ‘connect’ with nature again and to achieve some kind of reconciliation—a *real* improvement of the urban situation after all that would also positively affect people’s emotional state. The park ending “stands for the battle between the natural and the artificial which permeates most parts of the work” (Sheppard 50), and it further reflects “a fear of dirt, disease, ugliness, hostility, old age, [and] death” (Needham n. pag.). One learns, for example, that the park is marked by a “shallow concrete lake, / Scummed over, fouled with paper” (p. 29, ll. 27-28), “grass plots, featureless / Muddy, and bruised, and balding” (p. 29, ll. 30-31), and an old goose with “diseased feet” (p. 30, l. 1, l. 4, and l. 7)—all of these images conveying a sense of the perceived neglect and pollution in that place. That the speaker repeatedly mentions the goose’s “diseased feet”, three times in fact, underlines the urgency of the message he wants to get across. People seem to back away from this park because of the signs of neglect, destruction, and artificiality, but the action itself is symbolic of the city-dwellers’ reluctance to take action and change things. The speaker remains inactive here as well, which is why Sheppard is right in claiming that

[t]he 'hero' of *City* is precisely 'unwilling' in response to such sickness and decay (as one of the section titles, 'Lullaby and Exhortation for the Unwilling Hero', has it). He is generally an anonymous and detached observer (who only makes a substantial appearance towards the end of the work) (51).

Nevertheless, as pointed out at an earlier point in this analysis, the speaker at least feels the wish to bond with nature and sees in it a solution to his miserable identity as city-dweller, which is why, at the end, he expresses his hope of "wander[ing] the park at leisure" (p. 30, l. 14) one day and "visit[ing] there, most diligently" (p. 30, l. 16).

Summarizing, it can be said that, with *City*, Roy Fisher has not only succeeded in portraying the post-war situation of the city and its redevelopment, but also in conveying an idea of how the city must have appeared to people in these times of transformation. Through the speaker, the reader is invited to examine also the effects the changes in the spatial environment have on the human psyche. Although the text is set in the post-war context, which is quite difficult to relate to for many of today's readers (especially for younger ones), and although it presents a very subjective view, the general atmosphere of transformation and rapid development is probably familiar and felt by everyone these days and thus links the text to our times. This is also why O'Brien concludes that "[r]eading Fisher may at first be a disorienting [...] experience [...]; but in *City* [...] the combination of meticulous notation, scepticism and insistent enquiry creates a climate which may be far more familiar from the common lived experience of English cities than from much of what other English poetry has had to say about them" (115). One of the main aspects of criticism embedded into the text is the skeptical view of the directedness of the (re)development of the city: It is shown throughout the text that the speaker holds the opinion that the way the city's growth and development are pushed forward will not result in an improvement of the city's situation—neither in geographical terms nor with regard to the effect it has on people's well-being. The analysis has shown that one of the main problems is seen in the urban sprawl which may lead to visible progress (due to the city's growth in size), but also bears in it a range of disadvantages if it is not reacted to in a proper way. As the text revealed, one of these disadvantages is the disregard of nature and its suffering, which is accepted in order to boost expansion, commerce, and profit. In this way, the text fits the ecocritical view that one must "understand that it all needs to be sustained: the nonhuman and human, the wild and tame, the rural and urban" (Nichols, *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism* xvi) because "the entire planet depends on a new willingness to see urban and nonurban spaces as equally worth saving" (ibid.). This desired

reconciliation of nature and the city, as well as of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ urban design, is not achieved in the poem; the developments rather lead to a chaotic mix which is doomed to failure in the speaker’s view and also influences the citizens in a negative way. This mix is nicely reflected at the level of language, through alternating prose and verse parts that have an effect on the rhythm of reading: The verse parts slow down the rate of reading and the prose parts proceed more quickly, which emphasizes the clash of the ‘old’ city and nature with the rapidly introduced ‘new’ urban characteristics. The strange mixture this results in is further supported by the speaker’s switching between different times and places, which shows the author’s motivation to offer a picture of the city’s development that is as complete and comprehensive as possible. Thus, all in all, *City* inspires readers to look at urban growth and development from a different perspective and opens their eyes to the negative side effects—a first step to encouraging an attitude towards modernization and urbanization that is directed towards a more lasting, sustainable, and successful kind of development, regarding both the place as such and the people living in it.

8.3. Edwin Morgan’s *Glasgow Sonnets*

Edwin Morgan’s work *Glasgow Sonnets*, first published in 1972 and later in the poetry collection *From Glasgow to Saturn*, offers a “devastatingly effective exposé of Glasgow slum life” (Kinloch 53) through a socially driven series of ten sonnets. As John Corbett says, “Edwin Morgan’s *Glasgow Sonnets* are poems as polemics, social observations which provoke anger at the poverty and deprivation which they portray” (125). One will see, however, that Morgan’s “social criticism, though acute enough, is never soured and always tempered by his wit” (Frykman 145). Having lived in Glasgow, the author knows the place quite well, which contributes to the realistic and detailed account of the urban experience. Each of the ten sonnets focuses on different aspects of the urban sphere, which is why the text almost appears like a snapshot album, with the different sonnet parts capturing the mood and details like a photograph. As Morgan himself recognizes:

Writers who live in large cities and use urban material develop—instinctively!—a very quick, unstudied, unprying, oblique yet intense and unforgetful way of looking at people and things: it’s like using a very good silent automatic camera as a pair of eyes. To look too long at anyone is dangerous (in Glasgow at any rate—I don’t know about other places), and so the rapid flickering scan is characteristic of the urban poet (*Nothing Not Giving Messages* 253).

Just as in the other city poems that are analyzed in this chapter, the general atmosphere that is conveyed is rather negative, which is due to the overt criticism included in the text and the straightforward description of the pitiable living conditions, always supported by forceful stylistic devices. According to Robyn Marsack, “[a]s a poet, [Morgan] learned to tackle this modernity and urban life from reading James Thomson, Eliot, [and] Baudelaire” (“From Glasgow” 22). Conveying an idea of how the spatial surroundings and the atmosphere of the city have an influence on the people living in it, the *Glasgow Sonnets* sequence presents one more means to gain an understanding of the factors of urban life that contribute to so-called ‘urban anxiety’. As a whole, the ten sonnets reveal that “Morgan is perturbed about the future of mankind” (Frykman 145). Thus, at best, the poem can help to stop underestimating the influence spatial surroundings have on people’s well-being and lead to a higher sense of appreciation of the environment in general, maybe even to an increased nature-supportive and -protective attitude.

The first sonnet of the sequence deals with tenement life and seems to be based on the impression of ‘the Gorbals’, an area in Glasgow which—especially at the time of the poem’s publication—was known as a slum-like district associated with poorly constructed tower blocks, bad sanitation, poverty, and crime. Being modeled after the Petrarchan version, the sonnet consists of an octet and a sestet, with the caesura, as typical, indicating a shift in content, here marked by a change from an outside perspective to an inside view of the tenement. From the speaker’s description of the place, the tenement area seems like a hellish environment, characterized by decay, dirt, disease, danger, and despair. The speaker’s detailed account reveals what Roderick Watson has found to be characteristic of Morgan’s urban poetry, namely a “painstaking documentary impulse—detailed, precise and almost successfully deadpan in its utterance” (“An Island in the City...” 15). From the outside already, the tenement blocks and the surroundings look dirty and dilapidated, as can be seen from the speaker’s mentioning of “backcourt trash” (l. 1), “old mattresses” (l. 2) lying around, “[p]lay-fortresses / of brick and bric-a-brac spill[ing] out some ash” (ll. 3-4), and the fact that “[f]our storeys have no windows left to smash” (l. 5).¹¹¹ The image of the “backcourt trash” (l. 1) is a means of conveying to the reader that the place is full of waste materials and that these are left there because no one cares about the trash or keeping the place clean—thus, they are a symbol of neglect. The “old mattresses” (l. 2)

¹¹¹ The lines given in parentheses refer to the poem version printed in *From Glasgow to Saturn*. Cheadle: Carcanet Press, 1974. 92-96.

serve to emphasize this impression of neglect and mess because they are said to have lain there for a long time already (cf. “old”, l. 2) without anyone putting them away, and because they appear in the wrong context, in a tenement’s backcourt instead of in a bedroom. In addition to contributing to the appearance of demolition and ruin, the “[p]lay-fortresses / of brick and bric-a-brac spill[ing] out some ash” (ll. 3-4) can also be interpreted as an allusion to gang warfare, since the games played by the children living there seem to be of a violent nature (cf. “play-fortresses”, l. 3) and the alliteration built by “brick” and “bric-a-brac” (l. 4) makes the reader startle. This two-sided symbolism is also mirrored in the next line: The fact that the first four floors have “no windows left to smash” (l. 5) proves both the degree of destruction and the air of violence and crime. Adding to this first bleak impression of the backcourts come more atmospheric descriptions in the form of personifications, like the reference to the “mean wind” (l. 1), the “[h]ackles on puddles” (l. 2), and the “old mattresses / puff[ing] briefly and subsid[ing]” (p. 92, ll. 2-3). Through personification, everything appears even more frightening and threatening because it is portrayed as ‘alive’: The “[h]ackles on puddles” (l. 2) indicate that the situation gives the shivers, and the “old mattresses / puff[ing] briefly and subsid[ing]” (ll. 2-3) bear similarity to the gesture of sighing—often an expression of an unpleasant emotion like grief, disappointment, pain, or resignation. The fact that even things are said to ‘feel’ the tragic and depressing atmosphere, matching the general hopelessness, emphasizes the effect of the speaker’s description even more. The building itself is depicted in a similar way; it obviously looks so decrepit (cf. “chipped sill”, l. 6, “cracks deepen”, l. 9, and “rats crawl”, *ibid.*) to the speaker that he finds it surprising that it has not collapsed yet (cf. “that block condemned to stand, not crash”, l. 8). All the more surprising is it to him that there are still people living in it, as can be seen from his mentioning of a “mother and daughter” as “the last mistresses / of that black block” (ll. 7-8). The word “mistresses” (l. 7) also conveys an idea of the speaker’s attitude towards these women, since he obviously regards them with respect and is concerned about them and their situation. It is not just through the images of decay as such that the reader is made to picture the hellishness of the place, but the impression is also caused by the *enjambments* in the sonnet that make the images build up, like in an enumeration, and seem never-ending. Some lines, however, also end with a full stop, which leads to an irregular mixture of run-on lines and end-stopped lines that further reflects the described chaos at the level of form. A closer look inside the building shows that the inside is just as much marked by decay

and neglect as the outside because the speaker spots “[r]oses of mould grow from ceiling to wall” (l. 11). Saying that the mold fungus grows in the form of a rose is very ironic, of course: The rose is usually a symbol of beauty and here it is used to highlight the total absence of the beautiful. Sławomir Wąciór is thus quite right in saying that the elements one often finds in sonnets “undergo a process of a peculiar desacralization or defilement” (“Reading the City” 294) in the poem, as “we see how the *spirit* of the place turns into a ‘mean wind,’ the *sacred waters* become ‘puddles’ and royal *castles* are converted into ‘play-fortresses/of brick and bric-a-brac’” (ibid.). Inside the building, the speaker can also see another person, namely a man “[lying] late since he has lost his job, / smok[ing] on one elbow, letting his coughs fall / thinly into an air too poor to rob” (ll. 12-14). Judging from the speaker’s words, one could say that the man seems about to ‘crack up’ just as the building, since he is depicted as someone who has given up himself, living without a thought for tomorrow (cf. “lies late since he has lost his job”, l. 12) and suffering from health problems (cf. “coughs”, l. 13). The statement that the “air is too poor to rob” in the final line of the first sonnet, once again, emphasizes the extreme poverty, both physically and psychologically, that is perceived by the speaker—the assonance occurring in “too poor to rob” (l. 14) makes these words stand out at the end of the sonnet and inspires the reader to reflect on the message.

In the second sonnet, the motifs of neglect, poverty, and despair are continued with the help of more examples given by the speaker. On the way leading to the tenement flats, he catches sight of a “shilpit dog” (l. 15) and also takes notice of “slogans fad[ing]” (ibid.). The “shilpit dog” (l. 15) prowling around without its owner and not having enough to eat is just another sign of the omnipresent neglect and poverty. The image of the “slogans fad[ing]” (l. 16) fits in there as well, since it reflects the people’s lack of concern for their living environment; the process of fading out also conveying a sense of a certain inaction, passivity, and abandonment, the noticeability of which is increased with the passing of time. In addition to that, the gloomy and shadowy atmosphere underlines the general hopelessness expressed via the images: For example, the speaker mentions that “shadows lengthen slowly” (l. 16) and that “[t]he YY PARTICK TOI grins from its shade” (l. 17), which adds to the threatening effect of the surroundings. Not least because the “YY PARTICK TOI” might be another allusion to gang culture, with “PARTICK” marking the Glasgow district and the word “TOI” referring to medieval pirates and their criminal nature.¹¹² The speaker reveals that he

¹¹² The chapter on piracy in Bruce L. Batten’s *Gateway to Japan: Hakata in War and Peace, 500-1300* also includes the information that the Korean word ‘Toi’ translates into “barbarians” (Batten 101).

recognizes in such gang presence a certain wish for improvement and action to be taken, “like the last strains of some lost *libera nos / a malo*” (ll. 18-19), but immediately goes on to assert the hopelessness and forlornness of the place because “[n]o deliverer ever rose / from these stone tombs to get the hell they made / unmade” (ll. 19-21). Wrapping his thoughts in this Christian image of salvation (with the help of the passage from the Lord’s Prayer), the speaker tries to point out to the reader that no one seems to be willing to do something in order to change the situation and that everyone simply accepts their fate, which is why he believes that all faith and hope is lost. He wants to make clear that the situation is a vicious circle and two examples help to illustrate this which also stand out due to the effect of anaphora: The speaker refers to the children who will grow up this way and suffer from the situation they cannot escape by saying that “[t]he same weans never make the grade” (l. 21). Moreover, he also picks up an image from childhood play with the statement that “[t]he same grey street sends back the ball it throws” (l. 22), revealing his understanding that there is no way out of this situation and that the children, too, are trapped in this never-ending circle of poverty. While the octet appears rather dark overall (cf. “shadows”, l. 16, “shade”, l. 17, “grey street”, l. 22), the sestet includes more examples of light which could be interpreted as a slight signal of hope (cf. “cat’s eyes glitter”, l. 24, and “[g]littering stars”, *ibid.*, and “shine a torch”, l. 27). These signals of hope, however, prove unsuccessful quite quickly, since they appear in a row with just more examples of destruction and despair, like a “twisted pram” (l. 23) and references to a “ragwoman’s dram” (l. 27) and “the evil cold” (l. 28). Obviously, people living in the tenement are so hopeless and desperate because of their situation that they drink their sorrows away (cf. “dram”, l. 27) and the buildings are so poorly constructed and so far advanced in decay that they do not offer appropriate protection from the weather (cf. “evil cold”, l. 28).

Sonnet number three clarifies that people come to live in the tenement buildings just because of their poverty and despair; they do not have any opportunity to live somewhere else, since they cannot afford it. Morgan’s text is thus clearly related to the theory of social ecology and brings into play the issue of environmental justice. The sonnet opens with a person’s offer of a flat in the tenement to a family, but quite ironically, although the person acknowledges that the building is “due for demolition” (l. 29), he or she believes that, for this kind of accommodation, one can still ask for “[s]even hundred” (l. 31) pounds to be paid, even if the living conditions are beneath human dignity. The speaker also conveys that such lettings often happen in the form of

illegal actions, as indicated by the landlord's addition "[s]even hundred and nothing legal to pay / for it's no legal, see?" (ll. 31-32). Colin Nicholson adds that "sonnet three's tenement shark further shatters social solidarity in a miserable and predatory exploitation of homeless people" (76). The fact that the family accepts the flat despite the terrible condition proves their hopelessness: "And they, / trailing five bairns, accepted his omission of the foul crumbling stairwell, windows wired / not glazed, the damp from the canal, the cooker / without pipes, packs of rats that never tired" (ll. 35-39). Having five children to feed, the family still prefers the squalid lodgings to living on the streets and thus accepts the troubles and limitations. The enumeration of the examples of the poor living conditions (cf. ll. 37-39) could also be taken as a means to express the family's apathy and insensitivity that has developed with their situation; they might already have become used to living that way, which would also fit the speaker's observation from earlier in the poem, namely that no one stands up to do something against it because everyone has already resigned and sees no way out. As another example of the bad living environment and the crime associated with the place, the speaker mentions "vandals [...] who stripped the neighbouring houses, howled, and fired / their aerosols—of squeaking 'Filthy lucre!'" (ll. 40-42). This shows that the people's hopelessness and despair—their suppressed anger and sadness—often find expression in violence, as, for example, in the robbery of those who are better off.

The fourth sonnet, then, links in with the aforementioned aspect of the bad living conditions and the fact that people have to freeze in their flats. Right at the beginning, the speaker says that the people can feel warm during their work in the brick factories at least (cf. "Down by the brickworks you get warm at least", l. 43), bringing in the issue of working life. Furthermore, the sonnet is full of intertextual references through which the speaker tries to make clear that nothing has been done to the situation for a long time and that it will not change, if people do not come up with a good solution and react adequately to the problems. The speaker first refers to the poem "Glasgow 1960" by Hugh MacDiarmid from 1935, which expresses a hope for a Glasgow in which people care about culture and art rather than football. That this is no real solution to the problem of the city and its inhabitants from the working class becomes clear in the speaker's assertion that "Hugh MacDiarmid forgot / in 'Glasgow 1960' that the feast / of reason and the flow of soul has ceased / to matter to the long unfinished plot / of heating hands" (ll. 45-49). He is "skeptical about MacDiarmid's ironic criticism as he is realistic and knows that the basic needs like hunger and warm shelter need to be catered

for first, before any intellectual needs” (Wąciór, “Reading the City” 297). An increased affinity for poetry or high culture—a theoretical approach to a more ‘beautiful’ side of life—would not lead to any kind of real improvement in the speaker’s view (cf. “We never got an abstruse song that charmed the raging beast”, ll. 49-50), since it would rather keep the working class people in their place and probably make them realize their distance from ‘high culture’ even more. This is why the speaker comes to the following conclusion with regard to what should be done to the city, “[u]sing mock political rhetoric and aphorisms, and paraphrasing *The Communist Manifesto*” (N. Williams 147):

So you have nothing to lose but your chains,
 dear Seventies. Dalmarnock, Maryhill,
 Blackhill and Govan, better sticks and stanes
 should break your banes, for poets’ words are ill
 to hurt ye. (ll. 51-55)

Expressing the need for the demolition of the tenement areas and the redevelopment of these places, instead of a concentration on pushing high culture, the speaker here ironically draws on another intertextual reference from the field of poetry, namely a popular “nursery rhyme” (Wąciór, “Reading the City” 298). The cleverness with which he makes use of this device (due to the quasi clash of the form with the criticism he expresses content-wise) just enforces his message. The speaker’s prospect of demolition and redevelopment of the tenement areas is further expressed in the last lines of the sonnet, in his saying that “[o]n the wrecker’s ball the rains / of greeting cities drop” (ll. 55-56). As Nicholson rightly observes, “[p]unning on a contrast between ‘greeting’ as welcome and as Scots idiom for shedding tears, the poem shapes its elegy” (76).

The following sonnets include more examples of the situation in Glasgow that serve to underline the central message that was conveyed in sonnets one to four.¹¹³ For example, to stress his view that the people’s poverty has not been reacted to properly so far, in sonnet five, the speaker refers to the popular statement ““Let them eat cake”” (l. 57), commonly associated with the aristocracy’s lack of comprehension for the common people’s struggles. He obviously finds that it ties in perfectly in this context because he believes that this reaction to learning about people’s starvation is not much different from the officials and politicians who have a very poor understanding of the severity of society’s situation. The speaker also makes clear that this state of inaction and disregard will only make the situation worse with time (cf. “But we say let them eat

¹¹³ The following sonnets will not be analyzed in as much detail as the introductory sonnets, but only with a focus on certain examples that contribute to understanding the general picture of the city drawn by the speaker.

the hope deferred / and that will sicken them”, ll. 58-59). The end of sonnet five is a clear expression of the speaker’s view that it is the officials’ turn to act because the poor population simply does not have the means to change something: They are not really able to revolt against the injustices because they depend on their wages to live, even if this means that they have to endure being ignored by a “centralised economic power” (Nicholson 77):

But all the dignity you muster
can only give you back a mouth to feed
and rent to pay if what you lose in bluster
is no more than win patience with ‘I need’
while distant blackboards use you as their duster. (ll. 66-70)

Moreover, the text also seems in line with the arguments from the field of eco-Marxism, which is closely related to the theory of social ecology: How Glasgow as a city and especially the citizens have become slaves to big companies and their greed for profit is further pointed out in sonnet six, for example in the image of the “North Sea oil-strike [that] tilts east Scotland up, / and [makes] the great sick Clyde shiver in its bed” (ll. 71-72). The speaker’s hopes for a change of the situation do still exist, though, and he voices them quite clearly in lines 75 to 78:

If only a less faint, shaky sunup
glimmered through the skeletal shop and shed
and men washed round the piers like gold and spread
golder [sic] in soul than Mitsubishi or Krupp

He does not just wish for a less bleak and desperate atmosphere, as expressed via the imagination of sunrise light illuminating the people’s work places (cf. ll. 75-76), but, first and foremost, he hopes for a more humane and less profit-driven attitude (cf. “golder [sic] in soul”, l. 78) on part of the big companies. Further, as Wąciór makes clear, the speaker might have the impression that “universal elements of Nature like for example the sun are meagre and feeble in contrast to golden, literally and figuratively, distant emblems of modern companies” (“Reading the City” 300). The following statement that “[t]he images are ageless but the thing / is now” (ll. 79-80) shows that the speaker is aware that the problems are not new, that the situation has existed like that for quite some time already, but that he really believes *now* is the time to act. Although the speaker voices his insight that he will probably not lead to direct changes through his criticism in the form of poetry, “[k]nowing the material inefficacy of his craft” (Nicholson 78) and acknowledging the failure of MacDiarmid that he referred to in sonnet four, he claims that he might, at least, succeed in helping the citizens not to abandon their hope:

Without my images the men
ration their cigarettes, their children cling
to broken toys, their women wonder when
the doors will bang on laughter and a wing
over the firth be simply joy again. (ll. 80-84)

Sonnet seven concentrates on the issue of gentrification and it is here that—just like in Roy Fisher’s *City*—the speaker expresses his opinion that the attempts at redevelopment are often going in the wrong direction and will not necessarily lead to an improvement in the city’s situation and the citizens’ problems. While the sonnet begins with the affirmation that “[e]nvironmentalists, ecologists / and conservationists are fine no doubt” (ll. 85-86), the following lines prove that these groups of people have no say in the ‘renovation’ of the city because they will be ruled out by other interest groups (mostly by those driven by profit). This idea is conveyed by the speaker when he says that “[p]edestrianization will come out / fighting” (ll. 87-88), the word “fighting” highlighting the brutal force with which shopping streets will come to replace areas of nature so that “riverside walks march off the lists [...] [and] pigeons and starlings be somnabulists in far-off suburbs” (ll. 88-90). According to the speaker, the form the development of the city takes on is all due to the fact that “[p]rop up’s the motto” (l. 93), which, in the end, will lead to a mock-development of the city with the city’s problems only being hidden behind facades and thus still ignored. The speaker refers to the illusionary character of the development plans through his conclusion in the last lines of sonnet six, namely by saying that “[t]he gutted double fake meets the adage: / a wig’s the thing to beat both beard and shave” (ll. 97-98). He probably wants to express that, just like a wig, the new design of the city might appear great at first glance, but that it hides the truth by making people overlook what actually needs to be improved. Furthermore, just like the decision to put on a wig, such a method of urban planning is a sign of taking the easiest way out without getting down to the root of the trouble.

In sonnet eight, the changing city is referred to in more detail, for example the increase in traffic both aerial (cf. “flyovers breed loops of light”, l. 99) and on the ground (cf. “earthbound stars at night / begin”, ll. 103-104, and “bus and car”, l. 110). The deceptive power of things is alluded to, again, via the “earthbound stars”, which are car lights mistaken for “stars” because the new, artificially illuminated city prevents people from seeing real nature and stars in the sky. Matching the motto of “prop[ping] up” from sonnet seven (cf. l. 93), the speaker states that the idea behind the approach of urban planning is a reversal of the common saying ‘less is more’, namely “[l]ess is not more” (l. 108), which results in more and more construction and transportation and

contributes to the vanishing of places of nature through “[i]nner-city gentrification” (Nicholson 78). In fact, the speaker says that “garden cities are / the flimsiest oxymoron to distil to” (ll. 108-109). However, the fact that he immediately brings in the question of “who wants to distil?” (l. 110) shows the general lack of concern for nature and the people’s unreadiness to support the preservation of natural areas. His final conclusion in the sonnet is therefore to “[l]et bus and car / and hurrying umbrellas keep their skill to / feed ukiyo-e beyond Lochnagar” (ll. 110-112), using the reference to the “ukiyo-e” (l. 112) as a means of pointing to the superficiality of the urban exuberance. Since these Japanese paintings often express people’s sense of life in cities and can be regarded as closely linked to the *vanitas* motif (cf. D. Bell 60), the mentioning of the “ukiyo-e” harmonizes perfectly with “the poem’s dedication to urban contexts” (Nicholson 78) and the message the speaker intends to get across.

In order to emphasize his view that the city has changed in the wrong way and to point to its problematic state, the speaker uses sonnet nine to present the city as “undergoing the pain of its own transformation” (Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 237):

It groans and shakes, contracts and grows again.
Its giant broken shoulders shrug off rain.
It digs its pits to a shauchling refrain. (ll. 113-115)

The use of personification adds to the threatening effect and helps to convince the reader that the problems should be taken seriously, like when a human being suffers from a disease. Furthermore, as Wąciór mentions, there is “a jarring music of ‘harsh’ consonants like [g], [ʃ] and [dʒ] which add to the total effect of devastation and malaise” (“Reading the City” 303). Another aspect the speaker finds worth mentioning in this context, because it is regarded as contributing to the problematic state of the city, is the uneven development that leads to a strange mixture—similarly as in Roy Fisher’s *City*: “The west / could still be laid with no one’s tears like dust / and barricaded windows be the best / to see from till the shops, the ships, the trust / return like thunder” (ll. 121-125).

Having referred to the poor people’s distance to high culture at an earlier point in the poem, it is quite ironic that the speaker, in the final sonnet of the sequence, tells about seeing, behind the “thirtieth floor windows at Red Road” (l. 127), a “schoolboy reading *Lear*” (l. 129). The intertextual reference might be a means to call attention to the link between one’s housing situation and education, including the resulting opportunities in life. Obviously, not all children living in tower blocks “never make the

grade”, as said in sonnet two (cf. l. 21), but with the demolition of the old decrepit tower blocks and the rebuilding of living space, at least people’s individual housing situations have improved in certain ways and could probably also be said to offer a better learning environment. Nevertheless, poverty is still a major issue for many people living in the buildings that have come to replace the former tenements, as expressed through the “stalled lives” (l. 135) that “never budge” (ibid.) and which “linger in the single-ends that use / their spirit to the bone” (ll. 137-138). The speaker says that one can guess their personal difficulties and their despair and depression from the way “they trudge / from closemouth to laundrette” (ll. 138-139) with “their steady shoes / carry[ing] a world that weighs us like a judge” (ll. 139-140). These people act as a sign that poverty is still a major issue in the redeveloped housing areas and remind people of the times when it was completely disregarded and not adequately resolved. This is also why the intertextual reference to *King Lear*, as Nicholson claims, could be an implication of “Lear’s belated attention to ‘houseless poverty’ (III, iv, 26)” (79), which would support the interpretation that poverty is still an issue that is not sufficiently considered in Glasgow’s urban planning and that too much of the new plans are oriented towards something completely different—the boosting of commerce and profit, as illustrated in sonnet seven.¹¹⁴ Thus, Wąciór is right to conclude that “[s]uch modern urban *psychostasia* which determines man’s fate and life by means of the place he was born and raised is part of the fate of both man and the city itself” (“Reading the City” 305). Furthermore, by the end of the poem, one should have come to understand that Morgan’s sonnet sequence “catalogued problems that could not be solved by buildings, and in many cases were exacerbated by the new architecture” (Marsack, “Morgan and the City” 109).

As a conclusion, it can be said that Edwin Morgan’s work *Glasgow Sonnets* has offered a comprehensive overview of the city of Glasgow through shedding light on different aspects of city life with each sonnet of the sequence. The shocking and disturbing images function like cultural-critical metadiscourse, as imagined by Zapf, and have been shown to stand for ideas from the fields of social ecology, eco-Marxism, and environmental justice. The poem has, however, not only led to an insight into the

¹¹⁴ To some extent, Morgan might convey through the speaker’s view of the city his own perception of Glasgow. This is because it is said that, when “Glasgow itself was undergoing rapid change [...] with old slums being torn down and high-rise ‘streets in the sky’ towering over its new motorways[,] Morgan initially saw this as an exciting new birth for his home city, so often characterized as a place of deprivation and violence” (Watson, “Morgan” n. pag.), but “later acknowledged that his optimism might have been misplaced” (ibid.).

city as a place, but also conveyed an idea of how the city is perceived by the people living in it and of how the place has an influence on them. This is also why the speaker does not simply describe the place in a factual way, but adopts a very sympathetic and emotional tone to transform his account of the city into a social and political criticism—mostly focusing on the aspect of poverty and the ‘failure’ of urban redevelopment. In fact, Morgan once said that he “like[s] to think of Glasgow as being quite willing to renew itself in a fairly devastating sort of way” (qtd. in Marsack, “From Glasgow” 22). Thus, *Glasgow Sonnets* is also a reaction to his “concern about the very incomplete way in which poetry since the nineteenth century has reacted to changes in society and in material surroundings” (Morgan, *Essays* 15) and his belief that “[o]ur poetry needs greater humanity; but [...] the humanity of man within his whole environment” (ibid.). As a result, the reader will not only empathize with the people mentioned in the poem and share the pain described, but he or she will also get an idea of the seriousness of the depicted dilemma. One could thus see *Glasgow Sonnets* as an example of the author’s desire for “an integration of science [or modernization in general] and poetry able to register the texture of present (and as it happens) of possible future life” (Edgecombe 668). Morgan argues that

as X-rays enter the hospital ward or the comptometer enters the office or the television set enters the livingroom, then it will be the poet’s job to bring these things into his poetry, and he will have (ideally) three tasks to fulfill—to seize their imaginative possibilities, to understand them as far as he can (so that he won’t merely use science [or modernization] as a new springboard into the romantic), and to see how they fit into people’s lives (*Essays* 4).

Even though, as the speaker asserts himself several times in the poem, poetry might not be leading to an immediately visible change in society and politics, it might at least help in inspiring a rethinking among the readership and raise consciousness for the issues addressed, which is the essential claim of all ecopoetry. In addition to that, *Glasgow Sonnets* also attracts the reader’s attention through the apparent clash of the chosen form and its content. While the sonnet is usually associated with a strict formal order and praised as being a very ‘beautiful’ lyrical form, it is here used to express total chaos and misery. Also, “Morgan’s cycle [...] is thematically a consciously anti-Petrarchan collection in which a primary category/feature—love—is completely ruled out” (Wąciór, “From Slate to Jupiter” 49). The modern approach of using a traditional lyrical pattern from the past and transforming it with the help of contrasting subject matter, after all, perfectly mirrors the attempts of urban redevelopment in the text which also turn out to appear striking and ‘strange’. Morgan, obviously, was very aware of this, as

becomes clear from his explanation for choosing the sonnet form in an interview with Gerry Cambridge:

I felt it would be a challenge to write a series of sonnets about the social and political problems of a modern city. I even enjoyed extending the impact of the sonnet by giving myself difficult rhymes, just to make a kind of gritty point. They're not poems you can read lazily. I'm trying to force the reader to get to grips with the subject: Glasgow has real social, human problems, and at that time—in the 70s—many things seemed to be going wrong, so I felt that the difficult rhymes, even the difficult syntax at times would suit that (Cambridge and Morgan 34).

8.4. John Barnie's *The City*

The final text that will be analyzed in this thesis is John Barnie's *The City* from 1993—another piece of writing that contains both prose and verse elements, and has come to be held as one of the most bleak and despairing portrayals of the city in contemporary British literature. In fact, Peter Barry writes in his work *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* that “it is difficult to conceive a poetic depiction of the city more pessimistic and sombre than this” (83), since “the city is shown in all its misery and squalor, but with no sense at all (either stated or implied) that cities might ever be different from this” (77). Because this thesis also aims at exploring the reasons for feelings of ‘urban anxiety’ that seem to become more and more common these days and proving that poetry can teach us how spatial surroundings influence our well-being, including *The City* is a must. With a very grim, partly even apocalyptic overtone, it offers an account of the city from the different points of view of its inhabitants. On the one hand, this allows the reader to comprehend the far-reaching influence of the city, namely that it affects every person in a certain way, but, on the other hand, the multitude of voices presented also creates a kind of “counter-subjectivity” (Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry* 83), as Barry puts it: The voices remain voices, “they are not dramatised into personae but resonate eerily in an urban echo-chamber” (ibid.), which underlines the general atmosphere of impersonality, confusion, and despair. Barry also claims that each scene in *The City*, due to the “generic comprehensiveness of the title” (*Contemporary British Poetry* 79), “demands to be read as an emblem” (ibid.). Although the text includes some references to existing places or monuments (like Birmingham's Rotunda tower, cf. p. 17), it is true that it presents somewhat of a ‘generic’ city that every reader can relate to in a way because its characteristics and atmosphere can be found in most modern cities. This intentional ‘openness’ is therefore also an effective means to engage the reader's attention, since one might think of the

city described as a familiar urban place and thus feel more personally addressed by the words and the overall message.¹¹⁵

The City consists of two major sections marked by the Roman numerals I and II, of which the first presents prose-like forms of text, again numbered by Roman numerals, that are later followed by several short poems with titles in the second part.¹¹⁶ With their description of the city and the city dwellers, both parts can clearly be seen as examples of cultural-critical metadiscourse as defined by Zapf in his theory of literature as cultural ecology—the second main part shows some signs of reintegrative interdiscourse, but does not completely qualify as such (as will be shown at a later point). It is the introductory lines of part I that already introduce, in a very general way, the effect the city can have on people, since the passage tells about a feeling that everyone has probably already experienced in a city: the feeling of excitement through different stimuli and the resulting difficulty to calm down and come to rest during or shortly after the urban experience. The speaker describes a moment when he or she “can’t sleep [and] lie[s] in the dark” (p. 3, l. 1), presumably because he or she is in too much turmoil after an exciting day or an experience that has left him or her troubled and nervous.¹¹⁷ The speaker’s reference to his or her behavior of lying with “eyes open and unblinking, staring upwards” (p. 3, ll. 1-2) almost makes it seem like a moment of shock. When the speaker adds the information that “hours pass” (p. 3, l. 2) like this and that he or she can “feel a fine patina of dust collecting on their [the eyes’] glistening surfaces” (p. 3, ll. 2-3), one is left to think that the restlessness and troubles must really be serious. The hyperbole used here with regard to the passage of time and as shown in the image of the dust is a means to stress the strange power of the thoughts running through the speaker’s head—they are said to be so persistent to keep him or her awake and alert for a long time. The reason for the speaker’s insomnia is only revealed at the end, when he or she states that there is no need for the eyes at all in this situation, since he or she “has no wish to see with them” (p. 3, l. 3) because he or she has “let the city

¹¹⁵ Since *The City* is built on several different themes that recur throughout the text in variations, the analysis will not be done strictly chronologically, as with the other texts, but rather follows, one after the other, the various topics addressed.

¹¹⁶ As a note on the use of Roman numerals, Peter Barry writes the following: “As a paratextual device Roman numeration usually signifies the occupation of the public sphere to voice triumph or tragedy, elegy or commemoration. In *Barnie’s* sequence, by contrast, each of the enumerated sections is a brief cameo, often novelistic in technique (though there is no narrative continuity between one section and the next), and usually showing something threatening, horrific, or vapid about the contemporary city” (*Contemporary British Poetry* 77-78).

¹¹⁷ The page numbers and lines given in parentheses refer to the version of the text as printed in *The City*. Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993. 1-89. Due to the length of the text and its mixture of prose and verse, the lines have been counted separately for each page.

enter [the] mind” (p. 3, ll. 3-4). Although it is not absolutely clear whether the speaker is led to think of the city because of having visited it shortly before or because strong memories of a visit from long ago suddenly come up again—what is clear is that he or she must have had some kind of urban experience with a lasting effect that continues to bother him or her even after a change of surroundings. It is also interesting that the speaker states that the urban experience is not mainly about ‘seeing’ (cf. p. 3, l. 3), but rather about ‘thinking’ or ‘feeling’ (cf. “mind”, p. 3, l. 4), explicitly attributing to the city a power to influence the human psyche.

The next point of view from which the city is described is that of a Yugoslavian immigrant who has lived in England for “twenty years” (p. 4, l. 3). His reaction to the city is strikingly negative, since he immediately conveys to the reader that he dislikes the Englishmen for the way they treat him as an immigrant. Thus, the section deals with a rather new, contemporary aspect of city life that is just another result of progress and globalization: racism. It begins with the words “Blooming English” (p. 4, l. 1) by which he curses a person next door who “called [him] a bloody foreigner” (p. 4, l. 2). The fact that the expression appears three times (cf. p. 3, l. 1 and l. 33; p. 5, l. 2) in this part stresses the speaker’s anger and dissatisfaction with society’s lack of respect for his person. As a natural reaction, he tries to win, at least, the reader’s respect by telling about his endurance and strength in past times of war (cf. p. 4, ll. 3-31) or mentioning that people once profited from his abilities as an interpreter (cf. p. 4, l. 32). However, such memories do not succeed in changing his negative outlook on life—it is the result of daily experiences of racism, exclusion, and solitude that remind him that he has not been able to become an integral part of English society. How much these daily experiences affect him can also be seen from his own behavior because he begins to speak negatively about fellow human beings (cf. p. 4, ll. 1-2) and seems to have lost all interest in life. The latter is conveyed when he looks back upon his wartime experience and remembers how he watched one of his friends die, making him wonder “[w]hat is the difference between life and death” (p. 4, ll. 15-16). A stylistically offset second paragraph with a narrator’s voice reveals, however, that the immigrant has, at least, found an adequate job with the passing of time. It is said that “[t]he city has engaged him as one of its kind” through the work “as a wages clerk [...] [in] a big chocolate factory” (p. 4, ll. 34-35). A closer look at the choice of words is important here: Obviously “*the city* has engaged him as one of its kind” (p. 4, l. 34; emphasis added), but he might still have to suffer from not being respected by his fellow citizens as one of

their kind. The image of him working “behind frosted panes” (p. 4, l. 35) is a first sign of this, and it is further indicated by the reproachful remarks by colleagues (cf. “Come on Rady, haven’t you got those chits ready yet?”, p. 5, l. 1) and the fact that he is presented as a lonely man with no friends to relate to in the last lines of the section. That he thinks of his old war comrade Radomir in moments of solitude shows that he misses friendship and a sense of community in the city that is now his home.

The aspect of racism is also addressed at other points in the text, like in the prose part V which deals with a male person voicing his dislike of fellow citizens with an African background. The dislike is clearly expressed in a conversation with his girlfriend or wife via expressions like “Fucking blacks” (p. 8, l. 1 and l. 18), “[s]end them back to the jungle where they fucking belong” (p. 8, ll. 6-7) or “I can’t stand them” (p. 8, l. 11). In fact, the word “fucking” appears 13 times in the passage, which stresses the aggression and anger that drives the speaker. Obviously, these emotions are linked to the man’s jealousy resulting from the awareness that these people are successful in the job market (cf. “take *our* fucking jobs”, p. 8, l. 5). He does not grant them this success and argues that “[t]hey got no rights”, p. 8, l. 7). Out of a helpless effort to add validity to his arguments, he claims that all people he knows share his opinion—that he is not the only one who “can’t stand them” (p. 8, l. 11), but that “[he] [doesn’t] know anyone who can” (p. 8, l. 12). The outspoken dislike towards fellow human beings and the aggressive tone in the passage show, once more, that the development of the city (which includes immigration and the mixing of cultures) also brings about challenges in terms of the social environment that eventually determine one’s well-being. Marcia R. England and Stephanie Simon rightly say that the “[a]bsence of feelings of safety and security [in urban space] can be rooted in fear of difference” (203) and thus present the “[f]ear of the Other” (*ibid.*) as another factor of ‘urban anxiety’.

The loss of a sense of community and altruism as well as a heightened potential of aggression due to such modern social challenges is further portrayed in part X that tells about an escalating conflict between a local and an immigrant. In this case, however, it is the immigrant who reacts wrongly in the first place—even if he has the right to be angry for being confronted with racist attitudes: “If he goes on, I know that one us [*sic*] will smash the other in the face. I estimate his speed against mine in reaching for the bottle whose green glass has no other purpose now except as a weapon” (p. 15, ll. 13-15). Although one might show some understanding for the immigrant’s aggression

because of the discrimination he has to face, the reaction reveals that he, too, has not yet been able to cope adequately with the social challenges in a multicultural city and that his behavior might only lead to a more tense relationship between locals and immigrants. Therefore, the situation serves to point out to the reader a need for an adequate cultural encounter from both sides as a prerequisite for a harmonious social coexistence.

Barnie aims to show, though, that social disharmonies in urban communities do not only exist as a consequence of immigration, but also as a result of the dynamics of the city. For instance, in part XXI, we learn about the mood of workers in a big city store shortly before the store closes on a Saturday afternoon: It is said that “[t]he girls behind the counters are exhausted and bored” (p. 28, ll. 3-4) and the “doorman [...] flicks back his sleeve to look at his watch” (p. 28, ll. 5-6), which expresses a certain boredom and dissatisfaction with the work they do. However, what is striking here is that the workers also show their dissatisfaction in the way they behave towards customers, as if they would like to make them responsible for it: Acting friendly on the surface by wishing a “Goodnight” (p. 28, l. 12) to the last customers leaving the store, the doorman reveals that he actually thinks that they are “[s]tupid prats” (p. 28, l. 14). Thus, this serves as an example that not just the city’s developments through globalization, but also its structures and inner dynamics (including one’s daily routines, work place, and work satisfaction, etc.) can be decisive for an absence of a community spirit and growing inhumanity, unfriendliness, and aggression amongst a city’s inhabitants. It should thus be noted that Burton Pike is quite right in saying that while “during the nineteenth century the literary city came more and more to express the isolation or exclusion of the individual from a community, [...] in the twentieth century [it came] to express the fragmentation of the very concept of community” (xii).

To make clear how far-reaching the loss of humanity can get, Barnie even includes a part that deals with an old woman killing a pigeon in a public park (cf. part VI, pp. 9-10). Apparently, the negative emotional state of the people living in the city cannot only lead to anti-social behavior, but also to animal cruelty: “[S]he has grabbed it below the head, hauled it into her lap, placed her left hand at the base of its neck just below the shoulders, and screwed once, twisting hard” (p. 10, ll. 2-4). The fact that she even dares to commit such an act of cruelty in the daytime, where she is seen by others, shows her shamelessness which adds to the atrocity. People who have watched her stuff the pigeon in her bag comment on the scene by saying that “[s]ome people are

desperate” (p. 10, l. 9), ascribing to her a psychological crisis that might have developed while trying to cope with city life. What has been conveyed with the help of several different examples so far is reminiscent of the idea often reflected in urban literature that “[a]ngst as a result of the loss of identity and sociability [...], aptly described as ‘citephobia’, could erupt in violence that caused angst to others: *territus terreo*” (Lessenich 714). Barry, too, has observed that there are, in the poem, many sections that “trace the build-up of confined, negative tensions within the city” (*Contemporary British Poetry* 80). He further concludes that

[i]ndeed, the atmosphere is Zola-esque, and the implicit philosophy is a variant of Naturalism, defined by J. A. Cuddon as concerned with ‘depicting the social environment [It] dwelt particularly on its deficiencies and on the shortcomings of human beings’ (ibid.).

Another problem at the social level that has to do with progress and modernization is the issue of communication. It was already mentioned that difficulties at the social level are often also reflected in language (swear words, racist expressions, etc.), but *Barnie* also sheds light on another aspect that is important to consider in this context: the way language changes when we increasingly talk to each other on mobile phones or phones in general. The author illustrates a conversational nightmare in an almost ridiculous way in part XXXVIII: Although the intentional message is conveyed (in this case the discussion of a date for an appointment), when looking at the language, the conversation is depicted as poor, staccato-like, and with lots of moments that seem as if the dialogue partners are interrupting each other and are hindered from pronouncing things to the end:

Mm	Nice	to	Yes	You	too	Uh-hunnh
Okey	Ya	After	After	six	then	R
Yes	Yes	uh-hunnh	Okey	Ya	After-uh	six
Th	Yes	Th	Thanks	for	ringing	

(p. 46, ll. 10-13)

Without wanting to go too far, one could argue that frequent phone conversations, replacing face-to-face interaction, might support a regression of social sensitivities and therefore also cause a change in one’s social behavior.

Turning away from the social and behavioral sphere of modern city life, it is necessary to also have a look at the other aspects of city life and certain urban scenes that are addressed in the text and to explore their negative influence on one’s psyche and general well-being. One of the issues mentioned is that of cars, crowdedness, and the connected problem of traffic. This fits the idea that, in more recent urban literature, “[t]he flaneur, in some respects, has become a chauffeur” (Ghent Urban Studies

Team 135). In part III, it is said, for instance, that “[b]y day, cars are colour, sheen, depth, exhaust, impatience, kinetic, slowing in lines at traffic lights, hands tapping on the steering wheel” (p. 6, ll. 1-2)—an enumeration that comprises the double-sided symbolic meaning of the car as means of transportation in the city: On the one hand, everyone feels drawn to it, because it is an object of desire and a status symbol (cf. “colour, sheen”, p. 6, l. 1; “Cars are our will to be”, p. 6, l. 8), but on the other hand, making use of the car often means to get stuck in traffic jams (cf. “exhaust, impatience”, p. 6, l. 1) and thus leads to negative emotions. Quite interestingly, Svend Erik Larsen notes that the willingness to own and use a car in the city might also be looked at as a kind of psychological defense mechanism, since “you *look* from a *distance* at the surroundings as a *framed landscape* [...], without being an essential part of them but having created a *provisional resting point* for your body” (227-228). Although traffic is not, strictly speaking, a social problem like the aforementioned issue of racism, it is still very much connected to social behavior. This is also reflected in the structure of the passage which contains details about the traffic situation (cf. “pedestrians peer up and down the streets”, p. 6, l. 4; “air shimmers off car roads in streams”, p. 6, l. 6) that are briefly interrupted by swearing expressions (“come on, come bloody on”, p. 6, l. 3; “What you using for brains. Stupid bastard”, p. 6, ll. 4-5; “Jesus”, p. 6, l. 7). Thus, urban traffic and its atmosphere of crowdedness, hurry, and aggression ultimately influence people’s well-being in a very negative way and inspire wishes of solitude, quietness, and peacefulness—characteristics of an atmosphere that is difficult to find in big cities. Traffic even haunts city dwellers at night when they “lie in the dark of [their] room” (p. 6, l. 9): The “cars are effaced to sound” (ibid.), but the noise keeps people awake and signals to them that the city never sleeps. The resulting insomnia is not only bad for one’s health, because one does not get enough sleep, but the sounds also serve as a reminder of all the hurry and anger traffic creates at daytime, and do not allow any rest—neither physically nor psychologically.

Quite interestingly, the aforementioned two-sided attitude towards the car is also taken up again at a later point in the text, where a city dweller claims that “[t]here’s no pleasure in driving these days” (p. 68, ll. 1-2), but that “at the moment [he] [doesn’t] see how [he and his family] can manage without two” (p. 68, ll. 7-8). He immediately adds that “[they] only got them because they’re a necessity. Part of the modern way of life” (p. 68, ll. 15-16), which proves the idea that owning a car has much to do with convenience and status. The idea of cars being “a necessity” is also mirrored in the way

Baudrillard writes “caricaturally and hyperbolically about L.A.” (Ghent Urban Studies Team 129): “If you get out of your car in this centrifugal metropolis [...] you immediately become a delinquent; as soon as you start walking, you are a threat to public order, like a dog wandering in the road” (qtd. in Ghent Urban Studies Team 129). The general interest in cars is also reflected in part XXIV, which tells about the view of “thousands of cars arranged in lines” (p. 32, ll. 1-2) in a car park with a phantasmagoric effect. Stylistically, the enthusiasm for cars is also underlined by the form of the passage—through interruptions of exaggerated expressions of excitement (cf. “OOOOOOOOOOHHHHHHHHHH” and “AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH”, p. 32, l. 3 and l. 7, etc.). However, here the focus is clearly on proving that the fascination with cars is actually strongest when there is an “intense silence of a world of machines at rest” (p. 32, l. 6).

The connected behavior of seeing mainly the positive aspects of modern technology and inventions and ignoring their drawbacks is further reflected in the description of a plane take-off in part VIII: When the passengers enter, “Vivaldi is being played over the intercom” (p. 12, l. 1), but as soon as everyone is seated and the plane is ready for take-off, the music is switched off and people are ‘drawn back to reality’. As the speaker himself admits, “It was a pretence, after all” (p. 12, l. 15) because what can be heard when it is gone is “[o]nly the roar of the engines, our own merciless music out of which we must make our peace” (p. 12, ll. 31-33). This shows that there are, in fact, moments when people realize that a large part of modern world features that influence people’s well-being negatively are actually man-made—this being reflected also in the use of the personal pronouns (cf. “our”, “we”, “our”, *ibid.*).

Another issue related to this, addressed at several points in the text, and important to mention for its impact on one’s well-being is that of environmental pollution in urban surroundings. In part IV, for example, the image of the “dirty river [that] spreads thinly over cobbles and a half-submerged supermarket trolley” (p. 7, ll. 1-2) is meant to give the reader an idea of how the development of the city and a certain environmental disregard is linked to the destruction of the natural environment and the bits of it that can still be found in cities. The fact that the polluted river serves as a setting in one of the sections (cf. p. 7, ll. 1-19), but is then no further commented on, because the characters in the scene completely ignore it and focus on something different, reflects the general indifference to the polluted ‘urbanatural’ environment and the lack of reaction to it.

When the waste goes where it belongs, to the household waste recycling centers, certain people's well-being is still negatively influenced because their homes are right next to the facilities (cf. "Beyond, blurred by the smoke, the tenements", p. 55, l. 13) where they can see each day how "[p]iles of waste spill out [from the trucks] like viscera" (p. 55, ll. 3-4). *Barnie* here brings in the idea of environmental justice related to the theory of social ecology: He addresses another problem of modern cities, namely that of housing scarcity and the construction of social housing in less beautiful areas of cities which, also spatially, puts poorer people at the margins of society—a development that may bring with it a range of other negative consequences. The fact that these people are, in a way, excluded through social housing in less beautiful places of the city that most city dwellers try to avoid shows that one can "understand fear as a productive force shaping [...] not just the cityscape, but the entire social fabric of post-industrial society" (Hubbard 73).¹¹⁸ Undoubtedly, 'urban anxiety', the fear of urban surroundings, is often linked to fears at the social level—both influencing one another. Still, poverty does not remain unseen in the city center either: Part XXIII mentions, for example, an "unshaven" (p. 31, l. 2) man with a "greasy jacket and trousers tied up with parcel string" (*ibid.*) who tries to earn money by making music on the streets. He represents the city's poor community and reminds passersby to look at the developments of the city not only from their 'comfort zone', but also from a poorer person's point of view.

Another aspect of the modern city that might have a negative influence on people's well-being is the constant confrontation with the city's ongoing progress and expansion, the impression of its seemingly unstoppable force to spread, as symbolized by the image of sprawl in *Barnie's* text. For example, part XII deals with the view from "[t]he restaurant at the Rotunda, the city's highest building" (p. 17, l. 1). Since the top revolves slowly, "[a]s the guests eat, they can see the city spread out beneath and beyond them in a complete circle. Three hundred and sixty degrees of the city and its meaning" (p. 17, ll. 2-4). That this view from the top is connected to a certain meaningfulness here might be the result of the opportunity it offers to view the city from a different angle—one that allows to see not only bits of the city in front of oneself, but shows the place as an entirety with a totally different effect. Also, the new

¹¹⁸ Hubbard comes to this conclusion in his article "Fear and Loathing at the Multiplex: Everyday Anxiety in the Post-Industrial City" in which he demonstrates, by taking the example of cinema-going, that "fear is inescapably caught up in the fabrication of social differences, with the strategies of risk avoidance that people practice in their everyday lives reinforcing boundaries between Self and Other" (51). The conclusions he draws in this article also fit the example of the housing situation in *Barnie's* poem, which is why the link has been established.

angle can lead to the confusing impression that certain aspects of the city that are familiar suddenly, from far away, seem not that familiar anymore at all (cf. “—That must be Saint Michael’s / —No, Saint Mark’s, surely. / —Do you think so?”, p. 17, ll. 13-15). Obviously, the view from the heightened position does not only play with a confusion of the known and the unknown, it ultimately also offers a view of the city’s vastness that is so overwhelming that it might cause a certain rethinking with regard to one’s opinion on the city: “As we eat and stare through the window, we gradually become silent. The city extends to the curve of the horizon. It ends in grey heat and exhaust haze in all directions. It is so vast, one mind cannot comprehend it. It spreads everywhere lazily” (p. 17, ll. 20-24). It seems that, even though a change of one’s viewpoint can help to look at the city from a different perspective (and maybe think about it differently)—as suggested also by the speaker in Wordsworth’s “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”—ultimately the city cannot be fully understood and its ‘meaning’ cannot entirely be grasped (cf. “one mind cannot comprehend it”, p.17, l. 23). While, in Wordsworth’s poem, the change in perspective (by looking at the city in the early morning instead of during the day) cheats the city’s ‘real’ character and makes it appear quite beautiful in fact, taking a different point of view on the city has more of a ‘teaching’ and ‘revealing’ function in Barrie’s poem; it works in the exact opposite way. Although one will not come to understand the city in its entirety, one might at least be led to new insights about it—even if this is sometimes painful. As Barry says, “[w]hen viewed from high [...] the effect is not a sense of euphoria or excitement, but of moral revulsion” (*Contemporary British Poetry* 79), due to the shocking vastness of the city. Just as certain viewpoints may help to look at the city in a new way, the unique atmosphere of nighttime can also fulfill this function. In part XV, the city at night is described as “a galaxy, the concentrate of power” (p. 20, l. 1), where “[s]trings of lights, towers of lights are flung in all directions, tangled in dense knots of power” (p. 20, ll. 2-3). Apparently, when the city is illuminated at night, everything man-made stands out even more and represents progress and achievement to the viewer—or, as the speaker himself states, the lights appear as signs of “power” (p. 20, l. 3), both literally and symbolically. The addition that “[t]he black space of a park is something stamped out” (p. 20, l. 4) and that, therefore, “[i]t doesn’t exist” (ibid.) further shows that natural spots are left unnoticed, which might reflect the attitude towards nature in the city in general. However, another short scene with pastoral character presented in part XXXIX proves that nature is not completely forgotten or given up by the city’s inhabitants. It is,

again, the view from the top of a building that allows a new perspective on the city that differs from everyday surroundings. A woman who plays tennis with a partner on a building's rooftop immediately notices the urban sprawl and vastness of the city (cf. "Buildings are dissolved in a grey haze that swallows the trees", p. 47, ll. 6-7), but she also quickly notices a certain calmness and solitude that she does not know anymore from living in the city (cf. "Up here, traffic is reduced to hum", p. 47, ll. 7-8). Since she probably associates this atmosphere with nature and non-urban environments, she is immediately more open to noticing spots of nature when looking out over the city (cf. "You can see the river far out", p. 47, l. 13). She later even interrupts the tennis match to hold on to this moment of joy for a little longer and "walks away [...] back to the netting" (p. 47, l. 36) to see "where the river runs, something ancient and dull, until it emerges glittering on the horizon and enters the sea" (p. 47, ll. 38-39).¹¹⁹ This passage could be said to reflect the author's idea that urbanites, because of their urban perspective, are alienated from grasping the reality of the countryside, although they still believe in its existence beyond the city. Barry sums this up as follows and believes that *Barnie* connects the urban experience with

a pervasive element of 'virtuality', by which he means the widespread growth of an urban 'spectatorial' attitude which tends to reduce all experience to some form of 'viewing'—modern design, he suggests, heightens this effect, so that for example, the tinted, sealed-off windows of high-speed trains, and the inaccessible open-deck space of modern 'super-ferries' reduces landscape and seascape to a virtual-reality moving picture which we watch while seated. Thus the real increasingly becomes representation, an effect which is 'produced' like a scene in a play. Though radically changed and recast, then, the distinction between country and city is by no means entirely superseded (*Contemporary British Poetry* 41).

The passages mentioned so far have shown both: Some city dwellers slowly realize the dangers of a rapidly developing city and long to satisfy important needs that the city denies them—others, however, are either simply still unaware of the negative side effects that modernization and urbanization bring with them or have deliberately repressed these needs, making technological progress and advancement their top priorities. That enduring the negative influences of the city will have negative consequences in the long run is no surprise: *Barnie's* text also reveals people's ways of coping with the problems they become aware of while living in the city, and makes the

¹¹⁹ One could probably say that *Barnie's* presentation of the city and nature in *The City* is closely linked to his personal attitudes to these contrasting surroundings that were formed throughout his life. At least, the following statement by him suggests this interpretation: "I grew up in a small market town in the Usk valley at the edge of the Black Mountains, a place of rivers and streams, hill farms and upland moors, which shaped me both as a person and as a writer, for though I spent some twenty years living in cities, I was always drawn back to the only world in which I truly felt at home. It eventually became the deepest source for the kind of poetry I write" (qtd. in Parle n. pag.).

reader understand that they have to be taken seriously. One example can be found in part XIII, which presents a dialogue between two friends—the one trying to convince the other that “[i]t’ll all be over in a hundred years [and that] [n]o one will be alive to remember this pain and worry then” (p. 18, ll. 1-2), and the other complaining that he cannot endure the situation any longer (cf. “but in the meanwhile *I’m* bloody *here*”, p. 18, ll. 5-6). The man’s personal way out of this dilemma is by drugging himself with alcohol (cf. “He’d go out and get drunk then. Drink was his medicine. His search for a cure”, p. 18, ll. 13-14), so that he can forget the problems at least for a brief moment. But *Barnie* goes even further by including other characters in the text that are shown to do away with the problems once and for all through committing suicide (cf. part XLIX, pp. 58-59). Although it is not explicitly said that the woman mentioned in part XLIX killed herself because of the city’s negative effects on her well-being, it is at least indicated by her neighbor’s remarks (cf. “And the cars. The build-up of traffic after about ten”, p. 59, l. 2; “The twilight despair”, p. 59, ll. 12-13) and alluded to in the first sentence of the passage which says that the death “isn’t really a mystery” (p. 58, l. 1). One will thus agree with *Jarvis*’s view that “for *Barnie*, being in human place means being confronted by all that is inhuman about such place—sometimes, indeed, to the point of our own destruction” (167).

Interestingly though, *Barnie* does not only present the fatal outcomes of ‘enduring’ the city, but he also includes characters and scenes that give proof of a change in awareness and attitudes with regard to the city’s influence on one’s well-being. And is not that what counts in the end, if you want to inspire people to bring about change? The inclusion of said characters and scenes is therefore also a means of consciousness raising aimed at the modern urban reader—an opening up of impressions that oneself has maybe not assessed negatively so far. For example, part XXXI tells about a person who reflects on another person’s saying that people have “abandoned identity in the city” (p. 39, l. 3). Although the person seems to be convinced of the contrary (cf. “Even in crowds I still feel I know who I am”, p. 39, ll. 6-7), the fact that he or she reflects on it so thoroughly shows that the thought causes concern and discomfort in a way. Another example can be found in part XXXV, which deals with a person complaining about a beggar’s condemnation of the city. He or she is shocked that the beggar “blame[s] it all on the city” (p. 43, l. 2) and claims that the beggar’s “trouble is that [he] think[s] too much” (p. 43, l. 21), because of the person’s conviction that “[t]he city’s not half as bad” (p. 43, l. 18) as the beggar says. Again, this passage

illustrates that one's opinion on the city can differ according to one's point of view: The beggar, due to his daily experiences and surroundings, has a totally different look at things (and time to reflect on them) than someone who follows his or her job day after day in the same environment as a 'cog in the wheel'. At last, people's awareness of the problem of environmental pollution and destruction is also taken up in part LII which gives the reader an insight into the program of one of the city's radio stations. For a show, the station has invited famous nature philosopher and poet Robinson Jeffers to talk about environmental issues, but the station's employees' reactions to it reveal that the topic is not yet taken seriously by everyone (cf. "What's with this Dark fucking Greens? I wanted some shit about don't throw away your Coke cans", p. 63, ll. 17-18; "Green. SHIT.", p. 63, l. 22). In addition to that, the sponsor announcement following Jeffers's talk does not fit the program at all and supports the employees' hypocrisy, since it is by "*California International Oil*" (p. 63, l. 9). It should be noted here that Bernie's idea to include the poet figure of Robinson Jeffers at this point also has a kind of meta-meaning: By portraying the famous 20th-century poet becoming ridiculed by the radio station employees, Bernie raises the question if poets expressing ideas about the environment are taken seriously at all. He might want to point to the need to also consider poetic voices, to take them more seriously, and to take their ideas into account when it comes to finding answers to modern day problems, and especially to the issue of environmental protection. In Morgan's *Glasgow Sonnets*, the idea of the poet's capability of actually reaching society with his message was also already questioned with the speaker's reference to Hugh McDiarmid. Thus, quite interestingly, contemporary poets also seem to reflect on the efficacy of their art with regard to raising consciousness for contemporary issues, and, with the help of such metapoetic elements, aim at being paid more (serious) attention. Although Bernie includes, at many points in the text, examples of people who are aware of the city's negative influence on one's well-being and the causes, he always points out that they are either simply ignored or not taken seriously, which shows that the people of the city he depicts have not yet reached the point where they realize that they have to (re)act. Clayton and Opatow rightly note that "proenvironmental action will be facilitated when social contexts support proenvironmental identities and encourage a recognition of a shared concern for the environment" (20). When this is not the case, "[e]nvironmental issues take on the role of a 'repressed', which is frequently pushed out of sight and which always returns"

(Kerridge 2). A psychoanalytical explanation by Slavoj Žižek might help to comprehend the mechanism of repression in this context:

The radical character of the ecological crisis is not to be underestimated. The crisis is radical not only because of its effective danger, i.e., it is not just that what is at stake is the very survival of humankind. What is at stake is our most unquestionable presuppositions, the very horizon of our meaning, our everyday understanding of 'nature' as a regular, rhythmic process ... Hence our unwillingness to take the ecological crisis completely seriously; hence the fact that the typical, predominant reaction to it consists in a variation on the famous disavowal, 'I know very well (that things are deadly serious ...), but just the same ... (I don't really believe it, I'm not really prepared to integrate it into my symbolic universe, and that is why I continue to act as if ecology is of no lasting consequence for my everyday life) (qtd. in Kerridge 2).

The reason for this reluctance to act becomes clear throughout the whole text—it also has much to do with people's inability to understand the city and to make sense of it. Although the inhabitants are part of the city (because they live and work in it), they are still not sure what to make of it. Some are slowly beginning to understand that the city's dynamics are so strong and forward-oriented that it becomes difficult to break free, as is shown by statements like the ones in part XLII: "We're traveling now. Some don't like it. But there's no avoiding the journey" (p. 50, ll. 6-9). The ship metaphor is also taken up again in part XLIV when a person compares being part of the city and its developments to sailing on a ship: "It's the journey. [...] We sail with it. We must bear it. Hold on" (p. 52, ll. 6-7). According to David Lloyd, "*The City* conveys a profound sense of the powerlessness of the contemporary individual: our inability to alter the rush to an urban future" (809). The city dwellers' problem of understanding the city is also reflected in their inability to give it a name: "As for the city now, it has no adequate name. We can hardly start because we do not know where to begin. Many names. That which subsumes us. Within limits, no limits" (p. 33, ll. 6-8). Although the city's inhabitants are aware that they are deeply involved in the city and its progress, they still admit that it is actually quite strange and unfamiliar, even frightening, to them: "It takes all our credos and that which we chose not to believe. It absorbs our blessings and builds on our cries. We are afraid of it. We have given it no name because we do not know what it is" (p. 33, ll. 30-32). Thus, besides pointing out to the reader, via different scenes and voices, the city's negative influences on people's well-being, Barnie's *The City* is also quite successful in depicting the modern urbanite's crisis of meaning—a confusing incomprehension of the place he or she lives in and maybe one of the reasons the city's developments are mostly silently accepted and rarely challenged.

Last but not least, for the whole picture, it is also necessary to look at the second main part of *The City* that consists of 15 short poems, which “have the impact of an afterthought, a coda to the main body” (Lloyd 809).¹²⁰ What is striking when reading through the various single poems is that the meaning is not as straightforward as in the prose passages. The first poem is titled “Afterwards” (cf. p. 75) and includes quite a lot of imagery related to the idea of arrival (cf. “Most people arrive / to gather on the shore / with packages / and children”, p. 75, ll. 1-4; “they’ve left / the land”, p. 77, ll. 12-13) and a new beginning (cf. “Here we are”, p. 75, l. 9; “celebrating the will to go on”, p. 76, ll. 15-16). This is why one might guess that it introduces the depiction of a new way of life that comes after finding out that the city no longer ‘works’ as a living environment or after deliberately leaving it in order to change one’s lifestyle. The interpretation of the poems as presenting the story of a ‘new beginning’ in a new environment is also due to the many references to more natural surroundings (cf. “shore”, p. 75, l. 2; “mountains”, p. 78, l. 2; “trees”, p. 78, l. 7; “hills”, p. 82, l. 6; “the hill’s green”, p. 89, l. 1; “the moor”, p. 89, l. 9). This shows that the ex-urbanites have looked for a place that is more natural because they already longed for nature when they lived in the city (cf. part XXXIX, p. 47) and probably suffered from long-time deprivation. Interestingly, the people’s arrival at a shore, as described in the first poem, also fits the ship imagery and the metaphor of sailing that was used in the prose part to describe the city’s developments and how each city dweller is involved in them. Also, it seems like the people have not only looked for a more natural place to live in, but also one that is smaller in size than the city, which becomes clear from the frequent use of the word “town” (cf. p. 76, l. 14; p. 83, l. 2). These images of a ‘new beginning’ first remind one of Zapf’s reintegrative interdiscourse, but they do not really function like this; the impression one gets of this ‘new beginning’ from the poems is that it is not working out as imagined: Although a few things might have changed for the better, like, for example, the new empathy or sensitivity to fellow human beings’ emotions (cf. p. 77), the sense of community and neighborhood resulting from doing things together (cf. p. 78), and the appreciation of animals (cf. p. 89), the old way of life and habits cannot be completely left behind. This is indicated in the first poem already with the image of “[t]he fighter / that nosed in / like the air’s curious fish” (p. 75, ll. 4-7) when the people arrive at the shore, bringing with it the noise of the city and the modern world. Other examples include the destruction of nature (cf. “CLEARING FORESTS”,

¹²⁰ It should be noted that the poems will not be analyzed in their entirety, but only with a focus on certain examples that contribute to understanding the general message of the second part of *The City*.

p. 78), the ongoing brooding and alcohol consumption as a means to forget one's worries (cf. p. 79), and the issue of discrimination (here, in terms of sex, though; cf. p. 84), which shows that new surroundings do not protect the people from resuming old habits and structures. Thus, one could say that the verse part of *The City* is a means to clarify that it will not help to escape from the city and its problems by simply going to another place, but that the solution to the crisis of the modern city has much more to do with a change of one's mindset, the reconsideration of one's own and others' behavior, as well as a motivation to take appropriate measures. In its message, the poem can thus be seen as similar to Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", since the speaker also experienced that it is impossible to simply leave one place in order to feel better in another one; he was haunted by worries about life in the city and did not succeed in 'becoming one' with nature. Both poems imply that one must look for real solutions and tackle the causes of urban problems, instead of running away and repressing them.

In summary, it can be said that John Barnie's *The City* is very successful in pointing out to the reader the different aspects of the city and modern urban life that can have a negative influence on one's well-being, but that its main power lies in giving an idea of the complexity of the problems through focusing on a multitude of characters and situations. Through seeing that every city dweller is in some way affected by his or her surroundings, one comes to understand that the problems are to be taken seriously and that it could just as well be oneself who suffers from them. Thus, ultimately, the multitude of voices which—by the way—are almost never named, heighten the possibility that the reader feels personally concerned because he or she might recognize himself or herself in one of the situations. The city's many facets and composite character are also reflected in the form of the text, namely in its combination of prose and verse. What is indicated already at the level of form is, then, in the process of reading, confirmed at the level of content: The single passages make the reader understand that the city is not homogeneous at all, which is maybe also what makes it so difficult to understand. The verse part at the end finally serves to show that it is impossible to run away from the problems by leaving the city and that, to live in an environment which is beneficent to one's mental and physical health, action must be taken. The arrangement of the two main parts is thus also cleverly done, making the reader finish the text with this important and thought-provoking insight.

As initially stated, when looking at the contemporary city poems in sum, one should notice that they point towards a range of new and particularly ‘modern’ reasons for the city’s negative effect on people’s well-being, but also include mentionings of causes that were found already in the Victorian city poems. In this way, they help the reader become aware of the fact that the problem of ‘urban anxiety’ (from the slightest to the most manifest forms) has lasted for quite a while already and that, with time, even new negative influences have come to the fore. It is also striking that some of the poems are explicitly concerned with the psyche (like Griffiths’s *A Book of Spilt Cities*), probably to stress even more the connection between the spatial surroundings and the effect they have on the human mind. Since all of the poems draw the attention to man’s role in shaping and creating ‘frightening’ urban environments, they fit the idea of Zapf’s cultural-critical metadiscourse and can further be related to the ecological premise that “human civilisation has developed in such a way that it has begun to *threaten [the] overall balance of life*, especially [...] with the increasing expansion of economic, technological and scientific rationality” (Zapf, “Literature as Cultural Ecology” 90). However, at times, the poems also show hints of Zapf’s idea of imaginative counter-discourse: Quite interestingly, just as in the Victorian city poems, the idea of nature is never completely forgotten or ignored—even in the most somber accounts of the city, nature is referred to here and there. Thus, at the heart of the contemporary city poems, there is the issue of competing mindsets: the thirst for progress and modernization on the one hand and the aim to protect the environment and restore nature on the other hand. In differing ways (and sometimes more and sometimes less distinctly), the poems suggest what can be done in order to establish a balance between the two attitudes for a sustainable future, which is where the poems’ main ecocritical strength lies. Therefore, they can be said to fulfill the third function of Zapf’s model of literature as cultural ecology as well: By indicating what needs to be improved for a better future, the contemporary city poems can further be regarded as reintegrative interdiscourse. In this respect, they also meet Patrick D. Murphy’s criterion for the effectiveness of teaching ecopoetry in educational contexts, namely that one needs to be confronted more with literature that is concerned with “possible solutions” (187)—whether in an explicit or in an implicit way—in order to avoid that one “tire[s] quickly of litanies of negative critique” (ibid.).

9. Conclusion

The interpretations of selected nature poems from the Romantic Period, poems from the Victorian Period dealing with the city, and contemporary poems with nature and/or the city as subject matter serve to show how much and in which ways people have been affected by their spatial surroundings ever since the Industrial Revolution. When looking at the development of these topics in poetry through time, as done in this thesis, one should come to a range of insights: If one thinks of the beginnings, for example, it should have become clear that the transformations in people's surroundings, due to the process of industrialization and the emergence of cities, have also led to a change in people's perception of their spatial surroundings and attitudes: While the pre-industrial (natural) surroundings were highly appreciated and widely praised for having positive effects on one's well-being (maybe more by the middle class than by the working class, though), the cities that emerged with the advancement of the Industrial Revolution were perceived very negatively by a large part of society because they caused a range of new problems and fears. Thus, the poems have also given an idea of the disillusionment that people experienced with the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian Period. During Romanticism, nature could lead to such positive feelings as happiness, contentment, and light-heartedness, but in Victorian times, a shift towards a certain skepticism regarding nature's 'healing' function can be perceived, which may be a result of the increasing urbanization and a disillusionment caused by the hardships in the industrial city. Due to the atmosphere of 'urban anxiety' and the constant suffering caused by the negative consequences of industrialization (e.g. the working conditions, child labor, poverty, pollution, and social injustice), the idea of nature leading to happiness and other positive feelings was often nothing more than a nostalgic memory by that time. Like Hulin says, "the flight from the city [became] a purely imaginary one, a piece of wishful thinking or nostalgic daydreaming" (16). People probably did not forget that it was once possible to feel happy and carefree in nature, but by the time the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, this function was questioned and one did not believe any longer that visiting nature could serve as an escape from the frightening atmosphere in the city. It was certainly very painful to realize that one could not get back to this pre-industrial feeling of harmony in nature and that spending time there would not help to do away with one's problems and fears, since one would return to the city sooner or later as the city replaced nature more and more anyway. Therefore, the

interpretation of the early nature and city poetry written during the Industrial Revolution has not only allowed us to get an idea of the trends in the ways nature and the city were perceived, but it has also shown that people's perception of their surroundings changed very rapidly within a short period of time. Although the views conveyed in the poems are certainly not representative of society as a whole, the poems chosen for this thesis have demonstrated the overall shift from the dream-like image of nature to the nightmarish perception of the city.

While, during the time of the Industrial Revolution, one could perceive a shift from the nature poetry of Romanticism to the urban poetry of Victorian times, the look at contemporary poetry has shown that both topics, nature and the city, are more or less equally common in poets' literary output. Of course, since cities did not stop developing, but have continued to grow and to become modernized, the rapidly introduced changes and transformations have continued to influence people. Also, with the passing of time, urban life has taken on a different form, which has led to new aspects of the city and city life to reflect on: Even though the contemporary city poems address many aspects that have already been an issue in poetry from the Victorian Period—a proof of their powerful and long-lasting influence—they have also offered a new, distinctly modern, view at the city and presented other, characteristically contemporary, types of 'urban anxiety'. This is the result of innovations, both constructional and technological, that come with an unprecedented speed and, last but not least, of the dynamics of globalization. Lastly, it should be noted that all of these developments are in some way determined by economic pressure, which can therefore be regarded as the decisive factor that finally leads to the forms our environment takes on and is thus an important link to our well-being.

It is no surprise that times of constant urban development and modernization have led to a revival of nature poetry. What began in Victorian city poetry as pastoral flashbacks to 'better times' or a longing for 'better places' in nature (however, mostly with disillusioning results) has in contemporary poetry reached a new, more prominent status. A great number of them have a hopeful tone and present the natural environment as a place in which one can have experiences that are beneficent to one's well-being and which is therefore worth protecting (comparable to the nature poems from the Romantic Period), while others present a new approach and draw a more hopeless picture by focusing on the issue of pollution and the destruction of the natural world (not only in the city, as in Victorian poetry, but even in nature). Again, it should be noted that it is

wrong to regard the attitudes towards nature expressed in the poems as representative of society as a whole, since they still differ much according to one's social background or education, but it is without doubt that the natural environment has risen to a more prominent position in people's minds in recent years. The interpretations of contemporary nature poems have shown that the aim is not to convey only a dream-like picture of nature and appeal to people's imagination, but also to be realistic and address the facts to make people become aware of their own 'involvement' in the process. Ultimately, one will have come to understand that even the hopeless images in the nature poems are driven by hope: They are all caused by feelings of a loss of nature and the urgent need to protect the natural environment, allowing it to coexist with the city. The rather recent readiness to find a way of combining the urban lifestyle and the dynamics of modernization and globalization with the preservation of nature is also addressed with the help of the 'mixed poems', namely poetry that deals with 'hybrid' places which show characteristics from both the urban sphere and nature. These new poems, which do not simply rely on a pastoral contrasting of the city and nature but on their mixing, point to the necessity of 'combining both worlds' for a sustainable future. They try to help us understand that the solution to problems (and our future) lies neither in the city nor in nature, but in a mixture of both (a balanced hybridity), which is why it is a very powerful contemporary type of ecopoetry.

Although one can find in Romantic and Victorian times, just as in the contemporary age, unique characteristics of city and nature poetry, certain patterns of presenting aspects that affect people's well-being positively and negatively are definitely recognizable through time. After all, it became obvious that the perceptions of nature and the city always need to be considered in relation to one another; they both interact due to the fact that the places are usually so contrasting, which means that the perception of nature is also always—to a certain degree—influenced by the perception of the city and vice versa.¹²¹

How contrasting the city and places in nature must have seemed to people during the Industrial Revolution and more recently should have become clear through the interpretations in this thesis, since each poem that was analyzed seizes on this idea—sometimes more and sometimes less obviously. What, then, did the poems tell us about

¹²¹ Karen Sayer mentions that “[i]n English, the word ‘country’ is derived from *contrada/contrate* (Latin), meaning ‘that which lies opposite’” (74). However, she also believes that “it is not enough simply to set City against Country [and that] it is necessary to look at the ways in which they interrelate” (Sayer 74).

the ways these contrasting surroundings tend to be perceived? How are urban and natural surroundings described in their appearance, in which ways do they affect people, and which functions are ascribed to these places? The texts that have been analyzed in this thesis have led to insights about why nature and the city have always been perceived so differently because they have given a great overview of the wide range of reasons for why people have often thought so negatively about the city and so positively about nature. It is probably most striking that nature and the city are described as contrasting places in the poems due to the general scenery and the properties and features that account for what the places look like. For the poems from the nineteenth century, it is in “Lines Composed a few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, “The Tables Turned”, “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill” and even in parts of “Bexhill, 1866” that nature is most obviously depicted as a very picturesque place with lots of scenic attractions and things that are pleasing to the eye. For instance, in “The Tables Turned” the speaker puts much emphasis on the fact that being in nature allows him to see only beautiful things far and wide—that he is completely surrounded by nature—and that there is nothing that disturbs this magnificent view: it is absolutely unspoiled. This is similar in the contemporary nature poems that were analyzed: Especially in Hughes’s “Spring Nature Notes”, “Autumn Nature Notes”, and “River Barrow”, just as in Grevel Lindop’s “The Beck”, the view of nature is presented as distinctly harmonious and as leading its observer to experience positive emotions. Even in cases where the natural scenery does not seem to be the most beautiful (like the decaying autumn landscape in “Autumn Nature Notes”), nature is still presented as a pleasure to watch. It must be noted, though, that the natural places mentioned in the contemporary nature poems do not always remain completely unspoiled as in many of the Romantic poems: Some, like Charles Tomlinson’s “Below Tintern”, also point to ‘non-natural’ aspects (like cars etc.) that interfere with the natural scene. In the city poems, however, the negative sights predominate: In the poems from the Victorian Period, speakers often refer to the buildings, especially the huge factories with their tall chimneys (cf. “The Factory Town” and “In a Manufacturing Town”) which blocked people’s view and added to the unpicturesque and frightening scene of the city. In the contemporary city poems, this is continued, for example, with references to the cold and intimidating effect of glassy office blocks, skyscrapers, and dilapidated tenements, or the depiction of the artificiality of the suburbs. The characteristics of openness, boundlessness, and vastness that are so typical of nature and find expression in

references to “long green fields” (l. 7 in “The Tables Turned”) or the mentioning of a “fresh woodland alley, never ending” (l. 20 in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”) could, of course, make people feel free and cause ease and insouciance in them because of the lack of ‘disturbing sights’ from an urban context that could make them feel uncomfortable or remind them of the problems in the city. It is quite interesting, though, that the aspect of nature’s vastness is not often mentioned in the contemporary nature poems anymore, probably also because vast places of nature have become less visible, due to the fact that nature had to give way to industrialization, urbanization, and modernization over the years. The city, however, affected people the other way round: Most of the city poems stress the fact that there are a lot of buildings and means of transport in the city that have a claustrophobic effect, as it is achieved in Roy Fisher’s *City* with the mentioning of “arrogant ponderous architecture [...] [that] dwarfed and terrified people by its sheer size and functional brutality” (p. 20, ll. 32-33). Further, especially in the contemporary poems, cars and traffic are shown to contribute to the feeling of claustrophobia and/or agoraphobia in cities, as has become clear from the reference to “[t]he rows of trucks / Extend[ing] [...] / Marshalled like building blocks” (p. 17, ll. 16-20 in *City*). In the earlier poems, the workplaces are also often, in a metaphorical way, described as prisons with the workers being ‘prisoners’ or ‘slaves’ (cf. ll. 9-10 in “The Factory Town”). Thus, it should have become clear how much the city (as a place) and city life can restrict people’s freedom and that this might cause feelings of constriction in the city—not only due to the fact that one is surrounded by ‘wall- or fence-like’ rows of buildings or traffic, but also because people are aware of their dependence on the city (maybe for work) and realize that it has much control over their lives. While visiting nature and seeing its vastness may lead to the feeling of freedom (in former times more so than now), living and working in the city constantly confronts people with their limits and conveys to them a sense of inescapability. Quite interestingly, the contemporary poems have shown that one can also speak of vastness with regard to the city—a vastness with a totally different effect than the vastness of nature, though. When the city is described as vast, this is not connected to feelings of freedom: The vastness serves as a means of expressing the city’s quick expansion and the urban sprawl, the realization of which leaves people behind overwhelmed and with feelings of inescapability: “The city extends to the line of the horizon. It ends in grey heat and exhaust haze in all directions. It is so vast, one cannot comprehend it” (p. 17,

ll. 21-23 in *The City*). In Bill Griffiths's *A Book of Spilt Cities*, this urban vastness also plays a major role in the explanation of the city's negative atmosphere.

Furthermore, the contrasting image of nature and the city in the poems also results from the speakers' use of color references. In the nature poems from the Romantic Period, there are numerous mentionings of colorful plants (especially flowers), fruits, and other aspects of nature. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", for example, the speaker refers to the "golden" daffodils (cf. l. 4), and "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill" includes the image of "the blue fields of heaven" (l. 10). The same is true for the contemporary nature poems: In Ted Hughes's "Daffodils", the flowers are also likened to "gold" (l. 74), and in Hughes's "Autumn Nature Notes", the atmosphere in nature is described as "honey-color stillness" (l. 77). Through the interpretations, one could also see that the color 'green' plays a very important role in the descriptions of nature: In "The Tables Turned" (in line 7) and in "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill" (in line 33) green fields are mentioned and in "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", we learn about "pastoral farms, / Green to the very door" (ll. 16-17). Likewise, the speaker in "Ode to a Nightingale" finds "the country green" (l. 13) worth mentioning. In the contemporary nature poems, then, one learns, for example, about grass that is "[g]reener than ever" (l. 40 in "Woodnotes"), a "green ember crumble of hill trees" (ll. 2-3 in "River Barrow"), and "a world / Green to the cliff-tops" (ll. 1-2 in "Below Tintern"). Interestingly enough, there are also some incidences of nature being associated with the color 'green' in the city poems. For instance, the speaker in "Bexhill, 1866" refers to green trees (cf. ll. 110-111) and "In a Manufacturing Town" contains a reference to "[t]he green sun-delighting earth" (l. 16). A large proportion of the poems conveys how rich nature is in colors, most often through references to flowers in bloom or to the astonishing verdure or greenness of the place. The city, on the other hand, is mainly depicted as a very dark and somber place. For example, when looking at the nature poems from the nineteenth century, there is a reference to the "sunless lanes and streets" (l. 57) in "Bexhill, 1866", and in "The Factory Town", the speaker mentions the "cold grey wall and blackened tower" (l. 4) and also gives a description of the dark workplaces in the city (cf. l. 10). Moreover, while one can enjoy the sunlight and see the blue sky in nature (cf. l. 10 in "I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill"), the air in the city is full of dark factory smoke (cf., e.g. l. 3 in "In a Manufacturing Town or l. 14 in "The Factory Town"). "The City of Dreadful Night" is the Victorian poem that draws most strongly on the image of the city as a place of

darkness in order to give the reader an understanding of the atmosphere of ‘urban anxiety’: Right from the beginning, the speaker makes clear that “[t]he City is of Night” (p. 124, l. 13) and it is due to the mentioning of such aspects as the “sombre mansions” (p. 130, l. 16) that he succeeds in conveying the gloomy atmosphere. The contemporary city poems continue these sinister images and intensify the rather dark impression one already got from the Victorian city poems. One could say that “[t]he proverbial black clouds of soot that hung over the industrial metropolis have been displaced by the no-less-proverbial smog of the postindustrial metropolis” (Ghent Urban Studies Team 139): Here, we find references to the “grey street” (l. 22 in *Glasgow Sonnets*), the mentioning of the “ashen sky” (p. 20, l. 12 in *City*) and learn that “[b]uildings are dissolved in a grey haze that swallows the trees” (p. 47, ll. 6-7 in *The City*). In Roy Fisher’s *City*, the speaker also describes his sight of “[t]he rows of trucks / Extend[ing]: black, white / white, grey, white, black” (p. 17, ll. 16-18) to convey the depressing atmosphere caused by traffic in the city streets. Thus, one can say that the poems have made us aware of the fact that nature, due to its verdure and richness in colors, tends to overwhelm people in a very positive way, since the colorfulness can lead to cheerfulness and a feeling of harmony. The darkness in the city, then, was found to affect people negatively because it is very depressing and reinforces the sadness and despair that one feels there all the time due to the negative consequences of industrialization and modernization (e.g. poverty, pollution, working conditions, etc.).

Another aspect worth mentioning is the fact that the speakers in the nature poems usually describe the natural world as being very much ‘alive’ or at least as a place that is ‘full of life’. In the Romantic poems “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, and “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”, this effect is mainly achieved by references to the flora and fauna and with the help of the stylistic device of personification. For instance, it has been claimed that the verdure of the place—the green trees, plants, and the flowers in bloom—could also show how much nature actually symbolizes life. Likewise, the mentioning of the water (cf., e.g. ll. 3-4 in “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” and l. 41 in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”) and the references to the animals one can see in nature, like the “swarms of minnows” (l. 72) in the water and “goldfinches” (l. 87) in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”, add to this impression of nature being ‘full of life’. This idea is even more clearly expressed when the speakers make use of personification with regard to different aspects of nature, as can be seen, for example, from the “dancing”

(l. 6) daffodils in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”. In the contemporary nature poems the presentation of the liveliness of nature is achieved similarly: Personification is also often made use of for this purpose, as, for example, in “Spring Nature Notes” which, in its entirety, builds on the atmosphere of nature’s ‘reawakening’. Right at the beginning, the speaker tries to convey his impression of the light spring breeze by referring to the air with the word “struggling” (l. 3) and the whole poem, with its description of nature, is full of words of movement. At a later point, the speaker even adds a soul to certain objects in nature (cf. “The oak tree’s soul”, l. 19). Further, just as in the Romantic poems, sources of water are associated with liveliness, as we have seen, very clearly, in the poems that refer to water already with their titles: In “River Barrow”, it is said that “[t]he current / Hauls its foam line feed-lane / Along under the far bank” (ll. 8-10), and in “The Beck”, there is the mentioning of “water foaming as if new-uttered that moment / from the earth’s interior” (ll. 6-7). Moreover, the inclusion of animals in the speaker’s descriptions of the natural world can also be found in the contemporary nature poems, one striking example being “Autumn Nature Notes” with quite a lively setting due to a “goldfinch” (l. 4), a “raven” (l. 22), a “woodpigeon” (l. 101), “Peacock butterflies” (l. 21), and “fieldfares” (l. 100). The mentioning of the animals in the poems could be linked to Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence’s finding that “[a]s our everyday lives distance us more completely and alienate us more irrevocably from contact with animals, our psyches yearn more intensely for our lost unity with the myriad living creatures with whom we share the earth” (47). The poems have shown that the insight of how ‘full of life’ nature is can have an invigorating or vitalizing effect on the speakers—that being of special importance if one thinks of the people from the city who are used to urban life ‘sucking’ the life and energy out of them. Also, through the use of personification, certain parts of nature are humanized, probably because the sight of them has made people become aware of the interconnectedness of man and nature, which fits the idea of deep ecology in ecocritical theory. The city is also often depicted as ‘alive’ via imagery and with the help of personification; however, this liveliness has a very negative effect on the speakers in the poems and the other people in the city. On the one hand, the impression of the city being ‘full of life’ certainly results from the descriptions of the urban bustle, traffic, and crowded places, but it is also reinforced through certain images, as for instance the depiction of the factory as a kind of ‘monster’ (cf. e.g. stanza 2 in “The Factory Town”) or the direct reference to the city as “a composite monster” (p. 23, l. 10 in *City*). The interpretations of the Victorian city

poems have led to the insight that crowded places (especially workplaces) often caused feelings of constriction and that the huge factories may have appeared very frightening and oppressive.¹²² In the contemporary city poems, the negative effect of the crowded streets can still be felt and it is here very often linked to the issue of traffic and the accumulation of cars in the city—the majority of the texts analyzed addresses this problem. The city is not always depicted as ‘alive’, however, because, with more intimate study of the poems, it has become clear that they also convey the city’s actual lifelessness that is ‘hidden’ behind the apparent bustle and activity. Regarding the Victorian poems, it is probably in “The City of Dreadful Night” where the lifelessness of the city is emphasized most frequently and most strongly, since the speaker constantly compares the city to a place of the dead—he refers to the place as a “necropolis” (p. 126, l. 15) and speaks of a “mausoléan night” (p. 145, l. 22). Also, the speaker states that there can be no life in the city anymore, since “Hope”, “Faith”, and “Love” have died there (cf. p. 128, l. 15, to p. 129, l. 8). Another example can be found in the poem “In a Manufacturing Town” because the people in the city are referred to as “ghosts in some sulphurous Hades” (l. 2). The analyses of the contemporary poems have led to similar results: *A Book of Spilt Cities* is completely built on the idea of the city’s lifelessness, since it presents the city as ‘ill’ and as ‘not functioning properly’ anymore, comparable to a mentally-ill person. The city’s lack of liveliness is a motive that runs through the whole text and can be applied to all places in the city—whether it is the inner city or the suburbs that are so ‘designed’ and ‘constructed’ that they seem ‘plastic-like’ and artificial. How serious the speaker is about this perceived liveliness is expressed when he refers to the city’s “BARELY BEATING HEART” (p. 8, l. 14). In *City*, too, the crowds that normally indicate liveliness are depicted as fragmented (probably to indicate that the people are psychologically fragmented as well) through the image of “a mass of necks, limbs without extremities, trunks without heads” (p. 23, ll. 11-12). Thus, maybe the presentation of the city as a ‘lifeless’ place reveals more accurately (or, at least, more directly) what the city *really* looks like to people and how they actually feel about living in such a place.

A further aspect that contributes to the positive image of nature in the poems are certainly the references to the ‘gentleness’ of nature which are the exact opposite of the

¹²² That being in crowded places could arouse fears in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was also noticed by William Cooke Taylor, an “apologist of the new industrial system” (Briggs 61): “[A]s a stranger passes through the masses of human beings which [sic] have been accumulated round the mills [...] he cannot contemplate these crowded hives without feelings of anxiety and apprehension amounting almost to dismay” (qtd. in Briggs 61).

references to the harshness of the life in the city. This ‘gentleness’ has been referred to both in the Romantic nature poems (cf. “soft wind”, l. 36 and “Nature’s gentle doings”, l. 63 in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”) and in the contemporary poems. As an example of the latter, one will immediately think of “Spring Nature Notes”, since the transformation of nature with the change of the season is described as subtle and not as uncomfortably abrupt—the ‘gentleness’ being underlined by expressions like “soft excitements” (l. 3) or “silks” (l. 4). While the experience of nature’s ‘gentleness’ can be said to have a soothing and calming effect on people and to lead to a feeling of light-heartedness, the confrontation with the harsh conditions in the city is very shocking, depressing, and causes fears—not only for the people who live there, but also for those who visit the place. Every single city poem in this thesis contains numerous references to the problems and people’s miserable situation in the city. The speakers very often mention the bad working conditions in the city and refer to the workers’ weariness, weakness, and exhaustion. Striking examples of the Victorian poems are Thomas Hood’s “The Song of the Shirt” and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “The Cry of the Children”. Likewise, in the contemporary poems, the speakers mention “cavernous textile-mills” (l. 6 in “From a Flat City”) to point to the negative effect of people’s workplace on their well-being and refer indirectly to wearisome night shifts through the image of a “great flat-roofed factory show[ing] clear by its bulk [...] with solid rows of lit windows” (p. 14, ll. 24-26 in *City*). The reference to worn-out workers sleeping on a night bus (cf. p. 21, l. 35 in *City*) further supports the impression of the general fatigue and exhaustion that contribute to the harshness of city life. In *The City*, this weariness caused by urban work even leads to a certain anti-social and aggressive behavior (cf. p. 8, p. 15, and p. 28). Moreover, the issue of poverty is frequently addressed—especially in the context of the description of the visible signs of social injustice in the city, like the differing housing conditions of the rich and the poor and people’s clothing. During the Industrial Revolution already, the problem of social injustice was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for people’s fears in the city and therefore also accounted for much of their idealization of the countryside: While in rural areas “the golden line of life [was] kept continuous and unbroken, from the owner of the lordliest domain, down to the humblest of the cottagers” (Chalmers, “Causes and Cure of Pauperism” 15), in the industrial cities “there [was] a mighty unfilled space interposed between the high and the low” (Chalmers, *The Christian and Civic Economy* 29). In Blake’s “London”, the speaker tries to convey to the reader that the city is a place of

omnipresent misery and suffering and he also makes clear that the suffering is inescapable and that one is immediately affected by it. According to G. Robert Stange,

[t]he density of urban life brought to the eyes and ears the processes of human elimination in ways that country life had not done. The modern city exposes men's physical needs; what takes place behind the hedge-row can be either overlooked or romanticized; when the same thing happens on the bricks of an urban alley it becomes an experience that must be either dealt with or repressed (631-632).

When they were published, some of the city poems were attempts to bring about change to the miserable situation of the people in the city, which shows that one was not only shocked by the different signs of misery in the city and the physical and emotional condition of those living there, but also—and probably even more so—by the upper-class people's indifference to the suffering of the poor. Thus, while being in nature could make people feel happy, light-hearted, and carefree, a temporary or permanent stay in the city caused great hopelessness and forlornness. The problems of poverty and social injustice as examples of the harsh character of the city are also still important issues in the contemporary poems: Edwin Morgan's work *Glasgow Sonnets* draws a strikingly sad and sinister picture of Glasgow's tenement areas and the people living there with the help of images that convey an atmosphere of decay, dirt, disease, danger, and despair (cf. e.g. sonnets one to three). Likewise, in John Barnie's *The City*, poverty is addressed when the speaker describes the appearance of a beggar on the street (cf. p. 31) and refers to the problem of social housing existing next to a household waste recycling center (cf. p. 55). Furthermore, in many of the nineteenth-century poems, there are references to child labor, illnesses, and at some points, one even learns about (young and old) people dying in the city. While the child labor of former times is only alluded to in the contemporary poems (cf. p. 9, l. 34 in *A Book of Spilt Cities*), they also address illnesses and death as aspects of the harshness of city life. People suffer physically from their spatial surroundings and the poor situation (cf. "coughs", l. 13 in *Glasgow Sonnets*) and even animals might have become victims to urban pollution (cf. the repeated references to "diseased feet", p. 30, l. 1, l. 4, and l. 7 in *City*). The description of how people cope with their situation and problems in the city also establishes a direct connection to the topic of 'urban anxiety': They are shown to drug themselves with alcohol (cf. p. 18, ll. 13-14 in *The City*) or commit suicide (cf. pp. 58-59 in *The City*). Finally, the harshness and dysfunctionality of the city is, of course, also expressed in the imagination of the city as 'ill', which is most prominent in *A Book of Spilt Cities* and also suggested in *Glasgow Sonnets* (cf. "It groans and shakes, contracts and grows again", l. 113). From the interpretation of "The City of Dreadful

Night”, one could also see that the hopelessness and constant suffering often led to a kind of apathy, which means that the people in the city, at some point, became resigned to the fact that there was misery everywhere: This does not mean that the people suddenly stopped being sad and frightened, but after having lived in the city for a while, the situation probably no longer appeared so shocking to them as it may have appeared to a visitor who was not accustomed to it. This kind of apathy, as a consequence of people’s feeling that they cannot escape their fate, is also alluded to in sonnet three of *Glasgow Sonnets* (cf. ll. 29-42).

Moreover, it should be noted that the image of the city as a place characterized by impoverishment—both, literally due to the people’s poverty, but also due to their inability to have positive experiences and feel happy—contrasts strongly with the description of nature’s ‘richness’ in sources of inspiration. In many of the poems that have been analyzed, inspiring aspects of nature are described with the help of words that convey a sense of value and preciousness. Examples from the Romantic nature poems are the “golden” daffodils (cf. l. 4) in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” and “the sweet buds [...] [which] [h]ad not yet lost those starry diadems / Caught from the early sobbing of the morn” (ll. 3-7) in “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”. In the contemporary nature poems, daffodils are also linked to “gold” (l. 74 in “Daffodils”), and in “Autumn Nature Notes”, the speaker refers to a tree as “golden” (l. 68) due to the effect of the light. Further, they include comparisons of nature or natural objects to a queen, as in “Spring Nature Notes”, where the speaker refers to the daffodils (and nature in general) as a “great queen” (l. 27), and in “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’”, where a mussel is said to be the “Queen of the River” (l. 26). Last but not least, it should be mentioned that the preciousness of nature is also expressed in “The Beck”: The speaker remembers a certain experience with water which has impressed him so deeply that he seeks another similar experience. His fascination can be felt in the description of the water in terms of perfection; it is referred to as “stunningly cold, / piercingly pure, flavourless [...] / [...] water” (ll. 12-14). It has been claimed that the speakers probably make use of such words in their description in order to indicate to the reader how valuable the experience in nature proved and to show that it means a lot to them. Of course, the speakers also explain why the experience in nature is or was so valuable to them: For instance, in “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” and “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, the speakers refer to what Wordsworth described as ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’: The speakers’ experiences in nature had such a

long-lasting (positive) effect on them that they could get back to the pleasure they felt in nature via memory and put it into words. From analyzing the city poems, one could see that the experience in the city also had a long-lasting effect on the speakers; however, the effect is a very negative one and the memories are not so often put into poetry for the sake of pleasure and art (as in Romanticism), but rather as a political statement and to make people become aware of the miserable situation in the city. Another reason for the valuableness of the experience in nature is given in “The Tables Turned”, where the speaker tries to make clear to the reader that nature can be a “[t]eacher” (cf. l. 16). He says that visiting nature can be very educational and enlightening because it leads to a deeper understanding of nature and an awareness of its importance for one’s well-being. Finally, one should not forget to mention that some of the Romantic poems also convey the idea that spending time in nature cannot only have effects on one’s physical health, but also on one’s spiritual and moral health: In “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”, the speaker claims that nature is “[t]he guide, the guardian of [his] heart, and soul / of all [his] moral being” (ll. 110-111). In the contemporary poems, too, the speakers give reasons for why nature appears so precious to them and for why they value the experiences so highly. In the majority of the poems, the speakers’ impression of nature’s preciousness is strongly connected to their understanding of the inherent value of nature and the insight that all organisms are interconnected, which is basically the idea of deep ecology. This insight is a result of the comprehension of nature’s liveliness and the discovery of the variety of life that can be found in nature. It leads to a certain sense of belonging and of ‘being a part of nature’—a feeling that is in strong contrast to the psychological fragmentation caused by urban life. In “River Barrow”, for example, the speaker also expresses that the experience in nature, watching the river, bestows him with life and makes him feel closer to nature, which is why it is worth craving for again and again (cf. ll. 14-20). In other poems, the speakers make clear that the value of nature lies in the ways it helps one to find out more about oneself and about one’s real identity (cf. “Woodnotes”), and in its power to lead to acts of contemplation that help to set the natural world in relation to the non-natural world. Above all, nature is presented as precious because one can learn from it not only about nature’s worth and beauty, but also about how it should be treated by mankind—in several poems, especially those focusing on the aspect of memory (“Daffodils” and “The Beck”), the experiences are shown to have an influence on the speaker’s attitudes and actions regarding the environment.

Another explanation for society's positive response to nature and the negative reaction to the city can be seen in the fact that nature is often associated with 'wildness' in the poems, while the city is frequently brought into connection with 'order' and 'control'. For instance, the reference to the uncontrolled growth of a hedge (cf. "sportive wood run wild", l. 16) in "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" has been interpreted as hinting at the possibility of 'letting loose' or letting go of one's thoughts in nature. In a way, the description conveys a sense of freedom to the reader. In the contemporary poems, too, nature is linked to a certain 'wildness' and positive 'messiness' (as in contrast to the urban 'order'): One just has to think of the 'rough' and 'wild' autumn landscape described by the speaker in "Autumn Nature Notes", or even such subtle remarks as the reference to "cow-shit" (l. 26) in "I Turned". Also the fact that the speaker in "Below Tintern" mentions his sight of "a world / Green to the cliff-tops" (ll. 1-2) shows that, at least in that moment, there is really nothing that disturbs the 'naturalness' of the surroundings. Moreover, in "Daffodils", the flowers (as a part of nature) are associated with the 'wild' and non-urban environment, since they are said to have grown on a "patch of wild ground" (l. 1). In the city, on the other hand, the surroundings appear more 'arranged' and 'organized' due to the streets and buildings—pointing to the fact that people are less free and that there are also fewer possibilities for self-development. Looking at the city poems from the nineteenth century, one can see that, in Blake's "London", the speaker's choice of words in the first stanza (cf., e.g. "charter'd street", l. 1; "charter'd Thames", l. 2) makes clear that he criticizes how much everything was 'controlled' in London at that time. The speaker also uses several different images in the poem (e.g. the "mind-forg'd manacles", l. 8) that are meant to explain to the reader that the people who worked in the city had no freedom at all and that they were actually treated like slaves. When turning to the contemporary city poems, the issue of the city's 'order' and 'artificiality' (as in contrast to nature's 'wildness') is most strikingly commented on in *A Book of Spilt Cities*. This might seem contradictory at first because the whole text draws an image of the city as 'out of control', but only to illustrate its actual dysfunctionality as a result of the constant attempts at 'shaping' and 'developing' the city which go in the wrong direction. When reading on, one learns that this has much to do with the urban sprawl and the appearance of the suburbs that make one realize one's distance to nature (cf. "We have made things plastic", p. 30, l. 16). The speaker also points to the effect this has on the urbanites' well-being when he states that people are "too worked and eaten, / bulled into

strain of / all the systems of control” (p. 21, ll. 13-15). This corresponds with the finding that “the post-modern city has been characterised as an environment in which form increasingly follows fear” (Bannister and Fyfe 810), since the almost ‘cell-like’ man-made environment makes people experience a sense of regulation and administration “via a panoply of human, physical and technological methods monitoring and regulating behaviour” (ibid.).

It is also important to mention that the poems have not only shown that nature and the city are perceived differently due to the way the scenery affects people and because of the things that one sees in the places, but that one’s image of nature and the city is also determined, to some extent, by the auditory experience. In the poems from the Romantic Period (and even in some of the Victorian and contemporary city poems), nature is repeatedly presented as a very quiet place. The interpretations of the poems have shown that the speakers often emphasize the noiselessness and the experience of solitude and seclusion in nature because these conditions allow for rest, relaxation, and recovery. Ultimately, they are said to help man to “rediscover his own inner life undisturbed by human society” (Clayre xx). Moreover, this atmosphere in nature was found to have influenced the speakers in a very soothing and calming way. It is quite interesting that the speakers in the Romantic nature poems are all alone when they spend time in nature, except for the speaker in “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” who is accompanied by his sister. The aspect of solitude is referred to at the very beginning of “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” by the word “lonely” (l. 1) and at the end of the poem when the memories of the experience in nature bring back to the speaker the “bliss of solitude” (l. 22). Moreover, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” contains references to the quietness of nature (cf. l. 8), just as “I Stood Tip-Toe upon a Little Hill”, where the speaker tells about him having heard “[a] little noiseless noise” that was “[b]orn of the very sigh that silence heaves” (ll. 11-12). The contemporary nature poems are full of references to silence and quietness as well: In fact, “Autumn Nature Notes” begins with an atmosphere of silence, when the speaker states in the very first line of the poem that “[t]he Laburnum top is silent, quite still” (l. 1). Although nature is, of course, not completely silent, the speaker wants to make clear that the sounds in nature come with a certain quietness, as expressed through the “whistle-chirrup whisperings” (l. 13), revealing his impression of a bird’s sounds. The same was found out for “Woodnotes” because, here, too, the speaker says that “[a] leaf dripped and a black / Defoliated tree creaked like [his] chair / But quietly so that only

[he] could hear” (ll. 43-45). Further mentionings of the silent atmosphere in nature were found, for example, in “River Barrow” (cf. “Dog-bark stillness”, l. 37) and in “Spring Nature Notes” (cf. “Spring thunders down in brilliant silence”, l. 13). The quietness and solitude that can be experienced in nature build a strong contrast to the noisy traffic and crowdedness that is so typical of the city. The poems from the Victorian Period often deal with the noise of the machinery in the factories (cf. “the wheels’ dull droning”, l. 21 in “The Factory Town”) or the noisy crowded streets (cf. “They only heard the tumult of the town”, l. 85 in “Bexhill, 1866”) because these aspects have contributed to the general atmosphere of ‘urban anxiety’ by causing in the people feelings of discomfort and an inner unrest. Tuan says with regard to noise in the city that

[t]o newcomers, urban cacophony may initially be their most disorienting and frightening experience. Noise is auditory chaos, and most people are better able to tolerate visual than auditory disorder because sound tends to affect emotions more elementally than does sight. In time, one learns to tolerate noise [...] [b]ut it continues to create tension and anxiety—to be a reminder of chaos (147).

When saying that the city is usually described as noisy, “Composed upon Westminster Bridge” is an exception: Here, the city is referred to as a quiet, calm, and lonely place—almost like nature. However, the speaker’s emphasis on the fact that one could experience this positive atmosphere *only* in the early morning—when the city is still ‘asleep’—shows that the actual intention is to make people become aware of how terrible and frightening the atmosphere was most of the time (by day and probably even until late at night). In the contemporary city poems, too, urban noise is explicitly and implicitly referred to: *The City*, for example, focuses on the issue of transportation in the city and car noise. According to the speaker, the sounds have quite a ‘haunting’ effect because they hinder people from sleeping at night (cf. “cars are effaced to sound”, p. 6, l. 9). As the Ghent Urban Studies Team states, “the noise of motorized traffic [...] has not only spread in space but also in time, giving rise to round-the-clock disturbances” (139). Moreover, at another point in the poem, aircraft noise is commented on as “the roar of the engines, our own merciless music out of which we must make our peace” (p. 12, ll. 31-33).

Both the nature and the city poems also include examples of the effects the perception of overwhelming surroundings can have on one’s imagination. Looking at the Romantic nature poems first, one example is “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, which has shown that the speaker is so positively overwhelmed by the sight of the daffodils that he starts fantasizing. He gives proof of his vivid imagination through the use of personification as well as by means of exaggerated descriptions. For instance, he

states that he imagined the daffodils to be “dancing” (l. 6) when he looked at them and he also reveals that he thought that the daffodils were “stretched in never-ending line” (l. 9) and that he saw “[t]en thousand [...] at a glance” (l. 11), which is probably a little exaggerated. Also, in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, just as in “Ode to a Nightingale”, it becomes clear that spending time in nature could lead to the impression of being ‘a part of nature’, since the speakers in the poems identify with plants, animals, or other aspects of the natural world: In “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, the speaker compares himself to a cloud (cf. l. 1) right at the beginning, and in “Ode to a Nightingale”, he imagines to be flying away with a nightingale and to be leaving ‘the world of human beings’ (cf. ll. 19-30). This applies to some of the contemporary nature poems as well: In “Autumn Nature Notes”, for example, the speaker gives proof of his heightened imagination at several points in the poem, like when he states that, in spring or summer, “the Elm was full / When it heaved and all its tautness drummed / Like a full-sail ship” (ll. 55-57). He also often makes references to ‘fire’ and ‘burning’ (cf. “fire-ball bird”, l. 71, and “flame”, l. 82), but these are probably only exaggerations resulting from the effect of the autumn sunlight in general or the striking color of a pheasant’s plumage. At one point, the speaker straightforwardly makes clear that he is highly impressed and overwhelmed by nature: He “stand[s], dazzled to [his] bones, blinded” (l. 75). In other poems, too, speakers admit their fascination very directly and convey that the experience feels slightly unreal to them, as, for example, in “River Barrow” (cf. “I lie here/ Half-unearthed”, ll. 44-45). The issue of fantasizing is taken to another level in “Woodnotes”, where the speaker describes the sight of “[his] own ghost / Wav[ing] from ground-misted ferns” (ll. 3-4)—probably an attempt to convey that the concept of himself is based on the awareness of his ‘old’ self (with a lack of seriousness about the environment) and his ‘new’ (environmentally conscious) self. Moreover, the speakers’ impression of ‘being a part of nature’ that was already found in many Romantic nature poems is still very noticeable in the contemporary poems and mirrors the basic ecocritical belief in the idea of deep ecology. In the city poems, the effect on the imagination is a different one: The Victorian poem “In a Manufacturing Town” shows that one was often so overwhelmed by the shocking and frightening experience in the city that one was led to hallucinations or ‘visions’ of a better life and atmosphere (cf. ll. 13-20). Likewise, the contemporary city poems have demonstrated the shock that the urban experience can lead to: In *A Book of Spilt Cities*, the speaker refers to the negatively overwhelming effect of the city by speaking of “THE

MONSTROUS OVERWHELMING / CATASTROPHES OF CITIES” (p. 8, ll. 10-11) or of “urbanic braincore shock” (p. 8, l. 20). Less extreme in its choice of words, but not less powerful in conveying an idea of the shock that the experience of the city (here: the awareness of its vastness and the urban sprawl) can lead to is the image used in *The City*: “As we eat and stare through the windows, we gradually become silent” (p. 17, ll. 20-21). What should be mentioned, though, as a new observation regarding the contemporary poems is that it is not only the city which is found to be the negatively overwhelming by the speakers, but nature, in its polluted form, also shocks them in an extreme way. This is because the poems concerned with nature do not only focus on its beautiful side, but also on environmental pollution and its consequences. For example, in “1984 on ‘The Tarka-Trail’”, one gets an impression of how appalled the speaker is by the sight and smell of the polluted river (cf. “ditch-carcase, a puddled horror”, l. 20, and “a bottleful is like a sap, a rich urine”, l. 14). Likewise, in “Going, Going”, the speaker finds the situation so hopeless that he even looks into the future very pessimistically (cf. “all that remains / For us will be concrete and tyres”, ll. 48-49).

The interpretations in this thesis and this final overview have shown certain patterns and similarities in the ways people perceived the effects of nature and the city on their well-being ever since the Industrial Revolution. Generally speaking, spending time in nature was found to have a very positive effect on people and one can say that the natural world is widely associated with harmony. Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” also demonstrates that the happiness one can feel in nature can be so intense that it causes pain, probably because it is so overwhelming, which is due to the fact that moments of pleasure were very rare for many people during the time of industrialization. The experience in the city, on the other hand, was shown to often cause feelings of discomfort, sadness, depression, fear, and hopelessness. Eckart Voigts-Virchow is probably right when he says that “[t]he more visible it [the city] became and the more alarmingly different it seemed, the more its craziness seemed to threaten the social order” (220). It is not only through the descriptions of the signs of misery (e.g. the references to the bad working conditions, child labor, poverty, pollution, crime, noise, social isolation, and the issue of social injustice, etc.) that the poems are successful in conveying an atmosphere of ‘urban anxiety’, but it is also a result of the speakers’ references to their own feelings resulting from their visit to the city—regardless of whether these references are direct or indirect. There are many voices that convey an idea of the city from an urbanite’s perspective (which adds credibility and

strong emotionalism to their view), but the poems also draw the reader's attention to the fact that, even as an 'observer' or 'visitor', one is immediately affected by the sight of the misery in the city, and that it helps to comprehend (at least to a certain degree) how the people living in the city feel, since one is led to similar feelings. After all, one should see that learning about 'urban anxiety' from the poems can be helpful in leading to solutions to these fears and bringing about changes: As Richard Sparks, Evi Girling, and Ian Loader state, it is important to remember "how potent and durable a motivator in human affairs fear may be" (885) because "[i]t is a fundamental and often mortally powerful motor of politics [...] touch[ing] our rawest nerves and often call[ing] upon some of our most visceral responses: to defend our own, not to surrender" (ibid.).

It is quite striking that the nature poems all convey largely the same image of nature and that the city is also presented in more or less the same way in the city poems (even if the contemporary poems, of course, address also 'new' aspects of urban life that did not yet exist at the time the Victorian poems were written). Maybe this adds to the force of expression, meaningfulness, and significance of the poems: The fact that the speakers are very consistent in their presentations of nature and the city shows that the poems do not reveal subjective views and impressions, but that they rather convey a certain objectivity. Thus, the speakers' portrayals of nature and the city also become more convincing.

Although relatively consistent in the images of nature and the city conveyed, just as in the general conclusions about the effects these places have on people's well-being, the nineteenth-century and contemporary poets sometimes also differ in their techniques of portraying the natural and the urban world. One reason for this is that, with time, new approaches have been chosen to express the 'old' ideas in a new manner: While Romantic nature poetry appears much concerned with praising the beautiful aspects of nature, the contemporary nature poems also shed light on environmental pollution—the motivation behind these approaches is the same, though; it is all about raising consciousness for the inherent worth of nature and about emphasizing the necessity to protect the natural world. As said before, contemporary nature and city poetry definitely builds on the ideas expressed in poetry from industrial times, but it also clearly marks its distinction from earlier versions of its type. That some of the 'old' ideas must be reconsidered in a different light has become most clear, in fact, by the intertextual references in the contemporary poems and the passages that allow for comparisons: Several contemporary nature and city poems refer to some of the nineteenth-century

poems that have been studied in the first part of this thesis to mark a change in perception over time. This was shown, for example, by Griffiths's *A Book of Spilt Cities*, which includes a 'confused' version of Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge", only to express that the 'old' and dreamy view can no longer be maintained and that the 'modern' urban situation is actually the opposite. Likewise, there is no getting around comparing Hughes's "Daffodils" with Wordsworth's famous "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud": Here the contemporary aim is definitely to draw attention to striking changes in the ways the appreciation of nature has developed with the passing of time—from the spiritual bond in Romantic times to the more anthropocentric attitude, lacking the adequate respect for nature, which can be felt more and more. Through the intertextual references, the poets make clear that—although agreeing with the general conclusions about the ways the spatial surroundings influence people as expressed in poetry written in the process of industrialization—there are certain views regarding nature and the city that can no longer be shared because they seem outmoded or incomplete. Thus, one can conclude that contemporary nature and city poetry also often uses nineteenth-century poetry as a template to highlight changes in the ways people perceive the natural and the urban world, which is an interesting finding from a literary-historical perspective.

Contemporary poetry, of course, includes many more examples of texts that convey images which are similar to the presentations of nature and the city in the poems analyzed in this thesis; one just has to think of the many writings produced by non-British authors that can also be categorized as ecopoetry—the poems by the American ecopoets Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry, the Australian writer John Kinsella, and Canadian ecopoet Di Brandt are just some examples. Therefore, if one is interested in finding out more about perceptions of nature and the city (as influenced by urbanization and modernization), one could build on this thesis and its results and go further, by taking into account also examples from other countries than Great Britain and doing justice to the fact that the environment is experienced differently by different cultures (even if the general responses might still go in the same direction as presented in this thesis). Such a study would lead to more comprehensive and maybe even more diverse insights into the ('new') modern factors that have further contributed to the positive image of nature and the negative image of the city. After all, it would convey the message that people (and their well-being) are influenced by urban and natural landscapes all over the world, which, ultimately, also reinforces the claim for action.

Moreover, as Gifford has noted, “we should perhaps give greater attention to the ways in which the reading and discussion of science has informed the [...] poetry of environmental writers, as well as the ways in which the metaphorical language available to imaginative writers is used in their presentation of environmental science” (“Rivers and Water” 89), as was begun in this thesis, for example, with Hughes’s “1984 on ‘The Tarka Trail’”. This should finally lead to the “collapse [of] the Two Cultures dualism that has for so long separated the ‘sciences’ and the ‘arts’” (ibid.).

Taking everything into account, one can say that the results of this thesis could also have an influence on today’s responses to nature and the city, since the insights gained from the interpretations might strengthen us in our determination to take further steps to protect the natural world. Ecopoetry, here, has been used to show that “we need to reconnect our modes of knowing and our modes of discourse in order to understand how these might inform each other in the service of both the planet and the people” (Gifford, “Rivers and Water” 90). In the end, what really counts is, of course, “what happens *off* the page” (Skinner qtd. in Hume 760). It would be a great success if readers of this thesis comprehended that the issues examined “are not just academic or technical matters, to be settled in elite dialogues between experts” (Brulle 48), but rather “fundamental questions of defining what our community is and how it should exist” (ibid.). Because the nineteenth-century and contemporary nature poems have given an overview of the positive effects nature can have on one’s well-being, and because the Victorian and contemporary city poems have drawn our attention to the frightening aspects of the city and urban life, we should have realized that it is about time to focus not only on urban expansion and development, but also, and maybe even all the more, on the protection and preservation of nature. As Ivanka Kovačević says, we “must be content to approach the problems of the present with concepts and attitudes inherited from the past” (15). Coupe, too, shares the belief that “the concern of green studies is with the living connection between past and future” (7). Learning that people have been expressing their fears about the loss of nature since the nineteenth century (and probably even earlier), should lead us to the awareness that these fears still exist. Perhaps they might even have become stronger over time, due to the fact that man has abused, neglected, and replaced nature yet more notably in the last decades. The images conveyed in the poems analyzed in this thesis have certainly helped us to comprehend that our surroundings have a great impact on our well-being and that we depend heavily on nature for the experience of positive emotions. Therefore, it is important that we

exercise restraint with regard to our modernization aims (which are often pushed through at nature's cost) and that we respond with more respect, appreciation, and care to the natural world. As Glen A. Love clarifies, "our task is not to remake nature so that it is fit for humankind, but as Thoreau says, to make humankind right for nature" (234). Apart from recent developments regarding environmental sustainability, like limiting emissions and managing resources carefully, one can also observe another interesting phenomenon in terms of rethinking: While it has been shown that the majority of the poems present nature and the city as very different places, today, it seems, people start considering also their 'compatibility': For instance, the new trend in urban planning to create more green spaces in the midst of cities shows that there are attempts to 'integrate' nature into urban areas.¹²³ This is due to the new awareness that,

[b]esides important environmental services such as air and water purification, wind and noise filtering, or microclimate stabilization, natural areas provide social and psychological services, which are of crucial significance to the livability of modern cities and the well being of urban dwellers (Chiesura 130).

As the consequence is that nature no longer appears so 'distant' and people are able to experience nature's positive influence more often, it may also alleviate the atmosphere of 'urban anxiety' in the long run. Slowly but successfully, nature is regaining its status in our minds, and hopefully even beyond, when more resolutions are put into practice.

¹²³ Van den Berg, Hartig, and Staats refer to this idea of "making nature (trees, parks, green rooftops) present" in the city as "Green Urbanism" (91). They further distinguish "Green Urbanism" from "New Urbanism" which "focuses on making cities greener in a broad, ecological, or resource-conserving sense (using small amounts of energy, reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and toxic waste)" (ibid.). Both movements certainly influence (and are influenced by) Applied Environmental Psychology, which "studies effective ways of promoting conservation of the natural environment and better ways of designing buildings, towns and cities, taking into consideration the behavioral needs and responses of people" (Mathew n. pag.).

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