

Holism versus Anthropocentrism: An Ecocritical Study of
a Sunrise on the Veld by Doris Lessing

الشمولية البيئية في مواجهة المركزية البشرية: قراءة نقدية إيكولوجية
لل قصة القصيرة الشروق للكاتبة دوريس ليسينج

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Abstract

This paper aims at presenting an ecocritical study of the short story *A Sunrise on the Veld* (1951) by the Nobel Laureate British writer Doris Lessing with an ecopsychological orientation. In her story, Lessing depicts a fifteen-year-old boy's gradual change from an exaggerated sense of anthropocentrism to his eco-consciousness about human and non-human coexistence. The sole human character in Lessing's story realizes that he is not the center of the universe but only a part of the biological chain. This eco-realization marks the sunrise of the boy's new self-awareness which accompanies the sunrise on the veld. This paper discusses *A Sunrise on the Veld* as a profound example of the ecocritical literature with its deep ecopsychological concern represented by the interrelationship between the human and the ecological world.

Keywords: ecocriticism, ecopsychology, holism, anthropocentrism, Doris Lessing

الشمولية البيئية في مواجهة المركزية البشرية: قراءة نقدية إيكولوجية للقصة القصيرة "الشروق" للكاتبة دوريس ليسينج

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم دراسة نقدية إيكولوجية (بيئية) للقصة القصيرة *الشروق* للكاتبة البريطانية دوريس ليسينج الحائزة على جائزة نوبل في الأدب من خلال تطبيق علم النفس الإيكولوجي على نصها الأدبي. تُجسد ليسينج في قصتها الوعي البيئي لصبي في الخامسة عشرة من العمر وتحوله من شعوره بـ"الأنا" المتضخمة وبمركزيته في الكون إلى إدراكه بأنه مجرد جزء في دورة الحياة البيئية وليس مركزاً لها أو سيداً عليها. حينها أدركت الشخصية البشرية الوحيدة في القصة القصيرة بحق تعايش جميع الكائنات في الكون تعايشاً بيئياً متكاملاً وشاملاً. لذا، يقوم هذا البحث بدراسة علاقة الإنسان بالبيئة المحيطة به دراسة نفسية إيكولوجية (بيئية) في قصة *الشروق* للكاتبة دوريس ليسينج كمثال للأدب الإيكولوجي (البيئي).

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظرية النقدية الإيكولوجية، علم النفس الإيكولوجي (البيئي)، الشمولية البيئية، المركزية البشرية، دوريس ليسينج

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Introduction

The natural world, as Simone de Beauvoir mentions in her book, *The Second Sex*, is a topic of interest to women writers due to the marginalization of both nature and woman in society and culture: “Nature is one of the realms [women writers] have most lovingly explored [...] nature represents what woman herself represents for man” (2011/1949, p. 747). According to de Beauvoir, Western dualism identifies ‘nature’ with ‘femininity’ as opposed to the superior ‘masculinity’, ‘power’, ‘rationality’ and ‘civilization’. As per this dualistic dichotomy, nature is seen as waiting to be controlled and possessed by a male conqueror and explorer.

Born to British parents in 1919, Doris Lessing moved in 1924 to Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, which was then a British colony. Doris Lessing’s father, formerly a bank official, became a maize farmer. Her parents also built their house on the farm, and in her book, *Under My Skin*, Lessing mentions the beauty of the place where she could see the hills and the sun showing up crystalline colors that kept changing with the day light (2013/1994, p. 54). Maria Emilia Alves Couto states in *Winter in July: Mapping Space and Self in Doris Lessing’s Short Stories* how Lessing as a child creates an intimate relationship with the environment and land:

The buck would spend hours in the shade of antheps, where she and her brother would go in search of them. They would follow the flatten grasses, the hoof prints, the pellets of dung [...] They would catch sight of a koodoo and would be close enough to see the colour of its eye and fur. (2017, p. 29)

Lessing as an adult finds out how magnificent it was and how she was privileged to spend most of her childhood in the landscape where she could see only few people, and where she could wander more and more with her brother in the veld at their will. At that young age, Lessing identifies with the non-human nature surrounded by the sounds of the

veld, “the sounds of time taken for granted” (Lessing, 2013/1994, p. 116), the sounds that she recorded in her memory.

She was able to notice “how the [animal] experienced its life, in constant threat, always on watch for enemies. [It] was one day, one time, one memory” (Lessing, 2013/1994, p. 115). While sitting in the veld surrounded by the high grass, Lessing would watch men ploughing the soil for harvest and would listen to other men singing work songs while toiling the soil: “The sound of thunder over the mountains could mean rain towards the end of the day, the doves would coo and cicadas [...] would be insanely incessant. The hawks would circle the sky” (Couto, 2017, p. 30). For twenty years, Doris Lessing lived within this environment till she left for London in 1949. She attached special meaning to the place in her memory and she observes and understands the landscape differently.

In *Under My Skin*, Lessing defines herself as an African writer, and for her, to remember Africa is to remember a construct of the self: “the best of (her)self, that is to say, the self-made by the farm” (Lessing, 2013/1994, p. 149). In her literary works, Lessing restores that perception of her environment and her relation to the environment through her fictional characters as in one of her literary works entitled *The Old Chief Mshlanga*: “A white child, opening its eyes curiously on a sun-suffused landscape [...] might be supposed to accept it as her own, to take the masa trees and the thorn trees as familiars, to feel her blood running free and responsive to the swing of the seasons” (Lessing, 1973/1951, p. 13). Yet, as a white writer, she has to face the dilemma involved in defining her position as a colonial female writer who once lived in an African country and wrote about the continent. As a result, most, if not all of her works, are categorized mainly in the colonial/postcolonial discipline and are studied using these theories.

Thus, this paper presents a different reading of one of Doris Lessing’s literary works, *A Sunrise on the Veld*. It presents a new reading beyond the usual color problem that most reviewers and critics use to study and analyze her works. Instead, the paper discusses how Lessing, as a fictional writer, presents a picture of African nature to her global readers

by restoring her own memories while running through the bush of the vast African land. For her, the veld recalls subjective elements and experiences related to the place, and it becomes the substance of the imaginative space in her literary texts. Her literary works, particularly her selected short story, present a “better understanding of the intertwined characteristics of place, landscape, memory, and the self” (Estok, 2016, p. 197). She writes about Southern Rhodesia in all its ‘Africanness’, of its bewildering silence and her restored feelings within the beauty and the wilderness of the African nature. The fact that Lessing’s fictional writings are set in the southern African natural world provides a site for her protagonists to engage with issues of a new sense of the self, and thus, a new commitment in relation to their surrounding ecological world.

A Sunrise on the Veld takes place in a veld in Southern Rhodesia two hours before sunrise and ends at the sunrise moment. The story symbolically has only one human character, an adolescent boy with an exaggerated sense of anthropocentrism in the face of nature. Celebrating his fifteen-year-birthday, the boy prepares himself to manhood by intruding the veld as an explorer and hunter. The readers are introduced to an immature and inexperienced adolescent who is fully assured of his youth, power and illusive sense of control: “I contain the world. I can make of it what I want [...] it depends on me, and what I decide now” (Lessing, 1951, p. 3). Yet, throughout the story’s events, the boy concludes that his voice is not the only present one in the universe; there is another creature’s voice that takes over his anthropocentric and solipsistic attitude: the voice of an injured buck.

Methodology

I chose *A Sunrise on the Veld* as the story opens the readers’ eyes, through the experience of the fifteen-year-old protagonist, to the topics of eco-consciousness and coexistence which were not of concern at the time of writing the short story itself, but they have become topics of a global priority nowadays. It becomes urgent for scholars and scientists to warn humans of the unprecedented deterioration of the natural environment and call for the diversity and heterogeneity of the natural world. According to Paul Jozef Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “An exciting, but also difficult and daunting task lies ahead of the global research and

engineering community to guide mankind towards global, sustainable, environmental management” (2000, p. 17). Nowadays, consensus is growing that the separation between nature and culture should be abandoned for a more holistic relationship between humans and non-humans.

“Back to the Holocene: A Conceptual, and Possibly Practical, Return to a Nature Not Intended for Humans” (2015) by Virginie Maris is an essential reference for this study. In her article Maris discusses the relationship between humans and non-humans. She highlights the ecological issue that “[n]ature, as a reality as well as a concept, could thus be declared to be dead, and the mere idea of the Anthropocene is nothing but the confirmation that we now live in a wholly human-made world” (p. 123). She claims that the space of nature on Earth is shrinking, and people have noticed the deterioration of the natural environment. In her study, Maris realizes that since the Earth has entered the era of humans, everywhere on the planet becomes a home for them: “We have become the powerful- although blind and planless- architects of the planet we inhabit” (Maris, 2015, p. 129). To save the planet and, in turn save ourselves, holism and biodiversity should face anthropocentrism or what Virginie Maris calls in her article the “death of nature” (Maris, 2015, p. 123).

In this paper, I discuss the experience of Lessing’s fictional boy in the veld with all his contradictory feelings and thoughts: his initial sense of control, power and confidence, then his surprise, helplessness and fear while watching the dying buck, and finally his eco-awareness. Hence, this paper discusses the gradual realization of a new ecological reality and the boy’s new sense of his place in the universe as only part, a helpless part, and not the whole or the center. Through *A Sunrise on the Veld*, Lessing attempts to create an immediate emotional identification of her human character, and thus her readers, with the non-human nature: “The reader is put in contact with characters that were hard stuck by fear [...] of landscape” (Couto, 2017, p. 10). That’s why, I believe that Lessing did not give a name or a direct description to her human character as she wants him to represent the experience of everyman.

Ecocriticism, as an academic field that analyzes literary texts with focus on the environment and pastoral peace, uncovers the contemporary environmental situation aggravated by humans, and tries to offer possible solutions: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1987, pp. 224-225). Thus, ecocriticism is considered a green approach with the main premise of displaying the connection between human culture and the natural world. It takes from the green movement its concern with the effects of human activities on the non-human world.

The author and ecologist William Rueckert was the first to use the term ecocriticism as an academic term in 1978 in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. His essay’s objective is to focus on the application of ecological concepts to the study of literature. Yet, the 1990s marks the official beginning of ecocriticism as a discipline with the publication of two important books: *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) by Lawrence Buell and *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm.

With the progress of industry, science and technology, the environment has become subject to man’s needs. By that way, nature enters the play of dualism or superiority/inferiority concept. That is why, I aim out of this study to deconstruct the dualistic dichotomy between humans and non-humans and the domination of the former over the latter by providing the literary eco-analysis of Doris Lessing’s selected short story. It rejects the “acculturation of nature” (Maris, 2015, p. 124), and instead offers a reassessment of non-human nature as independent of human culture and interests.

Ecocriticism presents a counter-vision to that dualistic attitude. It adopts holism: the concept that man and nature are fundamentally one entity, as a contradictory discourse against anthropocentrism: the belief that man is the center of the universe, and thus has the right to violate and exploit nature. This asserts ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary academic field with the aim of developing environmental ethics or what Leopold calls “The land ethic” which “simply enlarges the boundaries of the

community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land” (1987, p. 204). Harold Fromm, an American humanities scholar, believes “There is no environment, only an ensemble of elements recycled through every existing thing [...] the person is the environment and the environment is the person” (2009, p. 190). Like Fromm, ecologists aim to focus on the complex relatedness and the equal rights of all living organisms.

Intersecting with this ecological concern is another branch of ecocriticism that is psychologically oriented, namely ecopsychology. According to the American psychologist James Hillman, “psychology, so dedicated to awakening human consciousness, needs to wake itself up to one of the most ancient human truths: we cannot be studied or cured apart from the planet” (qtd in Hibbard, 2003, p. 23). For Roger Walsh, “all the major global threats to human survival and wellbeing are now primarily human-caused. That is, they stem directly from our own behavior and *can therefore largely be traced to psychological origins*” (1992, p. 59). Both ecologists and psychologists concluded that there was a dire need for a discipline aiming at studying the psychological and the ecological; a discipline dedicated to observing the relation of psychology with the environmental crisis, and hence, ecopsychology emerged. Ecopsychology met the appeal of both environmentalists and psychologists to found a dialogue that will benefit both fields and positively affect the public awareness.

Paul Shepard, the former professor of human ecology at Pitzer College, can be regarded as the pioneer of ecopsychology with the publication of his book, *Nature and Madness*, in 1982. Moreover, Theodore Roszak describes Shepard as “the first ecopsychologist, the first thinker in the environmental movement to apply psychological categories to our treatment of the planet” (2001/1992, p. 327). However, it was not until 1992 that ecopsychology was named and outlined formally as a discipline by the publication of *The Voice of the Earth* by Theodore Roszak himself. In his book, Theodore Roszak states that the aim of ecopsychology is “to bridge our culture’s long-standing historical gulf between the psychological and the ecological, to see the needs of the planet and the person as a continuum” (1992, p. 14). So, ecopsychology,

as an offspring of the environmental movement, tries to put the non-human nature into the psychoanalytic equation.

Ecopsychologists try to answer the critical question of why humans are intentionally destroying their habitat. Paul Shepard found out that humans in modern societies suffer from “profound psychic dislocations” (1982, p. xii) stemming from the humans’ transition to sedentary life style and being indulged in modern civilization and industrialization. This results in “a readiness to strike back at a natural world” (Shepard, 1982, p. 124). Humans in modern societies have the sense of being split off from the non-human outer world. This sense of separation has stimulated the humans’ obsessiveness to control, dominate, conquer, and subjugate the non-human world.

Humans’ attitude towards the non-human nature has been transformed from an innate ecological wisdom and respect towards its biodiversity and holistic concept to one of collective and massive alienation and exploitation that have led to both “environmental crisis and individual neuroses” (Roszak, 1992, p. 277). Ralph Metzner describes such condition as “collective amnesia” of humanity in which humankind pretends to have forgotten what they once “knew and practiced; certain attitudes and kinds of perception, an ability to emphasize and identify with nonhuman life” (1995, p. 61). Ecopsychologists believe that human well-being is interconnected with the environment and that the condition of our environment affects how people think and feel. They call for “respecting natural systems as primary structures that cannot be reduced to parts without losing something essential, and which honors the mental, cultural and spiritual as much as the mathematical and physical” (Hibbard, 2003, p. 41). Yet, humans intensify the belief that their psychological and physical prosperity is in a direction opposite to the non-human world, which in turn magnifies their ecologically destructive behavior and blindness to the fatal consequences. Thus, the human-caused environmental crisis, ecopsychologists believe, aroused ecopsychology as a discipline to re-define and re-function the human sanity in an ecological context in an attempt to motivate the “greening” of the public consciousness, and to improve the human relationship with the non-human environment for an earth-friendly nature.

Discussion

Prior to ecocritics and ecopsychologists, Doris Lessing precedingly sought in her 1951-short story to understand humankind interrelationship with the non-human world in an attempt to discover the failures of that interrelationship, and also to suggest that healing the human destructive behavior towards nature is possible. That is why *A Sunrise on the Veld* is an example of the canon of ecological literature that is relative to the environment. Through the short story, Lessing rejects the anthropocentric centralization of humans presented in most literary texts. Instead, as I discuss in this paper, the story equally presents the non-human nature and the human character side by side as a representation of the ecocritical holistic concept. Besides, this paper studies how Lessing's short story as a literary ecological text reflects the sole human character interaction with the natural world and its effect on his new vision of the self and his new awareness, or what is known as an eco-consciousness, of the surrounding world as an application of ecopsychology.

Through a deep reading of *A Sunrise on the Veld*, readers can realize that Lessing is presenting an anti-Robinson Crusoe figure. To explain, both literary texts present a sole human character in the face of nature. On the one hand, in the 1719-text, Robinson Crusoe controlled, domesticated and tamed the primitive and wild 'inferior' nature of the uninhabited island for his interest and comfort to preserve his 'superior' culture and civilization: "I descended a little on the side of that delicious valley, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure [...] to think that this was all my own [...] and, if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance, as completely as any lord of a manor in England" (Defoe, 2005/1719, p. 108). On the other hand, Lessing's fifteen-year-old sole human character is the one who has been enlightened and tamed by the nature of the veld: "There is nothing I can do [...] That is what living is" (Lessing, 1951, p. 4). Unlike Robinson Crusoe, Lessing's adolescent realized the importance of developing a psychologically healthy relatedness to non-human environment, and that he has not the right to control or tame nature as a human.

In *A Sunrise on the Veld*, Lessing indirectly represents her desire to break free from man-made boundaries. Instead, she writes about her early years on the African farm and wandering freely through the vast peaceful bush against her mother's Edwardian- England rules. Similarly in the story, Lessing's fifteen-year-old boy wanders alone in the vast African veld without his parents' knowledge. Through her human character's initiation in the veld, Lessing presents to her readers the boy's acquirement, in the course of the narrative, a more enlightened perception of the relation between the human and the non-human environment.

It is obvious at the beginning of the story that the boy is fully assured of his power, youth and sense of control: "Even my brain- even that! I can control every part of myself" (Lessing, 1951, p. 1). He thinks that he can control and defeat anything: the authority of his parents, his lack of sleep, his sense of being tired, and even nature itself: "There was nothing he couldn't do, nothing! [...] I contain the world. I can make of it what I want. If I choose, I can change everything that is going to happen: it depends on me, and what I decide now" (Lessing, 1951, p. 3). The veld is his own empty space for playing, discovery and hunting, and hence exploring his early manhood. If he sings, "the world had to answer him" (Lessing, 1951, p. 3), as if everything around him is at his service. Winter explains: "Our standard sense of self as a separate, autonomous being seriously jeopardizes our ability to live harmoniously with our ecosphere [...] we quite naturally abuse the environment with which we feel no identification" (1996, p. 249). Lessing's adolescent felt superiorly autonomous and separate from the non-human outer world, and this motivates his sense to abuse and exploit nature.

Moreover, his immaturity and inexperience cause his insanity towards nature, and give him an illusionary sense of power that he can remain untouched by the world, as an eternal and invincible figure:

he began to run, not carefully [...] but madly, like a wild thing. He was clean crazy, yelling mad with the joy of living and a superfluity of youth [...] He ran in great, leaping strides, and shouted as he ran [...] not believing that such a thing could happen to him, that he could break his ankle any moment, in this thick

tangled grass [...] he poised on a rock and looked down at stretches of water that gleamed through stooping trees, and thought suddenly, I am fifteen! Fifteen. (Lessing, 1951, p. 2)

Whit Hibbard discusses the humans' insanity towards the non-human saying, "insanity for ecopsychology, then, is not so much the effect of the collusive madness on individuals, but its effect on the nonhuman world" (2003, p. 39). Lessing's sole human character meets the features of insanity towards nature in his exaggerated individualistic sense of the self, his alienation from nature, his desire to dominate and exploit nature, and his later denial to avoid taking responsibility for any environmental crisis resulting from his 'human' activities.

The age of the boy is significant as Lessing wants to show her readers the dawn of manhood and sense of power through the boy's invading journey to explore natural areas during sunrise. This meets Roszak explanation in *The Voice of the Earth*: "There are certain compulsively 'masculine' character traits that [...] drive us to dominate nature as if it were an alien and rightless realm" (1992, pp. 320-321). Leaving the boy unnamed also promotes the reader's understanding that the reference of the character and his experience is representative rather than particular: "the reader is likely to understand that any critique made reflects not only on the individual protagonist but also on the values of the social world the young person is about to enter" (Hunter, 1990, p. 47).

According to Hunter, the boy in *A Sunrise on the Veld* is an exemplar of everyman. His initial excitement is described in 'masculine' terms, while the veld is 'feminine' in its passive allure (p. 49). That is clear in Lessing's description: "acres of long pale grass that sent back a hollowing gleam of light to a satiny sky. Near him thick swathes of grass were bent with the weight of water, and diamond drops sparkled on each frond" (1951, p. 2). Yet, Val Plumwood believes that both men and women are responsible in challenging and changing the dualized conception of human identity versus non-human and rather fully recognize human identity as constitute with nature (1993, p. 36). The boy, however, at the beginning of the story, surveys the veld as his empty space from which to extract the fulfilment of his ego needs.

Through her representing-everyman adolescent, Lessing criticizes the anthropocentric and omnipotent values that the boy inherits from the human society against the non-human world, the values that he will apply himself as a future adult man: "He felt his life ahead of him [...] I contain the world" (Lessing, 1951, p. 3). Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader* mentions that the anthropocentric orientation or the human-centered orientation regard human needs as separate from those of other creatures or even subordinate to nature (1996, p. xx). Yet, a turning point in the boy's perception of himself and his environment does come about.

Ironically, in the course of that morning, the boy will realize the sober knowledge of a world that is completely different from the human-centered world he was accustomed to; it is his moment from darkness to light. This moment takes place when the boy sees a dying buck eaten alive by ants. The boy is horrified by the scene. He thinks of shooting the buck to end its pain, but he reaches a self-realization: "I can't stop it. I can't stop it. There is nothing I can do" (Lessing, 1951, p. 4). The boy notices the animal has a broken leg, and suddenly finds himself "a small boy again, kicking sulkily at the skeleton, hanging his head, refusing to accept the responsibility" (Lessing, 1951, p. 5). The boy remembers shooting at animals while hunting, and he becomes afraid that this buck might be one of those he had injured and then neglected unchecked when he became tired or hungry, and thus, made the buck an easy target to the other predatory creatures in the veld. The boy realizes that he might be indirectly responsible for the buck's painful fate that he himself could not later stop.

The anthropocentric omnipotent boy in his encounter with nature reaches the conclusion of his helplessness. Such helplessness in that landscape has gripped him, and for the first time he was left unable, saying: "Yes, yes. That is what living is" (Lessing, 1951, p. 4). He is neither the master of nature nor the center of the universe, nor must the mountains answer his shouts; he is only a plain member like the other creatures: "accepting that we are not the designers of the Earth we inhabit and of the living things with which we share it is urgently needed to halt the tyrannical delirium that possesses us" (Maris, 2015, p. 130). The boy sees the world through new eyes and accepts this new fact. Although he

experiences fear and anger, he is satisfied with what he has learned in the veld.

The boy, who came to the veld as a hunter, starts to identify with the buck, through which the boy becomes able to recover Metzner's descriptive state of humanity as suffering "collective amnesia" towards the non-human world. When the boy felt the buck's pain, Lessing's human character restores his ecological conscience or what Metzner puts it as what humanity once "knew and practiced; certain attitudes and kinds of perception, an ability to emphasize and identify with nonhuman life" (1995, p. 61). He thinks about how the animal looked when it was alive, running like him in the veld and sniffing cold morning air. The boy also thinks of the broken leg of that sure-footed, light and graceful animal. Through this human/non-human identification, Lessing presents an environmentally-conscious text that focuses on the relationship between the human and the non-human as an environmental issue. *A Sunrise on the Veld* breaks the boundaries of the human/non-human dualistic dichotomies through prophesizing Glotfelty's later ecocritical view in *The Ecocriticism Reader* that the principle of ecocriticism is proving that the human world and the non-human nature are interrelated.

The boy puts himself in the buck's place, feeling its pain. The dying buck's fate could have easily happened to the boy if he had taken one false step as he raced carelessly in the veld. In that instance the boy "found that the tears were streaming down his face, and his clothes were soaked with the sweat of that other creature's pain" (Lessing, 1951, p. 4). At that moment, the boy is enlightened to his fragility, exactly as the other creatures, and that he cannot control his body, his brain, his life, and of course, he cannot control nature.

In ecological literature, the significant interaction between humans and non-humans takes place with the natural landscape as the core of the action. It foregrounds how the natural landscape can influence humans by shaping their psyches. In *A Sunrise on the Veld*, Lessing respects all forms of life however small; she portrays the non-human as equal in her story to the human through her description of the birds, the animals, the grass, the sky, the water, the land and the mountains in the veld. Thus, the

natural landscape could develop the human character personally and spiritually in a complementary relationship. At work here is Lessing's conformity to the very old and intimate dance between landscape and man that is no longer possible in an urbanized world. Her aim is to "enlarge the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, animals, or collectively the land" (Leopold, 1987, p. 204). It is a desire to achieve a wholesome state through a mutual relationship with the natural life.

According to Clare Palmer, deep ecologists use the concept holism to ensure that there is no isolated entity but interlocking relations. There is no difference between self and nature, and since such separation is impossible, then "the realization of all [living] organisms is necessary for one's own full self-realization" (2003, p. 30). In *A Sunrise on the Veld*, nature is used to promote the boy's self-realization, psychological growth and personality development: "It was in the veld that Lessing connected her character to [his] perception of inner and outer space. Edward J. Hall, sociologist and psychologist, also notes that an individual's behavioural and system of beliefs are based on early experiences in the space [the environment] they inhabit" (Couto, 2017, pp. 33-34). In the story, the boy's rational maturity, sanity and wisdom are closely interrelated to his identification with the non-human environment in accordance with the concepts of holism and coexistence, and hence gaining eco-awareness and spirit of the place.

The story ends with the boy's realization of the complex relationship with nature and that he also could be its mediator of destruction. Lessing recovers "the child's innately animistic quality of experience in functionally 'sane adult' to create the 'ecological ego'" (Roszak, 1992, pp. 320-321). At the beginning of the story, he leaves his home feeling superior to the world, but by its end, he returns unsure of his responsibility for the other creature's pain. Couto admits: "Lessing places children in nature in order for them to form and understand their own identity and that of the world around them" (2017, p. 39). Through them, Lessing depicts the development of humankind environmental/land ethics from ignorance of the ecological awareness to finally feeling harmonious and part of nature. She decenters her human character and his prior view

of the world, and instead highlights the fact that there is another world and many centers other than man, and each has its intrinsic value.

Ecopsychologically, the boy ends up adopting an emotional, healthy ecological behavior towards the non-human nature. By the end of the story, the boy acquires an ecologically harmonious sense of the self and his surrounding world; he restores his ecological conscience, ecological consciousness, and ecological ethics. The boy becomes aware that the self is ecologically interconnected, and thus, he develops a sustainable ecological responsibility in his broadened identification with the non-human environment.

Conclusion

This paper presented an ecocritical reading of Doris Lessing's *A Sunrise on the Veld* (1951). Although written about thirty years before the actual foundation of ecocriticism, *A Sunrise on the Veld*, as this paper showed, is an environmentally conscious text that depicts the gradual eco-awareness of a fifteen-year-old boy who has developed from an adolescent filled with the illusion of controlling the universe to a youngster who re-evaluates his place in the world as just any other creature on the planet. The recognition and respect of the different other creatures could be useful in reconsidering human and non-human relationships. His understanding of the non-human natural world through his identification with the dying buck's pain enlightens the boy to the probable fatal effects of his irresponsible actions on the existence of the co-universe creatures.

In 1951, Doris Lessing wrote about an issue the world did not consider and was not concerned about facing at that time. In other words, she wrote about something beyond the obvious to the human society that was trying to awaken from the crises of the world wars and the Great Depression at the expense of nature and natural resources. Yet, in Lessing's story, she dismantles the anthropocentric discourses and deconstructs the mind/body Cartesian dualism which deprives the animals and the non-human in general of reason and sensation, and hence they are regarded as inferior to man, and subject to his domination. Lessing, in *A Sunrise on the Veld*, rejects the human/non-human dualism and instead calls for environmental ethics through a holistic relationship between the human and the non-human, as the welfare of both is interrelated. That is why both the human and the non-human equally constitute the image in Lessing's story to eliminate the "otherness" of nature and to remind her readers of the harmony now lost in the urbanized world.

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