Ecological Identity in the Making: Poetic Encounters between Young Migrants and the Elements of Nature

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In loving memory of

my father

Dr Ali Shahwan

(26 May 1932 – 18 November 2009)

and

my second father

Dr Mohammed Ghanem

(1 May 1953 – 4 May 2024)

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Abstract

Young people in diaspora remain preoccupied with the question of identity, embarking on passionate 'investigations of self' (Said, 1986) where they seek to navigate non-/belonging and the liminal in-betweens of their multiple identities. In this context, my study examines the educational process of 'ecological identity work' that construes the self in relationship to the environment (Thomashow, 1996). Focusing on poetic encounters with the elements of nature, I draw upon an eclectic theoretical framework that interweaves elemental ecocriticism (Cohen and Duckert, 2015; Oppermann and Iovino, 2015) and common worlding pedagogies (Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Taylor et al., 2021). Attending to the materiality of the elements of air, water and earth in literary texts and pedagogies promises to shed light on our complex interconnectedness with the more-than-human world – the entanglements of inside and outside, body and environment, matter and metaphor. This study attempts to address the gaps in ecopoetics as related to its multilingual aspects and its pedagogical role for young people on the move. To address my overarching research question on how migrant children develop their ecological identities through poetry reading/writing and filmmaking, I employed Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) and participatory ethnographic methods. Over the course of three months, I conducted a series of poetry and filmmaking workshops with a group of ten Arab migrant students aged 12-14 in Istanbul.

The study finds the elements of nature to be central to the transnational imagination of young migrants, allowing for an exploration (and a possible reconciliation) of the tensions between rootedness in place and mobility across borders. My research further illustrates the affordances of ecopoetry as a common worlding practice that challenges subject/object dualisms and encourages inter-relational encounters with human and nonhuman others. Multilingual and multimodal interactions are found to facilitate a multi-directional reading of the self and the world. The ecological approach to both identity and literacy has crucial implications for understanding global citizenship, healing young people's detachment from the environment and promoting a pedagogy of radical hope. A key contribution of this study lies in the co-construction of critical ecopedagogies with migrant young people, advocating a reclamation of heritage languages,

literature and practices as invaluable parts of the semiotic repertoires that migrant students utilise in restoring an affective attunement to nature.

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1. Introduction:

A Tale of Home and Hope

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. (Dickens, 1859, p. 1)

A tale of three cities is behind my research about young migrants and their development of ecological identity through poetry reading/writing, drawing, photography and filmmaking. With a migrant being defined as 'a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for many reasons' (Sironi et al., 2019, p. 132), this description applies to my current status as an international student. This tale therefore relates the multiple paths I have taken with others across different cities in search of meaning. Our quest for a peaceful home has been a winding route marked by several stops and recurrent encounters with storms, wildfires, earthquakes, floods, famines, wars and uprisings. Through my research, I have chosen to tell a story of radical hope that does not turn away from the bitter realities of our present time. I turn to poetry and nature as I embark on this journey along with a group of young people who share a similar Post-Arab Spring background. In the space of this introduction, I attempt to pinpoint where my personal story intersects with the lives of my research participants who are 12-14-year-old migrant children in Istanbul coming from Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen as well as Australia. I also refer to how my professional work has prepared me for carrying out this study. I include a multimodal account of my fragmented memory, often incorporating photos to construct 'meaning through constellations, ruins, excavations, and rag-picking' (Madbouly and Nassar, 2021, p. 18). In this chapter, I document the journey to developing my main research questions and approach towards my fieldwork with children. I recollect fragments of experiences that have contributed to my own sense of ecological identity. My autobiographical reflections lead to a discussion of the rationale for conducting this study and a map for navigating my thesis chapters.

1.1. Autobiographical Reflections: Fragments of Memory and Place

There could be many starting points to my background story, which is why I do not necessarily stick to a linear or a chronological way of narration. I instead allow my account to flow freely across time and place. For the purpose of this project that is concerned with finding our voice in the world, I go back to 2011 when I first associated the meaning of 'home' with the capacity of my own voice to chant: 'The people demand the fall of this regime!' among thousands of protesters in Tahrir Square (see Figure 1.1). That moment served as an initiation into activism for many young people. I remember that the wish I had for my birthday which coincided with the eighteen days of what we then called 'the Egyptian Revolution' was for everybody to 'rise up and make it to Ta7rir', with the *heavy h* ح written 7 – the way young people used to transliterate Arabic (4 Feb 2011). The flame of the revolution spread from Tunisia and Egypt to the rest of the Arab nations, with protests erupting across Yemen, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Sudan. To everybody's dismay, the peaceful protests were eventually crushed and the rosy dreams of freedom and social justice dispersed. Albeit in substantially different circumstances, many individuals and families have had to pack up hopes and fly, searching for a place where voices are free to rise without fear of persecution. The Arab Spring wave that swept over the North African and Middle Eastern region has connected the people first in terms of hope and resilience, then concern and grievance, and eventually the dream of return.

Figure 1.1: A photo of protestors chanting in Tahrir Square. Taken by me, 1 Feb 2011.

There have been many times when I thought that the spirit of Tahrir had died or that at least I had lost it, only to realise that I still feel it within. It lives on in the burning urge to join voices raised to reclaim the right to life, land and education – from marching for a Free Palestine through to supporting actions against mass redundancies at the university.[1] The liberation spirit keeps 'haunting' our dreams, to use the metaphor of Egyptian activist Alaa Abd El Fattah (2019). In his article 'Five Metaphors on Healing', another metaphor that Abd El Fattah (2019) contemplates is 'recycling', which inspires me as a principle to ensure the sustainability of the revolutionary spirit. Explaining how to 'become an agent of history, instead of its victim', he writes: 'Make of your pain a revolution, your suffering is resistance. Destroy the sources of pain, and with the ruins of the old we shall build the new as an act of collective agency. This is inevitable, for history follows a logic as deterministic as the laws of the material universe' (Abd El Fattah, 2019). It is not easy to shatter those sources of pain into pieces for building a new order; however, this is the approach I would like to adopt whenever this research touches on pain.

1.1.1. Cairo: The Joy of Hearts

For so long, it has been painful to write about Cairo in general and Heliopolis (Masr El Gedida) in particular, the heritage district I belong to. I have tried to avoid this area, both in writing and in reality, because of the heartache it evokes after the 'transformation' it has undergone, resulting in the irreversible destruction of its structure and the deliberate erasure of its distinct identity. I bring up this connection here to provide a sense of where I am coming from, which explains my positionality within this research that seeks to explore young people's senses of place. A central part of my identity is deeply rooted in my attachment to this place; I often introduce myself not just as a Cairene but also as a proud resident of Heliopolis. Robert Ilbert (1985, p. 37) notes that 'so many of the inhabitants of Cairo have loved Heliopolis and today take pride in considering themselves Heliopolitans'. Heliopolis was founded in 1906 by Belgian Baron Édouard Empain as an oasis in the desert northeast of central Cairo. It was designed with the intention to be a 'Garden City', characterised by its extensive green public spaces and a blend of Oriental and European architectural styles (Ilbert, 1985). This is the place where I was born and raised, where I went to

[1] As of June 2024, marches across the globe have been protesting the ongoing genocide in Gaza since October 2023, calling for a 'Free Palestine' and 'Ceasefire Now'. Meanwhile, students and staff at Goldsmiths are having another fight against the management's 'transformation programme' and planned redundancies of over 25% of academic staff.

school and the local sporting club. The university, where I pursued my undergraduate studies, subsequently worked at and continue to maintain ties with, is located just a short walk from the Baron Empain Palace.[2] Heliopolis is where I learned how to walk a city and intimately explore it on foot.

It is the public gardens of my neighbourhood in Heliopolis that witnessed my dawn walks with Baba every Friday, a ritual he insisted on keeping amidst his busy schedule with patients and despite my lazy response then. He would wake me up at Dawn Prayer time, and we would go out in the dark on a mission to bring the sun back home. According to Baba, that was our chance to 'breathe' while the city was still asleep and enjoy some clean air before cars resumed their lung-choking activity. Our walk would approximately take two hours as we meandered around the nearby Egyptian Military Academy that has a perimeter of 5.78 km. This is how I was introduced to the concept of 'walk and talk', as we spent those two hours chatting about everything – small and big, trivial and serious; we shared observations, discussed politics, and told stories. What stands out in my memory of this weekly ritual was the poetry that Baba would recite as we walked, which is how poetry seeped into my being. This current project comes as an attempt to continue this ritual with young people in other places/countries, tailoring it for the methodology of my research.

Walking in Heliopolis nowadays has turned into a perilous journey, which can cost pedestrians their own lives. Despite the protests of local residents, the decades-old green gardens of Heliopolis have been razed to the ground and replaced with flyover bridges as Figure 1.2 shows. The ongoing project of demolishing Cairo's natural and built heritage has aimed to speed up the traffic flow and shorten the distance to the newly built executive capital. In just a few years, the public gardens and parks where people could walk were systematically turned into a concrete jungle of highways (consisting of up to 12 lanes), gas stations, car parks and chain coffee shops. People have become deprived of the right to walk, which one resident described as 'an assault on our right to breathe' (El Rashidi, 2023). According to Yasmine El Rashidi (2023), '[a] local heritage protection association estimates that, from 2017 to 2020, approximately 272,000 square meters – almost 3 million square feet – of green space were lost in Heliopolis, and more have disappeared since then'.

[2] Faculty of Women for Arts, Science and Education – Ain Shams University.

The whole area has seen the heartless erasure of most of its roadside gardens and tree-lined streets, leaving barely any trees for people to seek shade under in the scorching sun.

Figure 1.2: Al-Hegaz Square near my house in Heliopolis before and after 'development'. Source: Muhammad Magdy, Facebook post, 25 April 2024.

I remain heartbroken over the loss of our gardens and parks in Heliopolis; each has distinct memories that now feel as if stolen. I still cannot overcome the ruthless destruction I witnessed of the 'Joy of Hearts', a garden along the route that I took with Baba during our Friday walk. In the battle against the erasure of our green spaces and collective memory, I feel the urge to tell the story of this garden – not to romanticise my living experience in Cairo but to highlight an inspiring example of activism that, I believe, has left its traces in my present research project. Thanks to the dedication of Uncle Gamal Al-Nehary – a dear friend of Baba's and the nephew of Nobel-winning Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz – this public garden housed more than a hundred species of plants. It included fragrant ones like local jasmine, Indian jasmine, night-blooming jasmine, moonflower and gardenia as well as fruitful trees of lemon, mandarin, orange, date palms along with numerous types of ornamental plants. It was a delight for all passers-by who would stop to

enjoy the sight of the lush garden in the morning and the fragrant breeze in the evening. For this reason, Uncle Gamal had named the garden 'بهجة القلوب - Joy of Hearts' and coined a motto that says 'زهر وعطر وثمر - flower, fragrance and fruit'. He was 'captivated from head to toe with plants', to use his own words, and worked hard to pass this love of nature to the younger generations (see Figure 1.3). Retiring from journalism, he devoted his life to promoting environmental awareness. He saw the miserable state of the garden near his house and so took it upon himself to transform it from a trash heap into a haven for wildlife. He would single-handedly pick up massive amounts of litter from the neglected garden every day, with very little assistance from people in the beginning. He noted that after two years of daily work 80% of the people stopped throwing rubbish in the garden and that the number of volunteers was growing. Uncle Gamal spent around 10 years lovingly caring for the 'Joy of Hearts'; throughout this period, the garden attracted singing birds and provided the residents with a free experience of beauty.

As part of his environmental activism, Uncle Gamal sent an open letter to the neighbourhood mosques, calling on them to play their role in the maintenance of the surrounding gardens. His argument is noteworthy because it presents a link between faith and environmentalism, which is a key theme emerging in my research (see Chapter 4). The letter therefore merits extensive quotation, and I provide here a translation of an excerpt from his Arabic video shared on YouTube (Al-Nehary, 2013, translation mine):

> These gardens are a spiritual and cultural extension to the mosque, reflecting the high values of beauty, purification, health and joy that Islam advocates … I envision that, from an Islamic perspective, the garden serves as a sanctuary – a place for deep contemplation, a school for learning the lessons of creation and a hospital for maintaining health … A garden is not an insignificant matter to be overlooked; rather, it is a response to God's repeated call for us to 'Look at what is in the heavens and the earth' and 'reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth' (Quran, 10:101 and 3:191). The area surrounding the mosque is therefore expected to be harmonious with its spirit, consistent with it in terms of beauty and purification – the true essence of worship. Isn't God the One who said: 'And the earth – He set it up for living creatures; in it are fruits and sheathed palm trees, and grains in the blades, and fragrant plants' (Quran, 55:10-11)? Is this the earth He intended for us? How does it turn in our country into a large garbage bin? Is this acceptable? How

could we allow this? How do we tolerate this? How do we put up with the garbage thrown in our streets and gardens daily? Will we stay silent? When will the mosque take action to clean its surroundings? … I would be pleased to participate in any campaign that the mosque organises with its youth, perhaps once a month, for cleaning and maintaining the local gardens so that we can proclaim that here is a mosque, and this earth is our home … Indeed, the earth surrounding us is our larger home. Did not the honourable Prophet remind us that the entire earth has been made a mosque?

Figure 1.3: Two photos of the 'Joy of Hearts' garden, featuring Uncle Gamal and a new generation of young volunteers. Source: 'بهجة القلوب' Facebook page, 3 April 2017 and 24 July 2017.

Such appeals grounded in the sanctity of the earth, directed at residents and mosque-goers to take action, were met with a willingness to participate. Uncle Gamal became known as 'the Garden Man' and was joined by a hive of volunteers, mostly the area's youth. The 'Joy of Hearts' garden embodied his aesthetic vision and conviction that 'beauty elevates and refines human nature'. He would always say that 'beauty is at our fingertips, and creating beauty is easier than creating ugliness'. He had a dream that his model of planting fragrant flowers and fruitful trees would spread to other neighbourhoods across Heliopolis and the city. The public garden was a beautiful dream that was crushed by bulldozers only one week after the death of its guardian in 2019. One morning, we woke up to the nightmare of blades brutally cutting down the very trees that gave us a space to breathe (see Figure 1.4). The killing machine was deaf to our cries on the ground and in the media; it did not stop but moved on more violently from Heliopolis to the banks of the Nile in Giza and all the green in between. The camphor trees lining the Nile Corniche, for instance, planted during the reign of Khedive Ismail over 150 years ago, were among those felled amid widespread public outrage. The ecocide continues at a rampant rate as of the time of editing this chapter in 2024.

Figure 1.4: Residents trying to stop uniformed council workers from cutting down the 'Joy of Hearts' trees and plants. Source: Sahar Gamal, Facebook post, 23 March 2019.

The accelerating pace of destruction coincided with my period of studies abroad. With each home visit, I found myself losing one more piece of Cairo – I was unable to recognise the streets and lost my way in the city. I could no longer navigate the place I once knew like the back of my hand

without relying on GPS. Amira Elwakil (2023) in her photo essay 'Erasure and Disembodiment as Blackout' also wonders:

> Why are we estranged in this place? How do we navigate the fragmentation and feelings of estrangement in the aftermath of such radical change to infrastructure that created enclaves in a district once famed for being self-contained and well-connected? How do we make sense of the definitive sight of these times: the bulldozer standing victorious next to uprooted trees? How do we process the sight of uprooted trees that lie criss-crossed on main roads, once the sight of multiple forms of socio-spatial interaction?

We all tried to combat the atrocity of state bulldozers and at least stop them from erasing our memory and identity. We reacted differently in out attempts to navigate our feelings of loss and to resist a compelling sense of estrangement. Elwakil (2023) has set on archiving the city through photographs and narratives that she shares on her Instagram account *Archiving Heliopolis* (@archivingheliopolis). Many individuals have created numerous pages on social media to document and call for action against the ongoing destruction of our city. For me, I could not bear to see the massacre of trees I grew up with, nor could I write their elegy. I made a vow that I will keep nurturing my connection to the trees alongside children and young people, hoping to spread 'the joy of hearts' wherever my feet would take me.

1.1.2. London: 'Let Us Be Like Water, Fire or Air'

1.1.2.1. In the Forest

During my stay in London, I have been preoccupied with studying how to promote ecoliteracy (Capra, 1997) and a place-based ethics of care (Till, 2012). I decided to take the Forest School Leader training to advance my understanding and practice of environmental education. Since I did my training in 2021, I have spent two days a week in the forest in Dulwich (south London) with children aged three to five. My forest school sessions with children contributed to my development of eco-pedagogies that capitalise on the child's abilities of head, heart, hands, and soul. This experience has added to my environmental toolkit, as the forest school ethos is based on fostering a caring relationship with the natural world through regular personal interactions. As a forest school practitioner, it has been my duty to expand my knowledge of the environment, carry out an environmental impact assessment and commit to sustainable practices, ensuring both the health of

the environment and the wellbeing of everyone involved. As a community, we have learned to constantly monitor, minimise, and mitigate our impact on the environment (soil, vegetation, and habitats) by considering the trees that children climb, avoiding the overuse of deadwood when building dens or fires, and being careful to leave no trace behind.

Through the reinforcement of sustainable principles, I have observed how children get into the habit of making ecologically sensitive decisions. We would go foraging but make sure not to pick living plants aimlessly, as one child once put it 'because we need to let nature survive' and 'leave some for the bees and butterflies'. The awareness of existing flora and fauna would grow with the daily walks we take around the campsite as the seasons change. Walks with children have been remarkable in that children would stop and look at the ground beneath their feet; for many of them, 'mud is the best thing in the world'. With that sense of awe comes care for the little creatures they find hiding there. The forest school has been valuable in highlighting how learning takes place *with* the elements of nature, how children learn *with* mud and wind and fire and water – we set up tarps according to the direction of the wind and typically decide when to start our campfire and what activities to do according to the weather. My belief that education should operate in attunement to the environment has been solidified through this work experience.

I found care manifesting in the children's spontaneous reactions to the cutting down of several trees at the forest school site. A number of selected trees, claimed to be dead, were felled as part of the management plan of Dulwich Estate responsible for the woodland area. It was suspected though that the plan aimed to clear more paths for the cycling activities of the Velodrome that shared the site. The children, who attended the forest school daily from 8 am to 6 pm, closely observed the clearing process that took place just a few metres outside the flag boundaries of the campsite (Figure 1.5). Their reactions ranged from excitement at seeing a digger at work to fear and distress over the removal of plants and trees they had always been encouraged to care for. Questions of 'what are they doing? why?' and expressions like 'I do not like cutting down the trees, it makes me sad' were commonly heard from the children. It was also a distressing moment for me, as the image of the bulldozer triumphantly standing next to the cut trees in Cairo haunted me again. This situation, however, engendered hope. As the forest school community of both adults and children, we discussed the matter through storytelling and eventually were able to plant a new beech tree on the site. The newly planted tree has taught the little ones how to actively nurture

hope. This became another lesson in activism, conjuring up the calls in Egypt to counter the removal of trees by planting new ones in front of people's houses – an act that keeps hope alive.

Figure 1.5: The clearing of paths near the forest school campsite (where the green tent is). Feb 2023.

Storytelling has inspired children with examples to enact, like the planting of new trees in the face of 'roaring machines' in Anouck Boisrobert and Louis Rigaud's *In the Forest* (2012) and caring for wildlife in *Betsy Buglove Saves the Bees* by Catherine Jacob and Lucy Fleming (2021). Through stories that animate nature, children were encouraged to engage in dialogue with the biotic and abiotic elements of the woods. The forest school provided a great space for children to explore the different folktales and act out their own adaptations in the setting. One of the children's favourite times has been to gather around the fire to tell stories about fiery foxes and dragons. The fire would spark the children's imagination, and we would feel a sense of community and warmth while singing our ritual fire song:

> Fire, fire, burning bright
> Dancing flames of shining light
> We gather around in times of all
> To share our warmth and heart of Gold

Playing with words around the fire prepared children for the magic of poetry we shared. Interactive storytelling and poetry reading have been a fundamental part of my forest school practice (Figure 1.6), that I sought to continue in the context of my work with migrant young people.

Figure 1.6: Storytelling at one of my early forest school sessions with young children in Dulwich Woods. June 2022.

1.1.2.2. Water and Light

During my first year of pursuing the PhD, it was poetry that had also drawn my attention to the elements of nature and their confluence with the process of meaning-making. This took place as part of my participation in the Deptford Storytelling project in early 2020, a community project run by Goldsmiths in partnership with Deptford Cinema. It aimed to foreground the multilingual and multicultural voices of people living in and around Deptford in southeast London. Together with co-filmmaker Flora Guitton, I worked on making a short film that featured three Palestinian artists in diaspora whose spoken word was full of the elemental movement that characterises their experience of place – https://vimeo.com/395890237 (Figure 1.7). Poet Farah Chamma, musician Ruba Shamshoum and multi-instrumentalist Kareem Samara came together in a performance called 'مَيّ وضَيّ', meaning 'water and light' in Levantine colloquial Arabic. Their collaborative work was especially interesting to me, as it stemmed from a dream that they shared about creating songs for children in dialects and spoken Arabic. In a conversation we had in March 2021, a year after the performance and film, Ruba explained their focus on these two elements: 'we were

thinking about what gives life. You know for every plant you need light and water and we were thinking about that concept'.

Figure 1.7: A still from the film 'Water and Light'. Guitton and Shahwan, Deptford Storytelling Project, March 2020.

The journey of water and light that Farah, Ruba and Kareem captured in their multilingual spoken word on the Thames Embankment was linked to the experience of migration they shared with us and many others in the same boat – literally and figuratively. According to Kareem (March 2021), this entire journey was an 'elongated metaphor' of being somewhere else, as the three of them would have been in Palestine in a different world. Out of the many pieces they performed on that night, Flora and I decided to fuse pieces from the English poem 'London'[3] and the Arabic song 'Lighthouse'[4] in our short film (2020). As we interweaved poetry with footage from our walks in Deptford, our composition came to signify the intersecting paths, experiences and narratives of different people that cross a singular node on the map. We could relate to Farah's address to London: 'I would like to *see it, say it, sorted*! / But I feel that I am constantly chased / by an imaginary deadline on your Hammersmith and City line'. We also found in the Arabic song 'منارة - Lighthouse' an antidote to counter London's overwhelmingly fast pace and sense of estrangement. Farah, Ruba and Kareem attempted to reconcile the contrapuntal notes and

[3] 'London' is an English poem written by Farah Chamma for her farewell performance in the city in February 2020.
[4] The song 'Lighthouse', written by Farah Chamma, was released the following year in April 2021 as part of Ruba Shamshoum's second album *Risha* - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ok5k-ieXGc.

confusing rhythms of London in their harmonic performance of the lines below (‘Lighthouse’, translation mine):

Let us stay this way together	
Better than being on our own	خلينا هيك سوا
No matter how old we get,	أجمل من حالنا لحالنا
we still fear our shadows	مهما كبرنا بنضل نخاف من خيالنا
Let us be like birds on trees	خلينا نكون زي طيورك ع الشجر
Singing at the crack of dawn	نغني أول ما يطلع الفجر
Let us be like water, fire or air	خلينا زي الماي والنار والهوا

That was ‘a cry for connection’, as Farah told me on one phone call before the performance (24 Jan 2020). In my journal writing on the Deptford filmmaking experience, Farah’s expression prompted me to ponder the function of poetry and I noted that ‘amid all the conflicting thoughts, poetry comes to celebrate the lasting bonds of friendship and a sense of belonging to all that is beautiful’ (14 April 2020).

In song and poetry, the three artists – along with us – have searched for spaces of beauty and light. A mindful engagement with poetry suggests we reckon with our shadows and seek alternative worldviews, which we could find in the stretch of material spaces from clouds, waves and moonlight to forests, waterfalls and meadows. It was interesting how filming such poetry put me and Flora in conversation with those elements as we walked together in the streets of Deptford. With the aid of our cameras, we looked up to the sky and reflected in our discussions on what these encounters promised and the art of presence we were practising. The connection with the elements of nature has been emphasised in Farah’s Arabic lyrics as part of a wider movement that seeks to build a just and peaceful world:

We don’t want to learn any lessons	ما بدنا نتعلم دروس
We don’t want to have nightmares	ما بدنا نشوف كابوس
To know the taste of dream,	عشان نعرف طعم الحلم
Let us be the dream	خلينا نحنا الحلم

If we're afraid of war,	بنخاف من الحرب
Let us be peace	خلينا نحنا السلم
Let us be the light	خلينا نحنا النور
Let us be steady when the Earth moves	ثابتين لما الأرض بتدور
Amen!	آمين

The layers of this participatory project embodied the culture of dialogue, exchange and collaboration essential for my research with young people. I got access to the organic process of turning a poem into a song, as exemplified in 'Water and Light' where Farah wrote the lyrics and gave them to Ruba who created the melodies and passed on the music to Kareem to play with in his own way. Playfulness emerged as key for the creative process on the levels of composition, performance and filming. During this filmmaking experience, I tested the methodology of digital storytelling that will be discussed in Chapter Three. I discovered that it was all about movement – on screen, around a place, in time, with others and most importantly moving forward. I carried such experiences forward by working with migrant children and young people at the multilingual poetry and digital storytelling festival 'Our Planet' in 2021.

1.1.3. Istanbul: An Open Door to Migrants

Passing through the gates of Istanbul, my eyes were opened to the complexity of migration and its diverse trajectories. As a regular visitor since 2015, I have learned about migration from both close acquaintances and distant strangers. My various encounters with individuals and families passing through Istanbul, either as a transit place or a chosen destination, have triggered questions about the label of 'migrant' – the promises and challenges that come with it, what it means for children in particular to be on the move and resettle in different areas, how this act of moving affects and shapes their relation to the social and natural environment, and what role nature might play in the processes of adaptation, identity formation and citizenship education. When touring the old city of Istanbul, I developed the habit of carrying a sketchbook and pencils in my bag to record my impressions of the place. This habit, to my surprise, grabbed the interest of random children who would stop to look at the drawings, and sometimes join in (Figure 1.8). I observed how their drawings were accompanied by telling life stories; two sporadic drawing encounters with a Syrian boy and another Syrian girl were particularly eye-opening. Those incidents of sharing my

sketchbook with young passers-by propelled me to think of the stories that migrant children need to tell and the effectiveness of a medium like drawing in this regard. Given my own familiarity with the place and the context of migration in Istanbul, the present study has sought to explore the complexity of migration through the eyes of young people by using multimodal ways of expression as will be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Figure 1.8: An 8-year-old Syrian boy I met one afternoon in Fatih Mosque sketches a map of his journey to Istanbul. October 2016.

By the time I started my PhD in late 2019 and I was looking for complementary Arabic schools in Istanbul to volunteer in and do my fieldwork, I discovered that this type of school, including the temporary education centres that offered the Syrian curriculum in Arabic, had been closed down by the Turkish government. The population of Arab migrants at large were left with two main options: Turkish public schools and private ones. Within the non-state sector of schools, there are four categories: 1) Turkish private schools, 2) minority schools established by Greek, Armenian, and Jewish minorities under the Lausanne Convention, 3) foreign private schools established by American, German, French, and Italian citizens, 4) international schools for international students only (Akkari and Demirtaş, 2022, p. 58). For many Arab migrant families who could afford the high fees, this latter option of international schools has become the preferred alternative to Turkish public schools with their one-language, one-culture approach. Such schools usually have a bilingual or multilingual education system, with English as the basic medium of instruction, and follow curricula recognised worldwide. These international schools are exclusive to foreign

nationals and cannot admit Turkish students in accordance with the Turkish Ministry of Education regulations.

In a conversation with the Egyptian principal of Safir International School, where I conducted my research, it was revealed that one of the main challenges facing their students in Istanbul was the palpable anti-migrant sentiment. As explained by the school principal, this attitude was growing in response to the surge in refugee and migrant numbers in Turkey (16 August 2021):

> because of the number, they see us all as refugees and not foreigners coming to live here – unlike UAE or Saudi Arabia where it opened to nationalities to come and live and work. Here finding work is extremely, extremely difficult for a foreigner – extremely difficult. The restrictions in the law make it kind of impossible to have a foreigner working in a Turkish institute. So, they see us as refugees – and the Syrians specifically they came like 4 to 5 million, so the Turkish people are not welcoming us much. They see all the Arabs as trying to change their culture, so they don't mingle with us that much. Whenever you go out, you must hear that 'you are a foreigner' and 'you became too many in here' and 'I don't know why you don't go back to your country'. You must hear it at least once per month, at least!

It is worth noting here that in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Turkey has become the country hosting the highest number of refugees and migrants globally, with Istanbul seeing the greatest influx. According to the latest *Migrant Presence Monitoring* report by IOM (2023), there are over 5.1 million foreign nationals in Turkey. Of these, 3.8 million are seeking international protection, most of whom are Syrians – 3,435,298 individuals – granted temporary protection status**.** Turkey's geographical location, cultural affinity and relatively stable economy (in comparison to neighbouring countries) made it a prime destination for many people fleeing conflict zones. Since October 2011, until recently, Turkey has adopted an 'open door policy' that allowed migrants, especially Syrians, to cross its borders without significant entry requirements. Under this policy, the 'Law on Foreigners and International Protection' was implemented in 2013 to provide essential services, including healthcare, education and shelter, and to facilitate the integration of these individuals into the Turkish society. This open-door policy, however, has been reviewed in recent years due to several domestic and regional factors. Turkey has increasingly introduced measures

to prevent new waves of migration, with an announced plan to return Syrian refugees to safe areas in the north of Syria. As of 14 July 2023, for example, the Turkish government has attempted to reduce the migrant population in Istanbul through their decision to stop issuing residence permits for foreign nationals in the city.

In an atmosphere where refugees and migrants are seen as a problem, schools have the responsibility of empowering students to address the challenges of migration. The principal at Safir International School mentioned the following actions as part of their plan to help their students integrate (16 August 2021):

> We participate in some community service here related to very well-known NGOs. Sometimes we plant trees, we have charity campaigns and we may buy, for example, a machine for a certain hospital – Children Cancer Hospital. We also made a visit to them. All these things are counted, appreciated by some. Sometimes we make mutual visits with not only our Turkish Safir Schools but also other Turkish schools.

Such activities described by the principal highlight the vital role schools could play in fostering social cohesion between migrant communities and the host society. The school's engagement in community service, collaboration with NGOs, support for local institutions, and facilitation of mutual visits with Turkish schools all reflect an active stance in addressing social issues related to migration. It is interesting that the first thing mentioned in the list is planting trees, an act that targets the wellbeing of students, the community and the environment. For migrant students, planting trees can be a powerful metaphor for putting down roots in their new home, making a commitment to the land, contributing to the growth of their community, and incorporating meanings of sustainability into their lives (Thomashow, 1996). Tree planting importantly suggests that environmental education essentially goes hand in hand with global citizenship. It is within this context that I carry out my research about the interaction of migrant students with multimodal and multilingual poetry about the environment.

1.2. Rationale of the Study

With geographical mobility becoming the norm of our lives, very little remains fixed in terms of our internal and external worlds. As of 2020, the number of international migrants worldwide was

estimated by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to be 281 million people, excluding the irregular migrants that are not documented. Around 13 percent of the total number of migrants are children under the age of eighteen. The identity formation of these children and young people who grapple with the experience of migration is profoundly affected by their mobility and displacement in response to the political unrest and crises in their homelands. In this context of migration, the movement from one place to another calls for a constant recentring of one's personal map to navigate those changing landscapes. Considering the growing number of migrant children today, investigating their processes of place-making and identity formation is not only necessary but also urgent. My study therefore pays attention to a group of migrant children at the critical age of twelve to fourteen, aiming to give voice to their experiences and insights.

With the centrality of questions like 'who am I?' and 'what place(s) do I belong to?' to children and young people, the quest for identity is seen as part and parcel of their resettlement journey which has a long-term impact on the migrant's well-being. Mitchel Thomashow (1996, p. 10) notes that childhood, especially the middle period from nine to twelve years, is 'a time of *place-making*' when 'perceptions of the immediate environment undergo a remarkable transformation'. He elaborates that the 'childhood landscape is learned on foot, and a map is inscribed in the mind' (ibid.). Following other theorists like Edith Cobb in *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* (1977) and Roger Hart in *Children's Experience of Place* (1979), Thomashow in *Ecological Identity* (1996, p. 10) emphasises that this is the time when 'children establish their connections to the earth, forming an earth matrix, a terrain symbiosis, which is crucial to their personal identity'. In this study, I aim to understand how the development of an ecological identity, as suggested by Thomashow (1996, p. xvii), can be 'a process of personal and global healing'. I seek to highlight this potential of an ecological identity as well as any challenges and tensions that may arise for migrant young people. This study therefore comes to address the gap in research about the ecological identity and imagination of migrant children and their interaction with the environment.

In this pursuit, poetry is envisaged as providing the space for examining the development of this ecological sense of identity. Inspired by Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's book *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* (2019), my study regards poetry as a 'breathing' space. I build on his definition of poetry as 'an attempt to tune into the cosmic vibration, this temporal vibration that is coming and coming and coming' (2019, p. 17). Breathing, as the vital mechanism for connecting the internal and external

environments through the circular movement of air, is not a mere metaphor for the importance of poetry. I argue that the sensoriality of this physiological process is central to the experience of poetry, as projected in the rhythm of high and low tones and the experienced mind-body-environment connection. Noting that the Arabic word for breathing تنفس comes from the same root word نفس as self and psyche, identity construction can well be considered a search for a rhythm that is tuned to the natural environment and the cosmos.

With respect to children's poetry in particular, Karen Coats (2013, p. 135) argues that it is as important as 'breath' in that 'it fundamentally brings the two planes of our existence – sensory experience and conceptual language – together as one'. By integrating these two realms, children's poetry allows children 'to feel at home in their bodies' while navigating the linguistic landscape (ibid.). Coats (ibid., p. 134) explains how rhythmic patterns and metaphors facilitate a transition 'from being bodies in the world to being bodies in language'. The value of this deeply embodied experience of poetry, according to Coats (2013), lies in its effects which range from regulating inner chaos, attuning with the bodies of others, and developing empathy. If children's poetry is not just a tool for communication but a fundamental part of their becoming-*with* the world, I would like to explore how poetry shapes the identity of migrant children and how it could preserve their homes in language.

My study investigates the link between migrant children's poetry and ecological identity, which is yet to be explored in scholarly research. Ecocritical studies have been peripheral when it comes to children's literature about migration in general. While some research has generally tackled nature and grief in picture books (Lankford, 2010) as well as place and identity in picture books and young adult fiction (Charlton et al., 2014; Wyse et al., 2012), the poetry of migrant children/ young people still requires much more attention. In the present study, I look into the ways migration and displacement affect the child's relationships with nature and the physical environment, as revealed by the children's own responses and textual productions. I am particularly interested in finding out the roles nature and poetry play in the construction of children's identity.

Attending to the poetry of migrant children, another gap this research attempts to fill is that of multilingualism and multiculturalism in ecocritical studies. Lawrence Buell (2011, p. 92), reflecting on the general membership and activity of the US Association for the Study of Literature

and the Environment (ASLE), realised that 'by far the majority of self-identified ecocritics remain Anglophone scholars working on Anglophone texts'. By using Arabic texts and focusing on transcultural matters, this ecocritical research aims to elicit the ways migrant children perceive and make sense of the environment, and place within it, through poetry reading, writing and filmmaking. In this study, I adopt a 'repertoire approach to language' that integrates the individual's entire repertoire of languages, language varieties and dialects and all other meaning-making resources in the context of identity-making (Lytra, 2023; Anderson, 2016; Rymes, 2014; Busch, 2012).

1.3. Research Questions

The study seeks to answer one overarching question:

- How do migrant children develop their ecological identities through poetry reading, writing and filmmaking?

Related to this main question are three sub questions:

- How do migrant children respond to the imagery of nature and place in poetry?
- How do migrant children exercise multimodal and multilingual ways of learning in their textual productions to make sense of 'place' and 'identity'?
- What therapeutic possibilities do ecopoetry and text-making offer?

1.4. Thesis Overview and Outline of Chapters

This thesis revolves around the poetic encounters of a diverse group of Arab migrant children (12-14 years old) with the elements of nature: air, water and earth. In responding to the above-mentioned research questions, I conducted a series of poetry and filmmaking workshops with this group of children attending an international school in Istanbul over a period of three months which led to their participation in Goldsmiths' Our Planet Festival 2021. Employing Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) and participatory ethnographic methods, the project took the form of an ecopoetic quest full of Arabic and English voices that included folksongs, poetry written by well-known authors and the poetic legacy of the participants' own grandparents. With walking as a methodology for creative writing and reflective learning, the students engaged in multilingual and multimodal text-making that culminated in an Arabic-English anthology and a collective short

film entitled *Breeze*. Throughout my research, I have attempted to explore the ways children perceive and represent their ecological identities through poetry reading, writing, walking and filmmaking.

In Chapter One, this introduction, I have provided a personal narrative of the encounters that propelled me to undertake my doctoral research. I have included my memories and current perception of childhood places in Cairo, highlighting those transformational moments that shaped my identity and worldview. I have also provided a reflective account on my travels to London and Istanbul, with links to my professional practice as a forest school leader and my development of the current research interests. This first chapter lays out the reasons, aims and timely significance of the research.

Chapter Two establishes a theoretical framework based on the entanglement between ecological identity, ecopoetics and multiple literacies studies. It introduces the notion of ecological identity and its educational implications against a backdrop of cultural identity in postcolonial studies. It critically examines the field of ecopoetics, highlighting gaps in research about its multilingual aspects and its pedagogical role for young people on the move. I outline how elemental ecocriticism is used as a lens for examining children's poetic encounters with the materiality of the natural elements. As I interweave identity and ecocritical theories with the ideas of Common Worlding pedagogies, I develop my theoretical understanding of becoming hopeful *with* the world.

Chapter Three explains my choice of participatory research methods. I present the view of education as an ethnographic practice and select walking as an embodied mode of inquiry for both me and the children who are considered co-researchers. This chapter explores walking from different cultural perspectives before focusing on its multi-sensory aspects and its use as a tool for the co-production of knowledge and for reflection. It also looks at the development of new digital ways that adapt the go-along practice in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions at the time of conducting the fieldwork. The chapter also discusses Project-based learning as a framework for my research design, following the Multilingual Digital Storytelling model. The changes in my research design are traced through my discussion of the pilot study and development of main study. By the end of this chapter, I introduce my sources of data and the methods of data analysis.

I carry out my data analysis in Chapters Four, Five and Six, which I structure according to the elements of air, water and earth. Chapter Four is concerned with the flow of air/breeze through the multilingual poetry and multimodal texts of children. It follows the process of developing an ecological identity across four emerging themes: song and silence; flight and freedom; communication and connection; ease and relief. An elemental sense of the world continues to be explored in the next two chapters. Chapter Five focuses on how the affective engagement of children with water sediments into their identity through poetic devices like personification and apostrophe as well as the multimodal aspects of texts. Chapter Six extends the discussion around young migrants negotiating the liminal in-betweens of their identities as they explore the element of earth encountered through trees and land. In this final chapter of data analysis, attention to the metaphors in children's texts sheds light on the process of 'earthing' and its impact on developing the children's ecological sense of belonging and citizenship.

In Chapter Seven, the conclusion, I bring together the findings from my data analysis chapters. The conclusion underscores how an elemental ecocritical lens is useful in the investigation of ecological identity, highlighting the material flow of the elements through poetry writing, walking and filmmaking. It finds that the wandering elements are central in the development of migrant children's transnational imagination. In response to my overarching question of how migrant children develop ecological identity, three overlapping stages are recognised: identification, negotiations, and affective relationships with nature. My study shows that migrant children, in becoming-with the natural world, take two pathways: noticing and remembering. With an integrative view of multimodality and multilingualism, the pedagogical incorporation of ecopoetry in addition to walking and filmmaking into educational spaces is found to be an effective common worlding practice. I end the conclusion with how these embodied ways of knowing the self/the world represent routes of hope and healing for children in times of uncertainty.

*

2. Theoretical Framework:

The Entanglement of Ecological Identity, Ecopoetics and Multiple Literacies

> Exile, the outside world. Exile, the hidden world. Who then are you between them?
> I do not introduce myself lest I lose myself. I am what I am.
> I am my other in harmonious duality between word and geste.
> Were I a poet, I should have written:
> I am two in one, like the swallow's wings.
> And if spring is late coming, I am content to be its harbinger!
>
> (Darwish, 2005, 'Counterpoint')

The question of identity takes centre stage for migrants in their search for meaning amidst 'the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time' (Said, 1986, p. 20). As they negotiate their identities, migrants usually question the idea of belonging and seek to reconcile their sense of home versus exile. If home is supposed to provide stability and security, then exile presumably harbours opposite meanings of unwanted mobility and restlessness. In proposing the significance of environmental sensibility and poetic expression in transcultural identity negotiations, I draw upon an eclectic theoretical framework that attempts to interweave literary theory and educational studies. This chapter takes as its stating point a concise discussion of cultural identity in postcolonial studies, followed by introducing the concept of ecological identity and its implications for education, citizenship and healing. My exploration of an ecological way of seeing oneself in a turbulent world leads to a critical examination of the scholarly work on ecopoetics. In my discussion, I highlight gaps in the ecocritical body of scholarship that needs to further address the role of multilingualism in developing a sense of place and an ecopoetics of diaspora. I bring in elemental ecocriticism to pay attention to the elements of nature attributed with the power to heal the estrangement from the material world. The theoretical framework takes a New Materialist direction which applies to language research as well as ecopedagogy. The strand of materiality runs through my overview of multiple literacies as ways of becoming-with the world. I finally identify the inextricable need for a literacy of radical hope that reorients children's literature/poetry towards material possibilities in challenging times. This framework indicates the entanglement of

cultural, ecological, literary and pedagogical theories that guide my research work with migrant children.

2.1. Identity

2.1.1. Identity and Displacement

In his essay 'Reflections on Exile' (2000, p. 177), Edward Said analyses the unsettling state of exiles who are 'cut off from their roots, their land, their past'. The uprooting might take different courses, yet Said (ibid., p. 180) claims that 'an exile is always out of place'. He depicts the experience in terms of an 'unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home' (Said, 2000, p. 173). Delineating the different attitudes towards the loss of homeland, Said differentiates between three types of exile: the tender, the strong and the perfect. He adopts these ideas/categories from twelfth-century theologian Hugo of St. Victor who states (cited in Said, 2000, p. 185):

> The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his.

A sense of estrangement is particularly clear in the tender and perfect types. For the first attitude, the grip of homeland materialises in nostalgia and nationalist affiliations that alienate the person from all places but his origin. The third attitude exemplifies a total loss of contact with the world including the homeland - there is no place called home. The second attitude stands out as the most balanced and hopeful out of the three, as ties of 'love' are established with all places. Such a strong attitude makes the migrant at home anywhere in the whole world, signalling a successful crossing of borders. In response to their loss of homeland, exiles feel a recurring urge to reassemble their identities and rebuild their lives anew. Considering the three types of exile described by Said, we might ask: Can these different states co-exist, or are they deployed at different interactional moments?

Identity is not fixed or definite but constantly changing; it is 'a production which is never complete, always in process' as described by Stuart Hall in 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' (1990, p. 257).

This non-essentialist premise of identity has been widely adopted in a postcolonial world characterised by displacement, migration and hybridity. In this context, Hall (1997, p. 4) reflects on how 'fragmented and fractured' identities have become recently; they are 'never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'. Out of the ruptures and refractions of diaspora, new experiences and thoughts emerge which play a critical role in reshaping the migrant's identities. Given the cross-cultural difference accompanying people's movement across the globe, identities are 'constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew' (Hall, 1990, p. 269). Through difference and change, identity is therefore established as 'a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as well as to the past', Hall maintains (ibid., p. 260).

Within the process of constant change and transformation that identities undergo, however, there exists a quest for an 'anchor', to use Hall's term (1990, p. 260). In diasporic situations, people embark on what Said (2000, p. 184) calls 'investigations of self' or what Franz Fanon (1963, p. 210) refers to as a 'passionate research … directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation, and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others'. This passionate research for identity is framed in relation to hope, the need of beauty and rehabilitation, making these factors (or values) vital for a healthy reclamation of self and its heritage. The present research explores the potential of anchoring identity in the natural elements of place, posing the question: Can nature potentially act as a stabilizing force or anchor for young individuals as they navigate their fluctuating identities?

2.1.2. Ecological Identity

Reclaiming the role of nature in self-construction and personal development is found in the work of environmental educator Mitchell Thomashow (1996; 2020). Before I discuss Thomashow's proposition of 'ecological identity' and call to understand oneself in relation to nature, it is crucial to briefly discuss 'what is nature?' – a question that might not have a definitive answer. Raymond Williams in his *Keywords* (2002, p. 184) describes nature as 'perhaps the most complex word in the language'. There is great complexity within this singular term which suggests a variety of meanings. Williams (2002, p. 184) breaks down 'nature' into three main senses: 'the essential quality and character of something', 'the inherent force which directs the world or human beings or both', and

‘the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings’. This third sense along with the debatable alterations in its usage (as will be discussed in the later sections) is the focus of the present study. Kate Soper (1995), while not so much concerned with the meanings of nature as concerned with the politics of the idea itself, distinguishes between three concepts of nature: the ‘metaphysical’, the ‘realist’ and the ‘surface’. Nature as a metaphysical concept is used in philosophical arguments to represent the nonhuman in relation to (and differentiation from) humanity and culture. Through the realist concept, we come to understand the physical world with its operating laws, dynamic structures and complex processes. The surface or ‘lay’ concept exists in the ‘everyday, literary and theoretical discourse’ that makes reference to the observable environment such as the wilderness and the countryside in opposition to the urban landscape – it is ‘the nature of immediate experience and aesthetic appreciation; the nature we have destroyed and polluted and are asked to conserve and preserve’, writes Soper (1995). It might sound as if the third concept is the one of relevance to the discussion of ecological identity, yet Soper asserts that these concepts do not work separately but are rather interlinked as one would invoke the meaning of the other even implicitly.

It is quite difficult to pin ‘ecological identity’ down to one standard description, if we are to place it within the different philosophical stances on nature and ecology. For deep ecologists who regard human beings as part of nature, the identity of an individual can be understood in terms of the ‘transpersonal self’ that embeds human ontology within a bigger ontology of nature (Light, 2000, p. 63). Environmental philosopher Freya Mathews (2001) explains the notion of selfhood as ‘based on active identification with wider and wider circles of being’ in reference to the principles of deep ecology laid down by Arne Naess (1973). His seven principles, as summarised by Mathews (2001, p. 218), include ‘(i) a metaphysic of inter-relatedness, (ii) an ethos of bio spherical egalitarianism, (iii) the values of diversity and symbiosis, (iv) an anti-class posture, (v) opposition to pollution and resource depletion, (vi) the value of complexity, and (vii) an emphasis on local autonomy and decentralization’. Linking identity to the principle of interrelatedness, it sounds illogical to view the self as ‘independent of the rest of reality’ since this very reality is essentially relational (ibid.). The deep ecological principle of inter-relatedness is central to relational understandings of the self and the view of being a part of nature.

The conception of the self as ‘co-extensive with nature’, in the case of deep ecology, is subject to a number of critiques. Val Plumwood (1990) criticises the deep ecological view of identity because of

its assumptions of human indistinguishability from the rest of nature and the expansion/transcendence of self, offering an ecofeminist alternative instead. Plumwood (1990, p. 253) points out the ambiguity of the identification process by which deep ecology seems to suggest 'that everything is really part of, indistinguishable from, everything else'. Due to this view of indistinguishability and metaphysical unity with the cosmic whole, Plumwood believes that deep ecology has failed in addressing the human-nature divide it originally sought to resolve. Arguing that an understanding and care for somebody/thing cannot be achieved through a projection of oneself on the *other*, the deep ecological account of the self seems delusional. Plumwood (1990, p. 255) argues that '[r]ecognition of nature, like recognition of a human other, requires both relationship with the other, that it not be treated as totally alien or disconnected, but also recognition of its distinctness from the self'. While this first criticism of indistinguishability is reasonable, I do not quite agree with Plumwood's (1990, pp. 256, 257) second critique that the 'expanded self' is necessarily 'an enlargement and an extension of egoism' or 'another rather pretentious and obscure way of saying that humans empathise with nature'. I would argue that an extended sense of self is real when it results from the strong connections we establish with the other parts of nature through experience and dialogue.

An ecofeminist account of ecological identity is proposed by Plumwood (1990) to overcome the human-nature dualism by embedding the self in a web of relationships. Unlike deep ecology, it is grounded in a relational position that does not deny the distinguishability of both the individual's subjectivity and the other. Ecological identity is defined as 'an <u>expression</u> of self in relationship, not self as merged with the other but self as embedded in a network of essential relationships with distinct others, which can include all or part of nature' (Plumwood, 1990, p. 261). This 'self in relationship', i.e. a recognition of human relations with nature, could provide the basis for 'an ethic of connectedness and caring for others and for nature' (ibid.). A relational position is the closest to the notion of ecological identity I explore in my study, as it deals with issues of difference, power, responsibility and care.

There are worries that an ecological identity might have regressive political risks represented in nativism, primitivism, xenophobia, and racism (Bookchin, 1988; Light, 2000). Murray Bookchin, who formulated the theory of social ecology, ascribes such threats to the absence of social theory within the environmental discourse of deep ecology. To avoid this, ecological identity is to be oriented towards the concerns of justice; the link between humans and nature is extended 'as the forms of

repression of nature are historically similar to those of the repression of other communities'. In light of social ecology, ecological identity should connect with other political movements like feminism, anti-fascism and anti-racism while noting that 'no single progressive identity could or should become the sole conjunctive receptacle of an ecological identity' (Light, 2000, p. 76). This model of identity is regarded not only as a personal articulation but a political stance that leads to action and change, which aligns with my approach to this study on ecological identity.

2.1.3. Ecological Identity Work

Having presented where the notion of ecological identity comes from and some of the debates around it, I now move to a discussion of Thomashow's development of the term with a focus on its implications for education and for a broader understanding of citizenship. Thomashow in his book *Ecological Identity* (1996) explores the integration of the ecological and political aspects of identity. He uses 'ecological identity' as an integrative concept to discuss how to reconstruct personal identity so that people would 'consider how their actions, values, and ideals are framed according to their perceptions of nature' (Thomashow, 1996, p. xiii). Perceiving oneself 'in reference to nature, as living and breathing beings' is 'connected to the rhythms of the earth' in its diversity (ibid.). Since the 'perceptions of nature' also vary from one person to another depending on experience and social/cultural interpretations, ecological identity is not confined to a single way of construing the self in relation to nature. Thomashow (1996, p. 3) highlights this multiplicity of perception and the consequent variety of ways for understanding identity in his definition of the term: 'Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions and sense of self'. He further stresses that 'each person's path to ecological identity reflects his or her cognitive, intuitive, and affective perceptions of ecological relationships' (ibid.). The many paths that lead to an ecological sense of self provide a foundation for what Thomashow calls 'ecological identity work'. Not everybody has an ecological sense of self; an ecological form of human identity is not a given but an active way of being in the world that requires work to attain. This makes ecological identity 'above all an educational process' and 'an approach to lifelong learning', as Thomashow (1996, p. 170) puts it.

Ecological identity comprises a quest for meaning, 'a search to recover and reclaim the importance of nature in one's personal development' (Thomashow, 1996, p. xiii). The search constitutes two simultaneous processes: 1) 'widening the circles of identification' and 2) 'opening the windows of

memory to look deep within' (ibid., p. 23). Ecological identity work involves an identification with nature, but the sense of identification here does not contradict with differentiation; Thomashow (1996, p. 22) explains that 'as people conceive of wider circles of identification, they also realize the ways they are *different* from other life forms'. Looking at it this way, expanding the sense of self does not mean a loss of individuality but a widening of ecological consciousness and the opening of new avenues for free self-exploration. Ecological identity challenges the individual's sense of self since they start to see themselves 'as an organism in context with other species, habitats and the biosphere' (Thomashow, 2020, p. 240). Placing the self within the environment, a context wider than the social and cultural circles could lead to an ethical reconstruction of identity. The second process of accessing memories is as important as the first, especially for migrants. Ecological identity work engages an act of recall using different routes such as those suggested by Thomashow (1996, p. 7) to explore: 'childhood memories of special places', 'perceptions of disturbed places' and 'contemplation of wild places'. The purpose of digging through the layers of memory by revisiting those places is to uncover the connections made with the earth. The two concurrent processes of widening the circles of identification and deepening the memory mining change the way people learn about themselves, how they make sense of their relationships within ecosystems, the way they interpret their lives and what actions/decisions they take in the world.

Thomashow's (1996, p. 23) educational approach employs 'critical reflection and deep introspection' as tools for exploring one's ecological identity. Reflective learning is at the core of ecological identity work; it occurs anywhere and anytime, with attention being paid to what seems ordinary. The ordinary is then transformed by means of imagination in this reflective process. Ecological identity work, according to Thomashow (ibid., p. 17), does not happen through 'grand epiphanies and dramatic incidents' but through noticing everyday life. This kind of attention/reflection communicates new meanings and creates transformational moments. What is meant by reflection in this context includes: 'mindfulness, introspection, and deliberation – thinking carefully about the personal meaning of knowledge, considering the wider ramifications of personal and collective action, and using information and relationship to attend to the moment, the direct experience of the here-and-now' (ibid., p. 173). It is through sensory experience and contemplation of nature that people understand themselves in relation to others. The dynamics of reflective learning develop a different way of looking at the world, where environmental observations are connected to the issues and dilemmas of life, where spiritual awareness and ethical responsibility are expanded.

2.1.4. Ecological Identity and Place

An important part of ecological identity work is concerned with the perceptions of place. One of the main questions that ecological identity is oriented around is: 'What do I know about the place where I live?' (Thomashow, 1996, p. 180). To this enquiry, I would add: what would the language(s) that one speaks tell the individual about their places: of residence and travel, of homeland and diaspora? And what ramifications does this have for the cultivation of an ecological identity? Ambivalence surrounds the very concept of place; as Lawrence Buell points out in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995, p. 62), 'What counts as a place can be as small as a corner of your kitchen or as big as the planet'. Such a perspective suggesting that the scale of place could shift problematises the local/global dialectic and the conceptions of identity and citizenship in consequence.

The controversy over restoring a sense of place or nurturing a sense of planet reflects those shifting scales of place. Developing a sense of place is believed by many theorists to be an essential step towards reconnecting the self with the natural world. For instance, environmental philosopher Paul Shepard (1977, p. 32) argues that 'knowing who you are is impossible without knowing where you are'. Paul and Anne Ehrlich (2004, p. 325) further emphasise that 'an understanding of local surroundings permits many people to gain awareness of the ecosystem services upon which their lives depend'. Familiarity with the local here is presented not in opposition to the global but as a path leading into an ecological awareness of the global. On the other hand, Ursula Heise (2008, pp. 55, 65) rejects what she regards as 'the conventional assumption' that the global has to be 'rooted in local perceptions and experiences', arguing that a focus on the local may impede comprehension of significant broader connections. She alternatively assumes that 'what is crucial for ecological awareness and environmental ethics is arguably not so much a sense of place as a sense of planet' (Heise, 2008, p. 55). Heise's eco-cosmopolitan approach rests on more 'abstract and highly mediated kinds of knowledge and experience' such as digital images and simulations (ibid., p. 62). Terry Gifford (2012), in turn, challenges such a proposition and defends the local route. His assertion that 'globalism is now deeply ingrained in the local' advocates against disregarding 'the specificities, the unique characteristics, the familiar quirks of the local sense of place'. According to Gifford, love of the earth and the care that follows, as manifested in sustainability and activism, begins in love of the locally known. I would argue then that a sense of

place is nested within a sense of planet, and that the latter is difficult to achieve by overstepping the locality of experience. Within this debate, I align with a view that values a sense of place as it embodies particular relationships within a personal geography that shape one's identity. I am interested in examining how a sense of place is influenced by mobilities and conflicts that young people might be involved in, without losing sight of the entangled relations with human, non-human and technological elements.

The interconnection between the local and the global, the particularity of a sense of place and the abstraction of a sense of planet, is highlighted in the context of diaspora. Doreen Massey in *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994) introduces the concept of a 'global sense of place', challenging the conventional idea of places as static enclosed entities and proposing instead a view of place as a meeting point. Such a perspective shifts the focus to border crossing and the ensuing possibilities of diversity. Drawing on the notions of hybridity and diaspora, Massey argues that places are sites where diverse social activities and cultural practices intersect; they emerge as pivotal nodes of connections and movements in a rhizome-like network. Alex Kostogriz and Georgina Tsolidis (2008) further point out that movement across places and communication channels have greatly expanded, rendering the boundaries of the local more permeable and flexible. Based on this understanding, Kostogriz and Tsolidis (2008, p. 134) develop 'transcultural literacy' to understand the 'dialogical encounters' between places, people and texts across boundaries, how place-, meaning- and identity-making is practiced in 'in-between spaces'.

With the 'spatial turn' in education, attention has been increasingly drawn to the links between place and identity as revealed through texts (Soja, 2000). 'Transcultural meanings' feature significantly in educational research about children's perception and representation of their 'place-related identities' (Charlton et al., 2011; Wyse et al., 2012; Charlton et al., 2014). A theory of place-related identity has been developed through this construct of transcultural meanings, characterised by renegotiating binary positions through dialogues of similarities and differences. The qualitative study involving schoolchildren (Wyse et al., 2012), through their response to a children's book (*My Place* by Wheatley and Rawlins, 2008) and creation of texts/maps and engagement with others in school exchanges, illustrates the complexity of the threefold place-/identity-/meaning-making process. It exhibits perceptions of locality, othering through religion/race/nation and insider-outsider positions (Wyse et al., 2012, p. 1035). The transcultural meanings communicated by

children through physical/social/textual interactions are the ‘defining phenomenon of place-related identity’ (ibid.). Transcultural literacy accordingly seems helpful in illuminating aspects of place and facilitating the shift from the singular identity to plural place-related identities.

One might ask then about the difference between a ‘place-related identity’ and ‘ecological identity’ since the cultivation of a sense of place is central in both conceptions. I would argue that ‘ecological identity’ is a broader term to use than a ‘place-related identity’, as it is not only bound up with locality/place(s) but also relational to living and non-living things in one’s trajectories. As a more inclusive conception of identity and belonging, ecological identity puts ‘human identity in relationship to place, to ecosystem, and to nature’ (Metzner, 1999, p. 183). Considering place as a ‘learning laboratory’ where ecological identity emerges, Thomashow (1996) devises educational activities that enable participants to explore a sense of place in a reflective way. Thomashow’s work is in line with that of David Orr (1992) who suggests that learning the art of living somewhere is based on the knowledge of place and the capacity to observe it with insight. Thomashow (1996), in this respect, introduces the ‘sense-of-place’ map, a form of storytelling that traces a person’s ecological and geographical roots, helping individuals visualise their relationship with the earth and express their ecological identity.

The importance of a sense of place as part of ecological identity work is also discussed by Thomashow in the context of migration and globalisation, which provides insights into the educational possibilities of ecological awareness in a global context. Thomashow (1996, p. 196) shares with theorists of diaspora/hybridity an interest in the tensions related to a sense of place for migrants: ‘In searching for our roots, we often experience how uprooted we really are. We realise the different number of places we have lived in. We see the various landscapes and traditions that have influenced us and wonder whether we have developed sufficient knowledge and intimacy in any of those realms’. It is a process of reflection on the multiplicity of places where a person lives including travels and all sorts of transient/settled contact. This is where the relationship with and feelings towards the land, region, community and home are examined, processed and expressed. Having a sense of place, in the words of Thomashow (1996, p. 194), ‘is to merge our personal geography with the ecological landscape’. Searching for a personal geography that makes sense of one’s various journeys might involve the reclamation of old roots as well as the placing down of new roots in ecological awareness.

2.1.4.1. Towards a Multilingual-Multidimensional Sense of Place

Investigating how migration modifies the individual's sense-of-place map is incomplete without an examination of the role that language and multilingualism play in creating bridges (and reflecting tensions) between the many places that constitute one's identity. The multilingual sense of place hinges upon a linguistic construction in addition to 'the social construction of nature' (Gifford, 1995; 2011), where a neutral portrayal of nature is impossible because language inherently contains cultural and personal biases and attitudes. Gifford (2012, p. 3) accordingly argues that '[a]ny description of place, for example, is framed twice: by the language of a text assembled by the author from what is culturally available and by the associations the individual reader brings to that language'. An awareness of the multiple frames of language could reveal 'the multi-dimensions of place'; this provides a lens through which we can look into how multilinguals perceive and represent a place, what words/language are used to describe the place and how translatable is a sense of place across different languages (ibid., p. 6).

Gifford in his article 'Towards a new Multi-dimensional Ecopoetics of Place' (2012) enquires about how place is framed in different languages by multilingual people. He conducts an experimental study of 'the multilingual senses of place', asking his participants to write about a place of their choice in two languages. He observes that there are some words about place that are difficult to translate in their specificity and 'complex nuances', since they are 'subjective bioregional constructions that are untranslatable into another language' (ibid., p. 15). It appears that different languages evoke different qualities about the place. Gifford therefore adds the multilingual to the historical, political, aesthetic and other dimensions of place. Gifford (2012) also provides an example from *Al Ortro Lado del Aguila - The Other Side of Aguila*, a dual language English-Spanish poetry collection by Gifford and Christopher North (2011) written to capture the spirit of two Spanish villages separated by the mountain Sierra Aguila. He discusses how the spirit of place in his English poem 'Among Almond Trees' is rendered differently in the Spanish translation, pondering the question of what it means to describe a place in two languages.

To further explore how different languages affect place-making, I have experimented with this notion of a multilingual sense of place by translating the same poem by Gifford 'Among Almond Trees' into Arabic. Following my visit to the two Valencian villages Sella and Relleu where I met

the poets in 2015, I tried to engage with the spirit of the Spanish almond groves I roamed by translating the poem into Arabic in collaboration with my professor Magda Hasabelnaby for a conference in Cairo on ecocriticism (2018). From the first stanza, the Arabic translation seems to be affected by my solo hike among the almond trees and my quest as a traveller to retrieve some of the Moorish spirit of the place, a spirit that was summoned by the agricultural terraces that the Moors left behind and that I walked along. While the English text is written in the present tense, our Arabic translation (Hasabelnaby and Shahwan, 2018) is dominated by the past tense that reflects a nostalgia for the historical glory of Al-Andalus found in the Arab cultural narratives/memory:

She comes among almond trees	انبثقت من بين أشجار لوز
terraced to trap water	تدرجت لتمسك المياه
from the gravity of her steps.	تشدها جاذبية خطاها

Comparing and contrasting the translations into different languages reveals the subjectivity of each linguistic construction of the place. Gifford in his article (2012, p. 9) contrasts the Spanish translation of the final stanza with his original text in English, noting how an opposite wording of the last line ‘why/ there is food and a house’ appears in the Spanish version to convey ‘the mysterious, elusive, sense of place’. The Spanish translation ‘pues / no puede haber casa alguna’ (translated by Gomez and Luber, 2011, p. 2) negates the existence of any house perhaps under the country’s economic recession at the time. Looking at our Arabic translation of the same lines, the Arabic diction used not only renders the meaning of ‘house’ but also an enhanced sense of home:

It is why she comes	من أجل هذا جاءت
early and late from the house, why	وتجئ في الصباح والمساء، في البيوت
there is food and a house.	ومن هنا يكون الرزق والسكون

The essence of Gifford’s poetic articulation, according to his article (2012, p. 10), is that the presence of almond trees not only provides ‘food and the income to make a house in an economic sense’ but also embodies a spiritual and aesthetic sense of local identity. The Arabic translation (Hasabelnaby and Shahwan, 2018) with our usage of the word ‘رزق’ /rizk/ seems to revive such a spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of place from a specific cultural perspective. ‘Rizk’ in Arabic is a big concept that is not limited to ‘food’ but refers to sustenance, provisions and all blessings

(physical, emotional and spiritual) as understood in our repertoire of Quran'ic verses and Hadith narrations, which our translation of the whole stanza appears to draw upon. Given that the phrase 'early and late' in the second line is also rendered as 'في الصباح والمساء', literally morning and evening, a hadith that revolves around the idea of rizq seems to have subconsciously inspired the translation: 'If you were to rely upon Allah with the reliance He is due, you would be given provision [*rizq*] like the birds: They go out hungry *in the morning* and come back with full bellies *in the evening*' (Translated in Sunan Ibn Majah, p. 4164; my emphasis). Each of the English, Spanish and Arabic versions of the text give the same place different layers of meaning based on the cultural bearings of each language and the perspectives of a British/foreign resident, Spanish nationals/citizens and an Arab traveller/first-time visitor.

There is still a gap in this area of scholarship about the role multilingualism plays in the perception of and relationship with place and its natural elements. Addressing this gap requires an integration of sociolinguistic theories with the ecocritical discourse to understand how the movement between different languages and language varieties affects the negotiation of self-other relationships and nurtures new ecological identity positionings. While an approach of separating languages yields issues of hierarchy and hegemony, adopting a 'repertoire approach to language' sheds light on the interplay of the individual's entire repertoire of languages and other meaning-making resources (Lytra, 2023; Rymes, 2014; Busch, 2012). As Canagarajah (2011, p. 1) argues, 'for multilinguals, languages are part of a repertoire that is accessed for their communicative purposes; languages are not discrete and separated, but form an integrated system for them'. Mahadeo-Doorgakant (2023, p. 48) develops this notion of repertoires in ecological terms, depicting the multilingual repertoire of children as a 'living organism, which morphs itself according to the different living organisms it comes into contact with'. Recognising this relational nature of semiotic repertoires as employed in communication and the way it pertains to the organic interactions within the environment can enhance our understanding of the intertwined processes of meaning-, place- and identity-making.

How a multilingual repertoire would reconcile the different linguistic and non-linguistic constructions of place is particularly needed for an examination of the transcultural process of place-making for people in diaspora. If the national imagination that produces a fixed identity is based on a 'one-nation-one-language ideology' (Lytra, 2023, p. 3), I might then presume that an ecological imagination necessary for ecological identity work benefits from the dynamic

interactions between languages as well as other semiotic resources that a semiotic repertoire approach suggests. My study aims to further examine this link between linguistic plurality/diversity and the development of ecological identity, how the linguistic repertoires of young people and their rich heritage are key to their ecological identity work and how language practices are related to understanding the dynamic and fluid ecological processes/systems.

2.1.5. Implications of Ecological Identity: Citizenship and Healing

The work of Thomashow shows how ecological identity could expand our understanding of citizenship in today's world and thereby heal the sense of exile for migrants. In this section, I view the implications of citizenship and healing as closely interlinked. I therefore proceed from Thomashow's views on ecological citizenship to an ecologically grounded conception of migration and finally a discussion of healing.

The development of ecological identity (with a sense of place) suggests a reconfiguration of 'local and global ecological citizenship'. Thomashow in his book *To Know the World* (2020, p. 148) reiterates his conviction that '[b]y achieving a sense of place, you learn to identify with the place where you live. You become familiar and intimate with your local surroundings. Hopefully you exercise citizenship by taking responsibility for that place's quality of life, and taking action to care for it in a tangible and meaningful way'. Citizenship here is conceived as the outcome of familiarity and intimacy with place, which allow the individual to care for it as he/she would do for a neighbour. The attachment to a local space is argued to open avenues to knowing the biosphere and a new expanded view of a neighbourly citizenship. In *Bringing the Biosphere Home,* Thomashow (2002, p. 212) explains the process of what he calls a 'biospheric conception' where noting the 'splendor of the biosphere' is first 'revealed to you in the local ecosystem'. With the 'place-based gaze' and 'learning how to move between worlds', one's observations/contemplations of the world develop into a sense of appreciation for the bigger neighbourhood, i.e. the Earth: 'You learn to honor biogeochemical cycles as intrinsic to your breath and thirst. You find your origins in the history of life on earth. You forge alliances and affiliations with people and species from all corners of the globe as you watch them pass through your neighborhood' (ibid.). Through the widening of circles of identification, the scale of neibourhood just like place expands from a local area to include the global biosphere. Through

this process detailed by Thomashow, ecological identity work lays the groundwork for ecological citizenship.

Adopting an ecological perspective to identity in the context of migration allows for a paradigm shift that could have positive implications for people on the move. In his latest book *To Know the World,* Thomashow (2020, p. 114) explores ways of expanding our perception of migration by viewing it as 'a fundamental ecological and evolutionary component of residency in the biosphere'. Migration is intrinsically linked to our human condition but should also be viewed as a common phenomenon among other species moving across the biosphere. This reminds us that the demarcation of political borders is a human construct that came about with the creation of nation-states very recently in modern history. Situating migration in the context of the biosphere is most importantly awe-inspiring; 'it is a wondrous process' (Thomashow, 2020, p. 124). Thomashow cites the ecologist Wilcove explaining that '[a]lmost every aspect of migration inspires awe: the incredible journeys migratory animals undertake and the hardships they face along the way; the complex mechanisms they use to navigate across the land and through the skies and seas'. As Thomashow concludes, 'It's about time we consider human migration with the same sense of awe, wonder, care, and significance' (ibid, p. 124). He argues that expanding an awareness of migration as 'an ecological response to living in the biosphere' and of our deep human ancestry could 'cultivate empathy for the movement of people and species' (ibid., pp. 117, 121). While the cultivation of empathy is a valid point for advocating the expansion of personal identity, I would argue that it is of high importance that migrants themselves take this positive position. To view oneself as part of the collective sphere and in sync with the processes of the biosphere would help heal the sense of estrangement that migrants might have. Such an ecological worldview changes the way migrants think, learn about and see themselves in the world. Healing emerges from the focus on the 'two-way flow' embodied by migration (ibid., p. 127), the reciprocity of relationships it extends and the dialogue it creates.

In his chapter on ecological identity and healing, Thomashow (1996, p. 143) emphasises that 'ecological identity work has a profound healing agenda: restoring ecosystem health, community well-being, and personal happiness'. Thomashow's view on healing builds on the work of Orr (1990, p. 51) who highlights the healing effect of environmental education; Orr argues that the conversation with nature entailed in earth-centred learning is 'a restorative process and healing art'

and that the direct experience in nature is 'an antidote'. It is interesting how Orr uses the words 'rhythm' and 'flow' in reference to the qualities of this two-way communication with the environment, when he foregrounds the use of language in the healing/creative process. Getting in dialogue with nature would help us synchronise our own pace with the observed cycles of day and night, the seasons, and the larger rhythm of the universe (Orr, 1990, p. 50). These ideas about ecological identity and healing underpin the field of ecopsychology which focuses on the synthesis of the ecological and the psychological. Roszak (1995, p. 14) argues that an 'ecological unconscious' could be 'drawn upon as a resource for restoring us to environmental harmony' (ibid., p. 14). Striking such a harmony that could bring individuals back in touch with their inner and outer worlds requires a process of enhanced sensitivity and deep reflection as discussed in the preceding section of ecological identity work.

2.2. Ecopoetics

Ecopoetics is approached here as part of ecological identity work. Ecopoetics is a practice of the contact zone characterised by its interstitial boundary work that challenges binaries wherever they exist (Skinner, 2011a). It appears as an offshoot of ecocriticism which is concerned with the relationship between literature and the environment. Ecopoetics revolves around the idea of 'house making' implied in the etymological roots of the term, with 'eco' derived from the Greek *oikos,* meaning our larger house, i.e. the earth and 'poetics' from *poietikos*, the adjective of *peieo* (verb) which means 'to make'. Skinner first conceptualises the term in the inaugural issue of *Ecopoetics* (2001), situating the new field along the 'creative-critical edges between writing (with an emphasis on poetry) and ecology (the theory and praxis of deliberate earthlings)'. As Tom Bristow (2008, p. 156) expounds, it investigates 'how "home" is defined and built; where (or whether) borders exist between body and world, human and other, space and place; and how sense activities, physical presences, memory, and moments of thinking locate and assist the human desire to navigate the self in the world'. The scale and intricacy of human-environment relations along the borderline between social and ecological, local and global, perception and imagination are readily acknowledged in establishing the ecopoetic patterns of thought.

Due to its broad interdisciplinarity, the term ecopoetics yields a multitude of definitions. In an interview conducted by Angela Hume (2012) with Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly and Jonathan Skinner about the contexts and conceptions of ecopoetics, each of the poets expresses

a relatively different view. Hass's understanding relies on the etymological meaning that underscores the 'practice of poetry' and 'writing about poetry whose subject is, broadly speaking, ecological' (in Hume, 2012, p. 754). For him, the prefix 'eco' canopies three referents: 'the world seen from the viewpoint of ecology', 'the imagination of what used to be called "nature"', or the awareness of the human 'relationship of crisis … to the whole of nature, and to our manmade environments' (ibid.). Hillman takes up the word 'crisis' and mentions ecopoetry that addresses 'environmental crises', arguing that 'the term implies an ethical dimension' (ibid.). She goes on to stress the centrality of 'an ecological sensibility' to 'noticing our relationships at many levels – the level of economic and linguistic assumptions we create' (ibid., p. 756). In the process of defining ecopoetics, Reilly detects 'an ambient ethos of reframing the human within the ecological' (ibid., p. 755). She thus describes ecopoetics as 'a way of thinking that can run through many different kinds of poetry' (ibid.). Instead of specifying certain 'kinds of poetry', Skinner thinks of ecopoetics in terms of locating 'sites' of connection and disconnection from the environment. I incline towards this view in the present study as I explore the unique rhythm of each text in expressing attachment and detachment, or intersections and tensions, between self/other, inside/outside, private/public, organism/environment. Skinner proposes a compass rose showing the shift in focus of ecopoetics 'from themes and styles to institutional critique of green discourse, and to an array of practices converging on the *oikos*' (ibid.). Such a capacious continuum of understandings was evident at the first Conference on Ecopoetics held in 2013 at the university of California, Berkeley where a variety of activities 'ranging from poetry and visual art, literary criticism, and performance to walking … and being alongside each other' demonstrated what ecopoetics could encompass (Hume and Osborne, 2018, p. 2).

The contours of ecopoetics as critical practice may not be clear-cut, yet the repositioning of the human as part of the more-than-human world stands out against the instrumental mindset that characterises the Anthropocene. With humanity's significant impact on the current geological era, critics and artists have adopted varied philosophical stances in reaction to this reality. Some practices have been congruent with deep ecology's tendency to combat anthropocentrism through a heightened appreciation for the natural world. Deep ecology, as introduced by Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1973), promotes the intrinsic value of all life forms independent of any utilitarian or rational ends. Its philosophical foundation rests upon 'the goodness, balance, truth and beauty of the natural world, and of a human being's biological and psychological need to be

fully integrated within it', to use Tobias' words (1985, p. vii). While this view is of relevance to some ecopoets, the deep ecological perspective has been considered inadequate by others who claim it perpetuates the nature/human dichotomous opposition.

To avoid this dichotomy, social ecology emphasises the continuity between both nature and society. In the light of ecosystems theory, humanity with its social structures is embedded within 'nature'. Bookchin (1987, p. 59) adds that 'our image of nature is formed by the kind of society in which we live and by the abiding natural basis of all social life'. Natureculture has accordingly emerged as a one-word concept to reflect the inseparability of nature and culture in ecological relationships (Haraway, 2003; Malone and Ovenden, 2017). The naturalcultural lens is endorsed by ecocritics like Gifford whose usage of the terms 'outer nature' and 'inner nature' convey the social-ecological synthesis in his books *Green Voices* (1995) and *Pastoral* (1999/2019). Gifford's view that the inner human nature can be understood in relation to the external workings of the world is especially useful in my study, since the healing process I am most concerned with is reflected in those self-explorations facilitated by images of and direct contact with the outer nature. In 'The Social Construction of Nature', Gifford (1995, p. 13) puts forward the view that 'notions of nature are, of course, socially constructed and determine our perception of our direct experiences, which, in turn, determine our communications about them'. With the diverse sense of cultures being crucial in communicating an experience of nature, 'any ecopoetics is always already an *ethno*poetics'; in other words, the meaning of nature unfolds according to a particular cultural context in time and in space (Skinner in Hume, 2012, p. 763).

Those deep and social ecological philosophies have directly influenced the paradigms of ecopoetry. The term 'ecopoetry' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'ecopoetics'; however, I will be using the latter in reference to the theorisation of the field. Ecopoetry refers to different kinds of poetry, namely nature poems, environmental poems, and ecological poems. While they all sound synonymous, the naming reveals a great deal of debate around the connected terms and the conceptual differences between them. Lidstrom and Garrard (2014) make a distinction between two types of ecopoetry they call 'ecophenomenological' and 'environmental'. By 'ecophenomenological poetry', they mean poems that inspire 'an appreciation of non-human nature with roots in Romantic and deep ecology traditions, aiming to heighten individual readers' awareness of their natural surroundings' (Lidstrom and Garrard, 2014, p. 37). It draws on sensory

perceptions/observations to deepen the reader's ecological consciousness and appreciation of the diversity of life. This category of ecophenomenological poetry is associated with American poets like Gary Snyder (b. 1930), Mary Oliver (1935-2019) and Wendell Berry (b. 1934), whose poetry largely evokes a sense of reverence for and intimacy with the natural world and explores the restorative power of nature in times of turmoil. Within the British tradition, Ted Hughes's (1930 - 1998) poetry with its sensory imagery conjures the mystery of the natural world, inviting readers to consider their place within it. The poetry of Alice Oswald (b. 1966) is also an example of how imagery evokes a sense of place and ecological interconnectedness. While ecophenomenological poetry is not commonly associated with the Arabic poetic tradition, we can find examples that reflect a deep reverence for nature in the Sufi poetry of Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and Ibn al-Fāriḍ (1181-1235), where imagery of the natural world communicates spiritual dimensions of ecology. Ecophenomenological poetry offers nuanced explorations of human-nature relationships through the sensory experience it portrays. The sensorial quality of such poetry is necessary for raising an environmentalist consciousness. As Felstiner in *Can Poetry Save the World?* (2009, p. 11) argues, such poetry could 'make us stop, look, listen long enough for imagination to act, connecting, committing ourselves to the only world we've got'.

'Environmental poetry', on the other hand, 'tries to grapple with the changing relationship between human societies and natural environments' (Lidstrom and Garrard, 2014, p. 37). It relates to the development of social ecology and a type of 'environmental thinking' that 'recognises the historical, political and cultural dimensions of the relationship between human and non-human nature that undermine dualistic constructs like nature and culture' (ibid., p. 50). Lidstrom and Garrard find the work of Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) to exemplify this kind of poetry that is concerned with the effects on society and oriented towards political activism. Looking at Arabic poetry in light of the above outlined category that intertwines political and environmental themes, an example would be the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) whose poetry focuses on the connection between land, identity and resistance. The characteristic interlacing of inner and outer landscapes in environmental thought places ecopoetry in a wider context, enabling it to 'address concerns associated with the broader field of the environmental humanities, such as environmental and social justice' (Lidstrom and Garrard, 2014, p. 50).

The connection between ecology and poetry has been elaborated quite differently in what is called 'ecological poetry'. The term is used by Bryson (2002) to refer to the type which 'offers a vision of the world that values the interaction between two interdependent and seemingly paradoxical desires' concerning place and space. The first of these desires is 'to create place, making a conscious and concerted effort to know the more-than-human world around them', while the second is 'to value space, recognizing the extent to which that very world is ultimately unknowable' (Bryson, 2002, p. 169). Bryson draws upon the work of cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p. 54) who identifies 'space' as abstract in comparison to 'place' which tends to be more 'enclosed and humanized'. Tuan (1977, p. 6) maintains that 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value'. The concept of 'space' is often overlooked by critics; Bryson explains that 'space is usually denigrated rather than valued, primarily because we normally interpret space as the opposite of place and thus as placelessness' (Bryson, 2002, p. 170). Space, on the contrary, suggests a sense of freedom and a transcendence of time; it entails movement as found in the spinning of earth, the succession of day and night, the shifting of skies or the subtler motion of breathing in and out (Tuan, 1977, pp. 52-53). Bryson (2002, p. 171) argues that while the process of place-making is essential in ecological poetry, it should be 'always balanced, or better yet, harmonized, with a healthy dose of space-consciousness'. One could conclude that connecting with place and appreciating space together would lead to 'house making', a sense of belonging that reconciles the inside/outside, which is the very purpose of ecopoetry.

Ecopoetry, as Bate (2000, p. 76) puts it, 'is not synonymous with writing that is pragmatically green' but rather aims to '"present" the experience of dwelling'. Bate in his seminal book *The Song of the Earth* (2000) theorises the ecopoetic through 'dwelling', an inflected concept of place he derives from Heidegger. The Heideggerian notion links the condition of ecological belonging with the power of poetry to speak it (Bate, 2000, p. 251). In his philosophy, Heidegger meditates upon the German Romantic poet Holderlin's saying: 'poetically man dwells on this earth'. He wonders how such poetic dwelling is possible for the layman and seeks the answer to his question by digging up the essence of both dwelling and poetry. Dwelling is not the mere 'occupying of a lodging', he writes, but is rather understood in terms of 'cultivating and caring' which are 'a kind of building' (ibid., pp. 215, 217). Likewise, poetry is seen as a special type of building that helps man belong to the earth instead of escaping it (ibid., p. 218). The human activity of building binds

'dwelling' and the 'poetic' together in the sense of providing structure to the physical environment, to cultural traditions and to the self via language and the ability to listen as well as respond. Poetry in this respect can be said to admit 'man's dwelling into its very nature, its presencing being' and is thus described as 'the original admission of dwelling' (ibid., p. 227). In responding to and with language, we exercise the capacity for dwelling in as much as we measure ourselves against the earth and sky. Following through this line of thought, Heidegger concludes that 'poetry, as the authentic gauging of the dimension of dwelling, is the primal form of building' (ibid.).

The value of the ecopoetic as set out by Bate (2000, p. 262) stems from this Heideggerian view that poetry 'is a presencing not a representation, a form of being not of mapping'. Poetically interweaving the fourfold of earth, sky, mortals and divinities 'grounds us; it enables us to dwell', comments Bate (ibid.). He also finds language in poetry to be particularly liberating because of its oral and spatial qualities. By rearranging some lines of prose into poetry, he demonstrates the transforming effect of 'the white of the page or the second of silence' (ibid., p. 260). In the same vein, Bristow demarcates 'an affective geography of poetry, person, place' in *The Anthropocene Lyric* (2015). As he claims, 'lyricism configures feelings and structures thought; it reflects on our capacities as humans to fulfil our potential for experiencing joy, surprise and delight while honestly admitting pain, grief and sadness into the home of our being' (Bristow, 2015, p. 3). This view of poetic language supports the understanding that '*poiesis* in the sense of verse-making is language's most direct path of return to the oikos, the place of dwelling' (Bate, 2000, p. 76). The question remains though about the relevance of 'dwelling' to the experience of people in today's world and whether there are other more accurate ways to imagine their relationship with the earth.

2.2.1. Ecopoetics of Diaspora and Mobility

The modes of dwelling presented in early ecopoetics are arguably disconnected from the complex experiences of dislocation and diaspora. Samantha Walton (2018, p. 395) doubts that the vulnerable and traumatised will be able to perceive the same 'affective quality of the moment of nature-contact which ecopoetry, according to Bate, is meant to capture'. Linking ecological thinking with diaspora in a comparative study of Palestinian and Native American poetry entitled 'Neither homeland nor exile are words', Benay Blend (2019) shows how Ursula Heise's notion of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' is incompatible with the conditions of land displacement and enforced

exile. In Heise's book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008, pp. 60-61), she has promoted an eco-cosmopolitan sensibility that should 'allow individuals to think beyond the boundaries of their own cultures, ethnicities or nations' by mainly envisioning 'individuals and groups as part of planetary "imagined communities" of both human and non-human kinds'. Such planetary sense is criticised for its insufficient consideration of the tangible environmental problems of non-humans and humans, especially those marginalised individuals (Kaapa, p. 218). As a corrective to Heise's sense of belonging to the global ecosystem, Blend deploys Steven Salaita's decolonising strategies in *Inter/nationalism* (2016). Through inter/national interactions, i.e. establishing ties between seemingly disparate communities, poetry becomes a means to put homeland within a broader matrix of geographies and communities (Blend, 2019). Among Native American and Palestinian poets, the complexity of 'diasporic space' (Brah, 1996) is entwined with the power that comes from knowledge firmly rooted in the land.

The move towards an ecopoetics of diaspora is much needed at our times of massive displacements. It falls within the efforts to transnationalise ecocriticism, a call that Cheryll Glotfelty voiced in 1996 and many other ecocritics reiterated (Heise, 2008; Oppermann, 2012). Glotfelty (1996, p. xxv) admits that 'Ecocriticism has been predominantly a white movement', yet this has got to change into 'a multi-ethnic movement … when a diversity of voices are encouraged to contribute to the discussion'. Within the efforts to decolonise the ecocritical scholarship and extend it beyond its white roots, Chicana feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldua's work (1987; 2005) is significant in theorising borderland and mestiza identity. She explores the complexities of such an identity, which 'operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out' (Anzaldua, 1987, p.79). As she shifts the notion of identity away from national and racial boundaries, she defies the hierarchical structures of identities imposed by colonial categorisation systems based upon the logic of domination and exceptionalism (Bost, 2019). Anzaldua (2002, p. 560) writes: 'Your identity has roots you share with all people and other beings – spirit, feeling, and body make up a greater identity category. The body is rooted in the earth, la tierra itself. You meet ensoulment in trees, in woods, in streams. The roots del arbol de la vida of all planetary beings are nature, soul, body.' If the soul/body binary is a product of western thought, healing the rift between soul/body and returning to shared roots 'in the earth' should be a decolonial practice. The translingual format and hybrid style of Anzaldua's writing, assembling different languages (Spanish and English), resists hegemony and embodies a borderland form of identity.

In a globalised world, ecocriticism is increasingly becoming more multicultural and multilingual. The transnationalisation of ecocritical theory is integral to my discussion of the role of the environment in migrant children's multilingual poetry. Given that my research deals with Arab young people in Turkey, my study is located at the crossroads of the emerging Mediterranean and Arabic branches of ecocriticism. The location of the 'middle place' calls for envisioning a conception of ecopoetics that adheres to the complexity of hybridity and 'intercultural connection' (Goodbody and Flys Junquera, 2013, p. i). A broad Mediterranean ecocriticism critically investigates the imagination of this dynamic space that is geo-physically a 'coalition of water and land, of mountains and abysses, of lush vegetation and arid deserts' and is geo-politically 'a field of encounters (and clashes)' (Iovino, 2013, p. 2). Within this frame, I also build on the sparse ecocritical studies of Arabic diasporic literature, with the aim of extending it to the realm of children's poetry and education. The majority of research engaging with Arabic literature in diaspora revolves around issues of cultural identity while overlooking the representation of nature (Bujupaj, 2015). Some of the scholarly pieces do examine the imagery of nature as it features in the literary resistance to occupation, highlighting the close interconnection of Arab poets with the nature of their homelands (Ahmed and Hashim, 2014). Other studies typically contrast the interactions of fictional protagonists with nature in the homeland and the new country of residence (Mukattash, 2022). With an acknowledgement of the permeability of borders, however, we might need to examine how multilingual, multimodal stories, songs and discourses about the environment break away from bounded places to connect and transform along with identities.

Despite the increasing rate of border crossings that characterise our world as 'right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge' (Haraway, 2015, p. 160), little sustained attention has been paid to geographical mobility in discussions about ecopoetics and the interplay between mobility and language, which this study seeks to extend. Skinner in his 2011 article 'Discourse Camping' revisits his understanding of ecopoetics and extends it to the 'remaking' of the household which sometimes requires 'moving out of the house altogether'. As he contends that 'ecopoetics is bound to face the uprootedness, restless nomadism and displacement', he calls for a new configuration of the field as 'a making of "transitional architectural systems" rather than of foundational dwellings' (Skinner, 2011b). In this context, Christine Gerhardt (2016, p. 421) develops an 'ecopoetics of mobility' which she defines as 'an ecologically sensitive mode of poetic expression that conceives of natural phenomena and human-nonhuman interactions as both place-

oriented and fundamentally mobile'. To clarify her concept, she outlines three interrelated strategies used for evoking a mobile sense of place. These tactics incorporate the construction of places whose ecology is defined by nonhuman movements, the focus on speakers whose geographical mobility informs their insights, and the acknowledgement of cultures marked by mobile ideas/people (Gerhardt, 2016). While geographical movement was previously regarded as the antithesis of place-connectedness and ideals of dwelling, the dynamics of intersecting human-nonhuman movement have become recognised in an 'ecopoetics of mobility'.

There is a tension inherent in mobility that emerges when we look at the spectrum ranging from forced walking to sauntering. When the act of walking is forced, it becomes an experience of physical and emotional pain as it does when refugees endure during their flight to safety (Fazel and Stein, 2002). The theme of forced walking is identified in studies of texts about migration and refugees, the materiality of which mediates the migrant journey to child readers of non-refugee backgrounds (Arizpe, 2021). While this aspect of walking is acknowledged, my study touches upon walking as it features in the writing of migrants themselves as a reflective practice. The idea that human mobility enables powerful expressions of place and identity shows in research about walking and art. Tim Edensor (2010, p. 78) draws attention to the peculiarity of walking as a practice that involves the whole body and aligns it with place, highlighting 'the nuanced and complex ways in which the rhythm and flow of walking folds body, self, other humans and non-humans, time-space and place together'. With place experienced through the passing of fixtures, habitual walking creates a 'distinct embodied material and sociable "dwelling-in-motion"' which may provide 'a comforting reliability and mobile homeliness' (Edensor, 2010, p. 70). Edensor (ibid.) argues that such a 'mobile sense of place' produced through the immersion of the walking body in existing space can 'install a sense of spatial belonging'. He elaborates that the 'rhythms of walking allow for a particular experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness, blurring the divisions …between representation and sensory and affective engagement' (ibid.). This flow of experience shapes the walker's identity; Labelle (2008, p. 198) similarly discusses walking in the sense of 'a site for a radical placement and displacement of self, fixing and unfixing self to urban structures, locational politics and cultural form, locking down as well as opening up to the full view of potential horizons'. I draw on these studies as I attempt to understand the implications of an ecopoetics of mobility for the unfolding of young migrants' identities along a

walking journey. In the methodology chapter, a detailed discussion is continued about the integration of poetry and walking to capture the rhythmic dimensions of and relationship with the elements of place/the environment.

2.2.2. Elemental Ecopoetics: An Encounter with Wandering Elements

Exploring ecopoetics, it is hard not to delve into the elemental realm of ecology for 'what isn't an element?' as Timothy Morton (2015, p. 281) exclaims. The elemental is a category that 'absorbs everything' inside and outside of oneself (ibid., p. 281); it is perceived 'in all shapes and sizes' since the elements 'are appearance and essence in an inseparable, non-orientable weird loop' (ibid., p. 279). Such looping envelops the universe with all its living and non-living beings. Even though the elements are everywhere, it is not easy to fully grasp them because the elements 'are not things, not objects or artifacts, but that which is the substrate for things, as well as life, to emerge' as Alaimo (2015, p. 298) puts it. Etymologically, the word 'element' is derived from *Elementum*, the Latin translation of Greek *stoikheion* which denotes the letters of an alphabet. The elements are in this sense 'matter's kinetic syllabary', forming a vibrant language that combines 'the slow and swift, the durable and ephemeral, the flowing and the deceptively still' (Cohen and Duckert, 2015, p. 8). What invites special attention to the elements in my study is their dynamism, the fact that they are always on the move. In their motion, it is intriguing how they initiate action and catalyse perplexing arrangements. Shifting and moving, the elements 'press insistently against boundary' in their pursuit of extension or breaking out of confines (ibid., p. 10). It is this threshold of elements that underlines 'the shared ecomateriality that is both us and world' (ibid., p. 13). This 'weird' way of conceptualising materiality offers interesting answers to ecopoetics in terms of the dynamic movement of matter, its entanglement with metaphor, the ecological loops of affect and the relation of elemental thinking to ethics.

Elemental thinking is traced back to the philosophy of Greek poet Empedocles (5th Century BC) who understood all matter to be composed of four classical elements in varying mixtures: water, air, earth, fire. The elements are held together or pulled apart by means of the two cosmic forces of combination and separation, 'Love and Strife'. The four elements have been 'both an ancient and a very contemporary way of thinking about the material world', to use Patrick Murphy's words (2009, p. 1). Elemental ecocriticism then comes to 'reanimate elemental thinking' (Oppermann

and Iovino, 2015, p. 314), as it promotes metathinking 'about *thinking* with' the elements (Duckert, 2015, p. 238). I am specifically drawn to thinking about and *with* these elements in literary texts and pedagogies, following their strange appeal to young people in my study. Elemental ecocriticism as a mode of inquiry bears great relevance to the focus of my research project on mobility inasmuch as it 'embraces the challenges, paradoxes' integral to 'thinking within the spirals of entanglement that the elements in motion form' (Cohen and Duckert, 2015, p. 6). Reflection on human-elemental encounters promises to demonstrate the entanglements of inside and outside, body and environment, mind and matter.

Elemental ecocriticism stems from material ecocritical theory and attends to the materiality of elements, moving away from the generalised views of nature. With the material turn in ecocriticism, there has been a 'search for new conceptual models apt to theorize the connections between matter and agency on the one side, and the intertwining of bodies, natures, and meanings on the other side' as Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann state in their book *Material Ecocriticism* (2014, p. 450). Recognising the agentic capacity of matter is central to new materialist theories; Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter* (2010, p. 6) develops the idea that all matter has agency or in other words 'the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle'. Karen Barad (2007) has interestingly theorised the 'entanglement of matter and meaning' in terms of 'intra-action', which is the mutual constitution of agency, at the level of elements. The elements exhibit a vibrant agency, which can be either destructive or generative but is most importantly transformative.

The agency/materiality of the elements is brought into focus as they run through and across human-nonhuman bodies, minds, discourses and communities. Oppermann and Iovino (2015, p. 310) remind us that '[o]ur blood is saline water, our bones are calcified earth, our breath is volatile air, and our fever is fire – elements that have composed mountains, oceans, and the atmosphere, and have nourished all terrestrial creativities across time and space'. This embeddedness of elemental matter in our bodies and lives is illustrated in terms of 'trans-corporeality', a concept developed by Stacy Alaimo (2010, p. 2) to reveal 'the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures'. Elemental ecocriticism depicts the 'transcorporeal crossings that position the "human" as intertwined with elemental forces' (Alaimo, 2015, p. 303). It deals with 'the vexing sites where figures, narratives, concepts and histories bear the marks of their worldly

entanglements' (Alaimo, 2015, p. 300). I find such an elemental mode of ecomaterial inquiry illuminating if adapted for educational settings where the active influence of 'elemental forces' needs more recognition.

Within elemental ecopoetics, humans are seen to materially contain the elements in both their bodies and narratives. When people realise that the elements travel through their bodies and stories/poems, a deeper connection to the universe takes place. By acknowledging that humans are 'transcorporeal subjects', according to Alaimo (2015, p. 301), 'they find themselves at the confluence of body, substance, and place, never distinct from the fluctuating world they seek to know'. With 'some patience, fortune, and persistence', as David Macauley in *Elemental Philosophy* (2010, p. 355) maintains, 'we might be able to rediscover and recover a deeper and more lasting connection with the elemental world and in the process find our place – reside in our own element or elements, with the bewildered and bewildering beauty everywhere around us'. The ability to perceive such 'bewildering beauty' is inseparable from the force of love. Alaimo (2015, p. 301) calls attention to the role of love in triggering elemental entanglements. Integral to the elemental is a sense of intimacy with the world, an intimacy that facilitates the process of becoming-*with* its living and non-living beings. This elemental intimacy fosters affective attunements to other beings, restoring kinship ties with the other when the outer world turns out to be materially intimate.

Attention to the elemental is believed to promote an ethics of entanglement. Recognising our enmeshment with the elements suspends anthropocentric views in what Cohen (2015, p. 129) describes 'an epistemological-ethical moment that debars us from humanist privilege'. This recognition shatters or at least challenges the assumption of human exceptionalism and separation of humans from the nonhuman world. An awareness of being coextensive with the material world of wind, seas, sky, stone, plants and animals has ethical implications for one's understanding of human identity; extending an openness towards other life forms that Morton labels 'strange strangers' is required for the development of an ethics of entanglement (Cohen, 2015). Barad (2007, p. 393) argues that 'we are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled, not through conscious intent, but through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails'. This view of ethics 'is therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of

becoming of which we are a part' (Barad, ibid.). Conversely, when the material agency of elements and other beings is unnoticed, it is likely for an opposite 'consumerist attitude' towards the world to thrive as 'substances are transformed into commodities for human use, consumption, and pleasure' (Alaimo, 2015, p. 302). In light of the above discussion, I can argue that elemental ecopoetics has the potential of encouraging people to acknowledge their permeability with the elements of the physical world, which leads to an ethics grounded in relationality and responsibility.

2.2.2.1. Matter and Metaphor

A poetics of the elements is built around the intertwining of metaphor and materiality. Metaphor as commonly defined in dictionaries refers to 'something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else' ('Oxford'). In association with poetry, it is considered a central literary device and a fundamental part of the imagination. A wider linguistic view frames metaphor as a tool of meaning making: 'when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is resultant of their interaction' (Richards, 1936, p. 93). Through the connection between the different parts of the metaphor, meaning is made in poetic as well as non-poetic contexts. In elemental ecopoetics, the elements of earth, water, air and fire are regarded as the foundation of meaning. According to Oppermann and Iovino (2015, p. 310), the elements unite 'humans and other Earthlings in their interlocked journey of matter and imagination'. From this elemental perspective, a confluence of text and nature emerges: 'nature as text' and 'text as nature', based on the interconnection between 'elemental reality' and 'elemental symbology' (Padilla, 2009, p. 22). Contemplating this interdependence, Steve Mentz (2015, p. 67) observes that '[j]ust as no burning occurs without fire and air, so no metaphor functions without materiality'. What Mentz illustrates by means of the combustion of fire and air is not just a chemical reaction but the literary effect it ignites. Mentz (ibid., p. 56) introduces a kind of 'phlogisticated thinking' which he defines as 'thinking across the boundary of matter and metaphor' necessary to narrate the entanglement between the elements and the human self. The elements, with their generative and transformative power, work on the material imagination, painting 'myriad literary images, sensual values, and ontological vicissitudes' (Oppermann and Iovino, 2015, p. 313). As the elements touch the human mind, they become metaphor strikers that could spark fictional stories, poetic insights and new meanings.

The action of the elements turns metaphor into what Cohen and Duckert (2015, p. 11) call '*matterphor*', i.e. language irreducible to 'linguistic terms' but is rather 'agentic and thick'. This conception of metaphor could be linked to Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors we Live By* (1980) in that metaphors are understood as taking root in physical and cultural experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 19) emphasise 'the inseparability of metaphors from their experiential bases' and go so far as to say 'that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis'. Physical experience takes prominence as we usually tend to interpret the abstract in terms of the concrete, the intangible in terms of the tangible. Metaphors arise from a variety of communicative experiences (or entanglements in other words); the basic kinds of experience are a product of 'our bodies, our interactions with our physical environment, our interactions with other people within our culture' according to Lakoff and Johnson (ibid., p. 145). Why metaphors are so important lies primarily in the role they play in expanding our perception and transforming our ways of being in the world – 'new metaphors have the power to create a new reality', Lakoff and Johnson assert (1980, p. 145). Investing in natural metaphors and symbolic meanings, abundantly found in art and poetry, is therefore key to renewing a sense of self and building a strong relationship with the environment (Drobig, 2007; Carpendale, 2015). With metaphors rooted in ecology and the elements, there is a possibility to shape new perceptions of one's identity and place in the world – as guided by an experience of enmeshment with the rest of human and nonhuman beings.

According to Gifford's concept of 'organic metaphor' (2023, p. 122), metaphor could be an instance of 'biosemiotics' (Wheeler, 2016), of organic subjects intuitively reading each other's sign systems. It is not just about reflecting another being in nature or 'standing as an external correlative' of one's internal state but it becomes a process of 'mutual affect' (Gifford, 2023, p. 126). He explains this reciprocity citing Kate Rigby's exploration of Gernot Böhme's 'ecological aesthetics of atmosphere' as 'participating in the articulate presence of things' (Rigby, 2011, p. 145; cited in Gifford, 2023, p. 123). Metaphor in this sense appears as an organic process of co-becoming, 'of mutual agency, something of an equity with other natural beings' (Gifford, 2023, p. 130). The meaning-making potential of metaphor thus emerges through affective 'attunements' to the environment (Brigstocke and Noorani, 2016), in relational terms that comprise 'a series of adjustments, interpretations, connections, affiliations and adaptations' (Pennycook, 2018, p. 131). I find this way of reading metaphor to be particularly useful in my study which aims to explore

how young migrants might use such 'organic' metaphors in their poetic explorations of self and the world. It allows for examining the intersubjective process embedded in their interpretation and production of metaphors in their texts, while paying attention to the embodied and affective dimensions of metaphor.

2.2.2.2. Materiality of Language

My discussion of the entanglement of metaphor/meaning and matter in the previous section calls for an interrogation of language (and identity) from a new materialist perspective. Ruth Finnegan (2015) asks 'where is language?', critiquing the humanist conception of language as narrowly associated with the human mind. The cognitive language-centred model, according to Finnegan (2015, p. 18), overlooks 'the gestural, pictorial, sculptural, sonic, tactile, bodily, affective and artefactual dimensions of human life'. The argument presented here is for a complex understanding of language (and literature) that is not narrowly focused on the cognitive verbal dimension but extends to the material environment, as mentioned earlier in relation to semiotic repertoires. The material is not 'a context in which we interact' but rather a 'part of an interactive whole that includes people, objects and space', as Alastair Pennycook asserts (2018, p. 53). He calls for language to be understood as 'embodied, embedded, enacted and distributed' (ibid, p. 88). In this regard, Pennycook (2018, p. 18) suggests a critical posthumanist applied linguistics as a way forward 'for a renewed engagement with language beyond human hubris' by challenging the binaries of mind/body and human/nonhuman. Within the posthumanist domain, a new materialist approach to language takes into account the material aspects of language through a focus on the ecology of human and more-than-human interactions, showing how the verbal/discursive component is one of many semiotic ways of communication that are entangled in the process of meaning making, of becoming-*with* the elements of nature.

A New Materialist approach addresses the materiality of interaction by locating language in its material context and interpreting the system of affect. It follows Deleuze and Guattari's line of thought (1987, p. 7) where language is perceived as part of a network of diverse acts, a 'rhizome' or a 'heterogeneous mixture of words, things, power, and geography' (Adkins, 2015, p. 25). There 'is no language in itself', according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 7), but 'semiotic chains of every nature … connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.)

that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of different status'. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Elizabeth de Freitas and Matthew Curinga (2015, p. 256) conceptualise language as a form of 'material expression' producing a 'field of affective forces' that helps us study identity as an assemblage 'always folding and twisting the lines of its network'. Materialising language disrupts the linear links between meaning and matter, allowing us to better map 'the material activity that sustains identifications' (de Freitas and Curinga, 2015, p. 256). Discourse and texts in their myriad forms 'should not simply be studied for their coding potentiality, but also for how they entail material contact. The utterance is not only communicative but also a haptic encounter whereby bodies mix and mutate into new learning assemblages' (ibid., p. 260). In studying the linguistic as well as the multimodal, multisensory and embodied aspects of language, the analysis of young people's interactions with each other and nature will highlight the ways in which bodies partake in affective/bio-semiotic assemblages.

The notion of assemblages, as developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is of complex configurations that imply connectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicity and change. There are two axes to an assemblage (ibid, p. 88):

> On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away.

Deleuze and Guattari define assemblages in terms of the relations among the heterogeneous elements and objects they involve; Bennett in *Vibrant Matter* (2010, p. 23) builds on the same understanding of assemblages as 'ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts'. In light of this heterogeneity, the relational interactions take the form of 'semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 23). Focusing on relationality and assemblages, we can understand how meaning and matter, people and elements, human and nonhuman are intertwined. In this sense, a new materialist/posthumanist approach to

language sheds light on how posthuman or ecological identity takes shape and operates as an assemblage of entangled materialities (de Freitas and Curinga, 2015).

A relational-materialist approach to language attends to the human entanglement with the other-than-human within discursive practices. Posthumanist materialism comes to challenge and dissolve the human/nonhuman dichotomy, expanding the view of language to include the nonhuman world. Pennycook in *Posthumanist Applied Linguistics* (2018, p. 12) poses important questions about the study of language: 'do we draw a deep divide between humans and non-humans … or do we open the door to consider that the relations between human and non-human communication need to be carefully considered?' The question of language concerns the relations emerging from assemblages of people, places, objects, animals, elements, technologies, etc. Attentiveness to the more-than-human world requires 'new modes of listening', according to Pennycook (ibid., p. 13). This relational-materialist approach reconfigures the affective system of relations where agency is distributed among multiple 'actants', to use Latour's (2005) term from his Actor Network Theory (ANT). An actant refers to any entity, whether human or non-human, that has the capacity to act and influence the course of events within a network. ANT emphasises the relational nature of agency, focusing on the interactions and connections between the different actants. According to Barad (2007, p. 136), posthumanism as a philosophy 'doesn't presume the separateness of any-"thing", let alone the alleged spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets humans apart'. Posthumanist linguistics, in opening up new ways of thinking what it means to be human, unsettles the boundaries of inside/outside, human/nature and questions 'what role a supposedly exterior world may play in thought and language' (Pennycook, 2018, p. 6).

These shifts in our understanding of language have foregrounded the place of the senses and bodily engagements in semiotic assemblages, which have consequently enlarged the scope of literacy studies. A focus on the multimodality of language necessitates a deeper engagement with multisensoriality (Pennycook, 2018). The link drawn between the multimodal discourse and the multisensoriality of the environment emphasises that signs address us in various ways and thereby compel us to respond with our senses, memories and imagination (Kramsch, 2014). Language and sensory experiences become intertwined as bodily aspects gain recognition within the communicative framework. Viewing language through the lens of multilingualism and

multimodality directs attention to the role of the senses in posthumanist semiotic assemblages. Within the context of young people interacting with the world through poetry and filmmaking, my study is grounded in the perspective of language as a multisensory, embodied and affective encounter.

2.3. Ecopedagogy: The Common Worlds Approach

The shift from viewing language as an enclosed entity to viewing it as 'dynamic assemblages of linguistic and non-linguistic resources' has major implications for literacy and education studies. To think in new materialist terms takes us towards a reclamation of 'the commons', as Pennycook suggests (2018). This concept of the commons is taken from the common land, i.e. the common property that can be accessed by anybody. An attempt to reclaim the commons 'at a time when the most basic of commons – the planet itself – is under threat' makes this idea a 'site of struggle and resistance' (Pennycook, 2018, p. 138). An example of reclaiming the commons would be the collective act of protests, 'a mobilization of the common that takes the form of an open, distributed network, in which no center exerts control and all nodes express themselves freely' (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 218). The 'commons' in posthumanist thinking introduces an ethics of relationality based on 'a more interrelated sense of the planet, the earth, the animals, the things' (Pennycook, 2018, p. 140). An ecological approach to language urges us to better understand the place of humans as enmeshed within the more-than-human sign system, which in turn promotes the development of pedagogies 'that resist the separation of mind and body, human and animal, reason and affect' (ibid., p. 143). Following this approach, educational settings are to be restructured in line with the model of a decentralised network where different voices emerge.

Looking through the commons lens allows educators to radically reconfigure the ways of learning. Similar to Pennycook's posthuman applied linguistic commons is a pedagogy of common worlds; it also questions the humanist views that 'assume humans at the centre of the world, that language learning only happens in our heads, that literacy is a matter only of textual decoding, that agency is something that only humans have and that the world revolves around the human subject', to use Pennycook's words (2018, p. 140). The 'common worlding' pedagogical approach (Taylor et al., 2021; Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Taylor, 2017) resists such assumptions of human exceptionalism and supremacy that dominate the modern model of Western education. Counteracting the humanist

premises, it attends to children's relations with other beings, whether human or more-than-human and seeks to 'find ways of thinking and learning with the worlds around us' (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 75). There is a paradigm shift from an entirely human-social framework of education to an ecological one, from social justice to multispecies justice, from individual centeredness to a collective orientation, from universality to pluriversality, from a belief in exclusive human agency to an acknowledgement of distributed more-than-human agency, from being an outsider to becoming an insider, from learning about the world to learning with it.

Even though the 'common worlds' conceptual framework originally developed from the field of early childhood education, I find it applicable with the secondary school children of my study and across all ages in general. As Taylor et al. (2021, p. 74) describe it, 'Common worlding is an ecologically attuned and recuperative pedagogical approach that seeks to make education relevant and responsive to the planetary-scale ecological challenges that all children now face—no matter where they live'. The guiding principles of this collective pedagogical practice make it particularly valuable in our times of intersecting global crises. By capitalising on our complex interconnectedness with the more-than-human world, common worlding pedagogies 'resist divisions – such as between subjects and objects or nature and culture – that separate human learners off from the world that they study' (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 75). Challenging this divide is key to the development of an ecological consciousness that would allow for responsible and respectful relationships with all our Earth cohabitants – 'We know we are accountable to those who are with us and to the places we cohabit' (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020, p. 6). As this perspective suggests, it is in collaboration with others (human and nonhuman) and the land itself that we could respond to local and global crises.

Another principle that makes the common worlding pedagogies particularly meaningful to me and my research participants is its decolonial agenda. Developed by scholars based in the New World, these pedagogies stem from a recognition 'that the lands [they] now occupy have been stolen from First Nations peoples and that ecocide is inextricably linked to Indigenous dispossession and cultural genocide' (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 75). The link between genocide and ecocide could not be more relevant nowadays than in the Middle East ravaged by both – the focal region within this research. The common worlding pedagogies equip educators, researchers and learners to take part in decolonising education by abandoning and breaking free from the dominant colonial narratives

and perspectives. They uncover multiple modes of knowing that are situated in the diverse ecological communities we live in, with a focus on 'Land-based Indigenous relational ontologies' as they 'provide an ancient blueprint for sustainable living' (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020, p. 3). Taylor (2020, p. 128) emphasises how important it is to connect to 'Indigenous understandings of the reciprocal responsibilities that are part and parcel of our life-giving land and water inheritance'. This might not be an easy task for young people distanced from their indigenous heritage or ancestral roots by means of colonialism and displacement, yet the narrative oral tradition and folk songs passed down from older generations hold the potential to maintain a lasting bond with the land.

Taylor (2020) argues that entering into dialogue with the more-than-human world entails a crossing of the divide between subject and object, thereby broadening and enriching the ecological imagination. It provides a holistic perspective that recognises the interconnectedness of human societies with the land and the ecological processes shaping the world. David Abram in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996) has similarly argued that the ecological imagination involves recognising the agency and vitality of the natural world as well as cultivating a sensory and embodied connection to the environment. Abram emphasises the role of perception and language in shaping our relationship with the Earth, advocating for a more participatory and empathetic engagement with the more-than-human world. I approach poetry, folksongs and filmmaking in my study as a common-worlds practice inasmuch as the interaction through these media urge young people to activate their ecological imaginations. I consider such literary and digital practices as ways of thinking, learning and dialoguing with the more-than-human world.

2.3.1. The Process of Becoming-*with*

At the core of common worlding pedagogies is a commitment 'to find ways of thinking and learning *with* the worlds around us' (Taylor et al., 2021, p. 75). The emphasis Taylor et al. place on 'with' reaffirms Haraway's notion of becoming-*with*: 'becoming is always becoming *with* in a contact zone' (Haraway, 2008, p. 244). Embedded within this pedagogical approach is a mutuality that disrupts hierarchies and dualisms of subject/object, nature/culture and human/nonhuman. As Wright (2014) explains, 'becoming-*with*' is an 'epistemological framework that undermines solipsistic thinking, because we learn about our position in a complex system not through abstract

knowledge, but through the affective capacities of our own bodies and the bodies of the more-than-human world' (279). This understanding of becoming-*with* is built on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of becoming that demands a transgression of boundaries. 'We are not in the world. We become *with* the world', write Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1994, p. 169, my emphasis). The process of becoming happens along borders; at the borders of binarisms such as human/nonhuman or self/other lies 'the threshold of transformation' (Adkins, 2015, p. 150). Becoming is 'neither imitation nor resemblance' but a transformation instigated by lines of flight.

The paths of becoming cannot be fully understood without Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'lines of flight'. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), lines of flight refer to those lines that escape the boundaries of one assemblage, connecting it up with another assemblage that is outside itself. It is only then that transformation occurs and a mutual process of becoming is initiated. These lines or fibres could stretch 'from a human to an animal, from a human or an animal to molecules, from molecules to particles, and so on to the imperceptible … A fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 275). Entailed in this description is a free movement of thought/energy that goes off in all directions unbounded. This concept of becoming is nomadic by nature; Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic theory challenges essentialist views of identity allowing for dynamic shifts. Education as empowerment relies on such lines of flight as escape routes for the oppressed; on their importance, Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 202) assert: 'we must invent our lines of flight, if we are able, and the only way we can invent them is by effectively drawing them, in our lives. Aren't lines of flight the most difficult of all? Certain groups or people have none and never will. Certain groups or people lack a given kind of line, or have lost it.' It seems that the existence of these moments of escape is not simply granted but rather depends on active creation and invention. It would therefore be useful to consider the potential of poetry and creative practices in prompting the emergence of lines of flight. My research project seeks to identify these lines of flight that young people create in their learning spaces and follow along their journey of transformation/becoming, examining how they are enabled or constrained under varying conditions.

Becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), is essentially experimental for it unfolds in unexpected ways. Yes, it is about making a rhizome, 'But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or

enter a becoming … So experiment' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 251). This principle of experimentation should define eco-pedagogies or common worlding practices, as we cannot predict where the becomings would take us. Rhizomatic thinking, as Dahlberg and Moss (2005, p. 117) explain 'is a matter of experimentation and problematisation – lines of flight, an exploration of a becoming, being shaken up as we encounter something that does not fit with our habitual ways of seeing and understanding'. Active engagement with the material world present encounters and relationships that bring about something new. Embracing this unpredictability remains an essential part of the learning process inherent in ecopoetry and critical pedagogies, if envisioned to affect change and transformation for the individual and society.

Adkins (2015, p. 151) clarifies that '[b]ecoming is a continuous transformation', giving an example of the wave whose intensity keeps on transforming into multiple forms as it engages with the forces of the wind, sun and gravity. Multiplicity features in this process as synonymous with transformation and becoming. Haraway (2008, p. 4, my emphasis) picks up on this notion, arguing that 'to be one is always to become with *many*'. The multiplicity and fluidity of becoming imply that the subject is in a perpetual process of becoming, which challenges fixed notions of identity. The process of becoming, for example, opens up new possibilities for the emergence of hybrid identities and the exploration of alternative modes of existence. This theory is of relevance to my investigation of how 'becomings' manifest in young people's texts – whether they are only literary transformations or multiple ways of experiencing and/or understanding the self in the world.

The process of becoming with multi-species others leads to 'response-ability', a term Haraway (2016) has coined to emphasise ethical duty that comes with human and nonhuman entanglements. Drawing on feminist and posthumanist perspectives, Haraway proposes a relational understanding of ethics that acknowledges the co-constitutive relationships that shape our existence. This capacity for response is part and parcel of the 'multispecies and multi-thing becoming-with'; the process 'renders us open to ethical, perhaps grace-full encounters with more-than-human assemblages' (Houston et al., 2018, p. 201). Response-ability is closely linked to the other concept of 'kinship' that connects us through kindness and care with others, human and more-than-human: 'making kin and making kind … stretch the imagination and can change the story' (Haraway, 2016, p. 161). It is then a question of how poetry reading/writing as a common-worlds inquiry could help young people become kin, become kind and become response-able with others.

2.3.2. Literacies as Becoming-*with* the World

The varied ways of becoming-with the world inform the new conception of literacies, that evolved from a focus on learning language codes to an interest in the flow of life experiences and transformation taking place through 'reading, reading the world and self as texts in multiple environments' (Masny, 2009, p. 15). Emphasising the transformative possibilities of such reading practice, Multiple Literacies Theory as developed by Diana Masny (2005; 2006; 2008) draws on Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual tools of becoming, affect, assemblage and lines of flight (discussed in the previous section). Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) conceptualises the ongoing processes of making meaning 'conveyed through words, gestures, attitudes, ways of speaking, writing, valuing and are taken up as visual, oral, written and tactile' (ibid., p. 13). The multimodality inherent to this view is tied with the material multisensory and affective experience of literacies. This experience is not a stable category given the multiplicity of texts, contexts, processes and rhizomatic connections constituted by literacies. The theory of multiple literacies itself is not fixed but always in flux, which allows for the extension and development of different perspectives. MLT broadens the conceptualisation of texts, as it views the world and self as texts in perpetual becoming. In this section, I discuss the affordances of multiple literacies in initiating a process of transformation and becoming (Masny, 2009). As relevant to my study, I highlight those aspects which would enable multiple literacies in young migrants – reading themselves and the world as texts, especially in relation to the processes of becoming-critical, becoming-ethical and becoming-hopeful.

2.3.2.1. Becoming Critical: Reading the Word, the World and the Self

Within the Multiple Literacies framework, reading is conceptualised as an event where the word, the world and the self are interrelated. This perspective concurs with critical literacy which seeks to disrupt the traditional/industrialised literacy approaches that homogenise language and education. Allan Luke (2000, p. 5) presents critical literacy in terms of the 'deconstruction, interpretation and reconstruction of text; and in so doing performs work on the levels of identity, opinion and cultural capital'. Placing reading within such a socio-cultural paradigm, critical literacy alters the aims of education to understand and redress 'what texts attempt to do in the world and to people, and moving students towards active position-taking with texts to critique and

reconstruct the social fields in which they live' (Luke, 2000, p. 6). As part of critical pedagogy that promotes cultural action for social justice, critical literacy empowers students to question the construction of texts and to 'use language to question knowledge, experience and power in society' (Shor, 1999, p. 9). Critical literacy is a dynamic process that involves an understanding of texts from a critical stance through questioning the viewpoints expressed in a text, 'whose voices are missing, silenced, or discounted' and what actions could be taken accordingly (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004, p. 53).

The development of critical literacy hinges upon Freire's dialogic method of education that valorises the critical thinking skills of learners who are creative subjects capable of reading the world through word and 'can then act critically to transform reality' (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 99). Luke (2014, p. 22) demonstrates how critical reading can result in 'unpacking myths and distortions and building new ways of knowing and acting upon the world'. In dialogic interactions with literary texts and the wider world, the four-resource model that Luke developed along with Freebody (1990) suggests that learners take up the roles of text decoder, text participant, text user and text analyst. The model suggests that readers enter into a relational position with texts and the society. In transactional reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976), attention is paid to the transaction happening within the 'author-text-reader circuit' that makes up the complex act of reading, how meaning is constructed through the mutual relationship between the text and the reader in a certain context and time. Migrant children, for example, will create their own individual reading circuit based on their own experiences which have some commonalities but are also highly disparate. Rosenblatt (2002) maps the transaction with texts on an efferent-aesthetic continuum where readers move between factual and emotional perspectives based on their experiences. Critical literacy expands reader response by adding the critical stance to that continuum, which involves reading the world and envisioning alternative views.

For MLT, Masny (2009) presents a Deleuzian-Guattarian theorisation of the reading event that comprises both 'intensive' and 'immanent' processes. Reading intensively is critical in that it disrupts ideas/worldviews, while reading immanently connects with the reader's experience in life that might bring on the thought of something different and produce various emotions. Reading, according to Deleuze (1990/1995, p. 8), refers to the 'contact with what's outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows'. Intensive reading is not so much what the text means as how the text

works and what it produces. Immanent reading, on the other hand, is an event of becoming, an assemblage of experiences that constructs the individual and their identity in an ever-changing manner. The intensive and immanent aspects of reading can be also understood in terms of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation – a worldview is disrupted in a moment of deterritorialisation and is transformed by means of its reterritorialisation (Waterhouse, 2009). The question triggered by MLT is what reterritorialisation or transformation or shift might take place through reading, given that the reading of self is enfolded within the process of reading the word and the world.

I would argue that MLT enhances critical literacy by recognising the work of affect and its implications for understanding literacy practices as forms of connecting with one another. The concept of affect, originally taken from Spinoza and adapted by Deleuze and Guattari, does not just refer to feelings but the forces that collide/connect in the rhizomatic structure of bodies. Affect enacts change in relation to an encounter with another body (Hickey-Moody and Haworth, 2009). According to Cole (2009, p. 68), affects are 'becomings that traverse one's old universe of being and thinking – thereby crossing and creating new definitions and ideas through relationships with "the other"'. Applying the theory of affect to pedagogy, literacies turn from being considered a variety of skills to relational practices and ways of becoming with the world – opportunities for entering 'into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body', to use Deleuze and Guattari's words (1987, p. 257). Hickey-Moody and Haworth (2009, p. 81) in their take on the affective aspect of multiple literacies employ Deleuze's conception of 'affectus', which they describe as 'a rhythmic trace of the world incorporated into a body-becoming, an expression of an encounter between a corporeal form and material forces that are not necessarily "human"'. In this sense, MLT seems to facilitate the emergence of radical posthuman pedagogies imbued with literacy practices that create connections with other beings, human and nonhuman.

2.3.2.2. Becoming Ethical: Ecoliteracy

Ecoliteracy is the product of such connections and processes of becoming with the world. The term ecoliteracy in education was originally coined by Fritjof Capra (1997) to describe the critical skill necessary to understand the fundamental principles of ecosystems and to live in accordance with that. Wooltorton (2006) introduces six elements of ecoliteracy that include: 1) an ecological self

that is interdependent with the life cycle, 2) a sense of place acknowledging the local culture and the biotic community, 3) systems thinking in terms of relationships, 4) the ecological paradigm which is the study of the whole with attention to patterns and processes, 5) the experiential, participatory and multidisciplinary approach to education, and finally 6) a cultural engagement with nature. In this sense, it 'goes beyond a basic environmental awareness – an external thing – to something that has been internalized and valued' (Ramos and Ramos, 2011, p. 328). There is a spiritual element that connects the essence of the living world with the individual's body, mind and soul (Cajete, 1999), which distinguishes ecoliteracy from the previously adopted notions of environmental literacy (UNESCO, 1976) and ecological literacy (Orr, 1992).[5] McBride et al. (2013, p. 14) relate this holistic understanding to ethical action, as they emphasise that an ecoliterate person is endowed with 'well-rounded abilities of head, heart, hands, and spirit, comprising an organic understanding of the world and participatory action within the environment'. From this perspective, ecoliteracy seems to weave the three processes of identity-, place- and meaning-making.

Inna Semetsky (2009, p. 102) promotes ecoliteracy as 'a common literacy for the multiplicity of the members of the household [*oikos*]'. If each member is 'made up of lines' according to Deleuze (1987, p. 124), then ecoliteracy leads to the formation of transversal lines that connect self and other, organism and environment, inside and outside. It is these 'multiple transversals' that create the dynamic network of relationships constituting our whole ecological being (Semetsky, 2009). To view ecoliteracy as a common worlding practice grounded in multiplicities necessarily requires an acknowledgment/accommodation of difference. Without differences, there is no disruption of old meanings/selves and hence no transformation is made possible. Ecoliteracy depends on a chain of becomings: becoming other and becoming ethical. Becoming ecoliterate follows 'reading the

[5] Environmental literacy was declared the primary goal of environmental education by UNESCO and the United Nations Environment Programme (1976, p. 1): 'The goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones'. By 1986, the term morphed into 'ecological literacy' taking root in ecology (Risser). David Orr developed the concept of 'ecological literacy' in his book *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern* (1992) where he put forward a vision of literacy that implies 'a broad understanding of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably' (Orr, p. 92). Orr's advocacy for an educational system that prioritises sustainable development was reflected in UNESCO's replacement of its International Environmental Education Programme with Educating for a Sustainable Future in 1997 (McBride et al., p. 14).

world as *Other* than' and 'us ourselves becoming-other' in the process (ibid., p. 103). Becoming-ethical is integral to sustaining a common household, for ecoliteracy teaches us 'to behave ethically in the context of the broad, yet interconnected, community' (ibid., p. 93). In the oikos of shared experiences, the crisscrossing lines of becoming-other and becoming-ethical lead us towards ecoliteracy.

2.3.2.3. Becoming Hopeful: Towards a Literacy of Radical Hope

To become-*with* the world also involves becoming hopeful, for hope is a significant part of the critical literacies that young migrants need in order to survive in our troubled times. Given the hopelessness and uncertainty that the intersecting political and environmental crises present, hope with its traditional meaning is not enough when the ability to hope for something specific is lost – a radical form of hope is therefore sought in the midst of despair. This final section of my theoretical chapter draws on the philosophical development of the term 'radical hope' and its application in educational settings that employ storytelling and poetry. I then reflect on the intricate relation between radical hope, action and the healing processes of place- and identity-making. In my study, I explore what radical hope looks like for migrant children who engage in ecological identity work while experiencing the uncertainties of a pandemic.

If hope in the typical sense of the word requires an object to be hoped for, a precise desire and a probability to actualise in the future, what would happen when these factors are no longer conceivable? Radical hope emerges. According to Jonathan Lear (2006, p. 103): '[w]hat makes this hope radical is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is'. When the ability to create a 'mental image' of what is wished for is lacking (Boven, 1999), radical hope comes to attend to the unimaginable. It is more of a faith in a goodness that 'outstrips [our] present limited capacity for understanding what that good is' (Lear, 2006, p. 93). Not fully understanding the nature of goodness might result in an openness to new possibilities, a willingness 'to open our imaginations up to a radically different set of future possibilities', as Lear puts it (ibid.). Rather than determined expectations, radical hope holds a promise of a range of open-ended possibilities that provide encouragement against despair. Kenneth Shockley (2022, p. 69), in pursuing the question: 'what should we radically hope *for*?',

takes as the object of radical hope the freedoms and 'the conditions that enable us to be ourselves … in a changed world' (ibid.).

As the world keeps changing and shifting, the characterisation of radical hope is built around the virtues of imagination as well as courage and commitment. The conception of courage, according to Lear (2006, p. 65), is broadened as well to encompass new ways that might not be found or envisioned in 'a culture's traditional understanding of courage'. It is the new forms of courage that constitute radical hope in the face of crises, fear, anxiety and uncertainty (Lear, 2006). This understanding of courage is developed by Allen Thompson (2010) in 'Radical Hope for Living Well' where links with commitment are underscored. As a form of courage, radical hope cultivates a commitment to living well in the world; a commitment to activism, i.e. the social and political struggles against all sorts of suffering and injustice. Radical hope is above all a form of commitment to making sense of oneself in times of instability.

In the context of migrants, there is a challenge to strike a balance between one's heritage and the new subjectivities that evolve in transnational conditions and so radical hope appears in the temporality of this situation (Kallio et al., 2021). For Kirsi Kallio et al. (2021, pp. 4009, 4011), radical hope is conceived as 'the ability to maintain a meaningful existence when a person's life is at the brink of losing all meaning'; it is 'the repertoire of possibility that people draw on in desperate situations'. In the pursuit of meaning, radical hope triggers a reorientation of self that breaks away from the linear dualism of past/future by focusing on what is possible 'here and now' (Kallio et al., 2021). Contrary to the sceptical criticisms of hope as delusional, the possibilities promised by radical hope are established through the continued connections and close relationships maintained with other people, species, places, etc. It reclaims a dynamic 'open-ended futurity in the present', as Kallio et al. call it (2021, p. 4017). A repertoire approach to hope fits the aims of my current study that looks into the ways this 'repertoire of possibility' operates for young migrants in a state of becoming when the focus is placed on their relational experiences of the environment.

Radical hope emerges out of 'reading the word and reading the world' and is therefore integral to critical literacies. Engaging in a critical dialogue with the world activates radical hope, which includes the capacity to navigate difficult times (Lamping and McClelland, 2018). While education

and hope are ontologically linked, education in times of transition and crisis should particularly aim at unlocking radical hope and allowing it to grow (ibid.). Following Junot Diaz's (2016, p. 4) note about radical hope that it 'is not so much something you have but something you practice', the role of teachers would be to create learning spaces for their students to practice it (Lamping and McClelland, 2018). In this respect, Hendrix-Soto (2021) conducts a study that seeks new ways of facilitating hope through a youth participatory action research project. She advocates 'critical hope building activities' that might take any form, from photography to school tours, change young people's visions of themselves as capable of action while adding 'joy and care to their repertoires' (Hendrix-Soto, 2021, p. 365).

Literature for children and young adults is viewed by many scholars as a significant resource of hope (Nilsen and Donelson, 1993; Beauvais, 2015). McAdam et al. (2020) closely analyse a selection of picture books, examining the hopeful possibilities they provide within contexts of precarity through imagination and dialogue. The value of literature lies in the potential it shows in driving children towards the radical type of hope grounded in the here and now. Hope as it appears in children's books, according to McAdam et al. (2020, p. 12), is 'a generative, homemaking process that could enable children in contexts of vulnerability to gain direction, "move on" through the world, and find pathways of looking into a possible future'. A literacy of hope seems inextricable from the house-making endeavours represented by ecopoetics as discussed earlier in this chapter (see Section 2.2). I view radical hope as a matter of care-full listening and ethical responding to the world, a way of healing and connecting to life on Earth, that could be greatly facilitated by art, storytelling and poetry as will be examined throughout my study.

*

In summary, this chapter draws a constellation of the theories and concepts that guide my study of the poetic encounters between young migrants and the elements of nature. My theoretical framework links the studies of identity, poetry and literacy within an educational framework of ecological identity work. The entanglement between the three main sections particularly manifests through the overlapping use of a concept like 'becoming' that is central to the processes of ecological identity, ecopoetics and multiple literacies. Materiality is another intersecting line of thought that is strongly connected with matters of language and metaphor. The literature comments on the tensions between dwelling and mobility, a sense of place and a sense of planet in the

ecocritical discourse. Within the intricacy of the discussed literature, I highlight gaps with respect to the multilingualism of ecopoetics and its pedagogical role for young people in the context of migration – which my study aims to fill. In the next chapter, I explain the research methodology used for investigating migrant children's ecopoetic multimodal practices and learning.

3. Methodology:

Walking into Fieldwork: Embodied Ethnography and Project-Based Learning

> You walk out of your usual context, into a more open relation with things. Hopefully, you arrive at a clarity, an immediacy of perception, and you lend attention to that, stay with whatever is happening, internally as well as externally, instead of being displaced into the past or future, instead of being caught up in an attitude.
>
> (Clark, 1995, 'Standing Still and Walking')

Following my discussion of the theories underpinning my research in the previous chapter, I explore my research methods and fieldwork conditions in this chapter. I first discuss education as an ethnographic practice and select walking as an embodied mode of inquiry for both me and the children, who are considered co-researchers. I then examine walking from various cultural perspectives, highlighting its multi-sensory aspects and its role in the co-production of knowledge. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions at the time of fieldwork (2021), I address the research challenges and review the development of new digital methods to adapt my go-along practice. The chapter also brings in Project-Based Learning as the framework for my research design, incorporating the Multilingual Digital Storytelling model. Changes in my research design are traced through a discussion of the pilot study and the development of the main study, leading to an introduction of my data sources and methods of data analysis.

3.1. Education as an Ethnographic Practice

Parallels have been drawn between education and ethnography in terms of the use of multiple methods, the direct involvement of the ethnographer and the importance of the participants' input (Walford, 2008). In a similar manner to the varied styles of learning and teaching, ethnography encompasses a variety of methods that allows for a multi-dimensional coverage of the culture under study. From an anthropological perspective, culture is 'a whole way of life' that includes social networks and ordinary behaviour. Given that 'culture' is multi-faceted, the use of only one method is deemed insufficient for the purposes of ethnography. As a theory and practice, ethnography basically entails revealing the mysteries of culture through fieldwork and writing. The term derives from the Greek words 'ethnos' and 'graphos', thereby combining people with writing. Laying out the foundations of long-term fieldwork, Bronislaw Malinowski (1922, p. 24)

suggests three paths ‘to grasp the native’s point of view’. The ethnographer can anatomise the structural layers of the culture being studied through ‘concrete, statistical documentation’. This outline then needs to be filled out with ‘the imponderabilia of actual life’ which can only be collected through ‘minute, detailed observations’ (ibid). According to Malinowski, the act of observing people in their day-to-day lives is ideally supported by records of ‘the natives’ views and opinions and utterances’ (ibid., p. 22). As Malinowski’s terms reveal, ethnography originated as a colonial practice of Westerners with a view of the ‘native’ people they research as ‘less civilised’ groups. Throughout this section, I discuss ethnography in relation to educational research, highlight its many criticisms from a postcolonial perspective and trace it being decolonised through the development of collaborative types.

Even though ethnography was relatively late in addressing teaching and learning issues, it ‘has become, if not the dominant, then certainly one of the most frequently adopted approaches to educational research in recent years’ (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p. 1). In educational settings especially with very young children, Peter Foster notes (1996, p. 13) that ‘observation may be the only way of collecting information about their school experiences’. I would disagree with Foster’s claim as there are multiple other research methods within ethnography that I discuss later in this section. Observation, however, appears to have been at the core of the endeavours to reform education. Maria Montessori (1966, p. xi), for instance, describes how her educational method has grown from ‘revelations given by the children’ when she set out in 1907 to investigate the problem of fifty children living in San Lorenzo, a slum district in Rome known for its high level of poverty and crime. The result has been a transformative ethnographic experience in the sense of developing her philosophy and educational materials based on observations of children in a specific setting. Ethnographic observation is appropriate for capturing detailed accounts of the everyday lives of individuals in a particular time and place, enabling the researcher to get firsthand knowledge of the wider context. Its main merit rests on the idea that it ‘can provide unique insights into how various and diverse ideas and activities generate meaning’ (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015, p. 56). The question here is: What does observation miss on its own? And what else is done besides observation?

What ethnographers do, as put by Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1995, p. 1), involves ‘participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching

what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of inquiry'. Geoffrey Walford (2008, p. 9) likens this inquisitive attitude to that of a 'magpie' in the tendency to pick up any interesting pieces of information. This is the same process followed by children in order to satisfy their sense of wonder and to obtain an understanding of the world. Learners naturally engage their senses to varying degrees, and so do ethnographers. In *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2009), Sarah Pink demonstrates the numerous ways vision, smell, taste, and touch can be relevant and interrelated within research. Not only do researchers use their eyes and ears in observation, but the 'ethnographer's body, and the sensations it records, are part of the ethnographic script' (Madden, 2010, p. 19).

Such a 'whole of body experience' makes observation less of an obtrusive activity and most importantly helps in the construction of meaning (ibid.). Relying solely on the visual sense bestows upon the researcher an air of authority bound in the 'ethnographic gaze'. The very act of fixing one's gaze on another is 'in a Foucauldian sense an exercise of power' and 'a lens warped by particular and ineluctable distortion' (Erickson, 2010, p. 238). These issues of power imbalance and interpretive invalidity have been two aspects of the criticism against the classic conduct of fieldwork established by Malinowski. His portrayal of the ethnographer 'alone on a tropical beach close to a native village', which has long been part of ethnography's underlying mythology, perpetuates a rather colonialist relationship with the 'natives' (Malinowski, 1922, p. 4). This lone position of the fieldworker has been criticised for creating circumstances in which power relations between the observer and the observed are asymmetrical. It also contradicts the very collaborative nature of ethnographic fieldwork. An understanding of people's ways of being and knowing is best obtained by getting access to different perspectives – sharing the gazes as well as sounds, smells, tastes and rhythms of others through activities like eating, playing, and walking.

Power relations could be effectively handled when the researcher and the researched work 'side by side' (Erickson, 2010), which leads to the adoption of more collaborative ethnographic approaches. In *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*, Luke Lassiter (2005, p. 16) defines collaborative ethnography as 'an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it – from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process'. Conducting

collaborative ethnography also falls under diverse labels: collaborative biography, collaborative oral history, reciprocal ethnography, participatory action research, to name a few. The different categories have brought about a shift from defining research participants as 'subjects' or 'informants' to '"epistemic partners" who may very well be addressing similar ethnographic questions in their own 'paraethnographic" projects' (Lassiter and Campbell, 2010, p. 760). This kind of collective ethnography implicates the multi-directionality of questions, products, and agendas when the agency of all parties is acknowledged. No longer does the ethnographer initiate a project alone, but all 'epistemic partners' join as early as the design stage to imagine and implement multidimensional projects that eventually 'generate broad-based civic engagements and activisms as well' (ibid., p. 761). As such, collaborative ethnography could erase the boundaries that separate traditional research from the community it studies. For my study, I use the term participatory ethnographic methods to capture its equitable approach that is based on mutual respect and the involvement of participants in the research process.

In designing and carrying out collaborative or participatory ethnographic research, there has been a move from 'participant observation' to what came to be called 'observant participation'. This progress is intended to resolve the tensions inherent in 'participant observation' as originally designed by Malinowski and developed by Mead in 1930. The oxymoronic term itself has fuelled controversy over the dichotomous relationship between observation/participation and objectivity/subjectivity. Whereas observation is viewed as the detached scientific method, participation is characterised with its emotional social involvement. Minimal participation as is the case with the classic mode of participant observation might lead to shallow partial understandings. In the guise of participant, the researcher may 'establish a seeming closeness to the natives which is not in fact actual, and get things wrong – perhaps a bit wrong, or close to half wrong, or more than half wrong' as Erickson contends (2010, p. 239). The oxymoronic concept, according to Tedlock (1992, p. xiii), is crystal clear in the 'move back and forth between being emotionally engaged participants and coolly dispassionate observers of the lives of others'. This procedure is bashed as 'not only emotionally upsetting but morally suspect in that ethnographers carefully establish intimate relationships and then depersonalize them – all, ironically in the name of the social or human sciences' (ibid.).

The tension between the 'observer' and 'participant' roles is problematic for some ethnographers. Karen O'Reilly (2012) sees no need for the tension to be resolved, since it is this combination of both objective-subjective positions that gives ethnography its strength. With participation familiarising the strange and observation defamiliarising the familiar, the ethnographer is better equipped to construct a whole picture of the group being studied. O'Reilly elaborates (p. 106): 'This balancing of involvement and detachment, being both insider and outsider, strangeness and familiarity, is in fact a very creative and distinct way of being in and learning about the world'. As the tension between the constituent components of 'participant observation' is countered with another internal balancing force, O'Reilly replaces the term 'oxymoron' with 'dialectic' in reference to it. The participant observation dialectic highlights 'the interrelationship through which the two terms work together in practice to produce new outcomes unattainable by each approach alone' (ibid., p. 105). In this dialectical relationship, participation and observation are at once opposites and complements.

In the 'participant observation'/'observant participation' formulae, proportions of the two components vary according to the personal ethical and philosophical positionality of the ethnographer. Emphasis on participation has increased with the shift in social science philosophies from the theory of positivism that renders reality a patchwork of facts to the theory of interpretivism that considers the social world a product of meaning-making processes. As summarised by Holy (1984, p. 174) in 'Participant Observation and the Interpretative Paradigm', 'the notion of participation in the subjects' activities replaces the notion of their simple observation as the main data yielding technique'. With this interpretative turn, the ethnographer cannot stay detached from the observed culture but becomes rather embedded in that culture, in 'webs of significance he himself has spun', to use Geertz's words (1973, p. 311). Disentangling the intricacy of these webs is 'not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning' (ibid.). Observant participation has become more and more integrated into my practice as I progressed with my research. From the outset, I was encouraged by my supervisors to engage more actively in the poetry reading and writing activities I designed for research purposes. In a sense, I was conscious about the participatory aspect of my research – sharing with other participants my responses to poetry, attempts at writing, pics/videos from my walks, etc. I would also consult the children about my interpretation of their work in individual interviews.

The insider/outsider positionality implicated in the participant/observer roles of the researcher is said to be the most problematic. This dilemma is encountered in educational settings as teachers/educators put on the researcher hat when inquiring into the culture of their own institutions. Schutz (1945, p. 369) uses the labels 'homecomer' and 'stranger' in his depiction of the dichotomy. He explains how the stranger 'will find himself in an unfamiliar world, differently organised than that from which he comes, full of pitfalls and hard to master' as opposed to the homecomer who will 'return to an environment of which he always had and – so he thinks – still has intimate knowledge and which he has just to take for granted in order to find his bearings within it' (ibid.). While there are other more recent discussions about the insider/outsider divide or continuum, I find the terms of homecomer/stranger relevant to my overall research.

Reflecting on my own positionality, I was neither a complete 'stranger' nor a 'homecomer'. I was familiar with the context of my study in Turkey as I have members within my close social circle who moved there in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as illustrated in the introduction to the thesis (see Chapter 1). I have also shared the same faith as my group of participants, who happened to be all Muslims. Regarding the school context, I did facilitate the workshops but did not claim to be a schoolteacher myself. I started off as an outsider to the institution where my research was based, which might have given me the ability to notice the nuances that are not usually questioned in the school community. The context-specific knowledge of the teaching profession and school dynamic, on the other hand, was missing from my perspective. I tried to compensate for this by keeping the lines of communication open with the teachers. This communication became my way of 'bringing research-based information to school practice and bringing practice-based information from school to research' (Nikkanen, 2019, p. 87). My position as 'not a teacher' has proven helpful in terms of the relationship with the children – I was not a part of the power system of exams and marks. At some point, I even acted as a mediator between the students and the teachers. I would prefer the position of 'in-betweener' (Milligan, 2016), though I do not apply it to myself in the same sense as Milligan's original usage of the term in reference to a teacher doing research in a foreign school. Balancing both insider/outsider or homecomer/stranger perspectives has been crucial to my ethnographic study.

3.1.1. Walking as a Mode of Embodied Ethnography

To gain an understanding of the overlapping meaning/identity/place-making processes I am concerned with in my research, I have found the integration of a walking methodology into my ethnographic practice to be particularly helpful. Research in walking studies has predominantly reflected adult walking acts within spaces in North America and Europe, which leaves a gap in relation to children and young adults as walkers and the different cultural contexts that shape this practice. In this section, I attempt to explore the different cultural meanings of walking before I examine it as a mode of embodied ethnography. Walking is discussed in terms of its multi-sensory aspects, network of rhythms and role in developing an environmental imagination. As a tool for the co-production of knowledge with young people, I discuss how walking can be combined with other methods of data collection such as taking field notes and photography.

3.1.1.1. Cultural Perspectives on Walking Methodology

Walking since the fourth century BC has been used as a method of philosophical inquiry by Aristotle and his disciples at the Lyceum where they met in Athens. The peripatetic school founded by Aristotle derives its name from the Greek word *peripatetikos,* meaning to walk around, suggestive of the practice of walking and discussing philosophy. This walking tradition has continued to flourish in the following centuries and across cultures. Examining the place of walking in Arab culture, it is found to hold a historical significance as reflected in the Arabic language. There is an abundance of different terms for walking in the Arabic lexicon, all revolving around the notion of movement with references that range from travel and transition to leisure. The word ترحال (terHal), translated into English as roaming or travelling, refers to the act of moving from place to place, often without a fixed destination or itinerary. It implies a sense of adventure and a nomadic lifestyle that commonly features in classical (pre-Islamic) Arabic poetry. The predominance of movement reflects the living conditions dictated by the desert environment as wandering takes place in pursuit of rain or trade and moving away from drought or dangers (Alolyan, 2011). The terms مشي (mashey) and تمشية (tamsheya) both derived from the same root word denote the act of walking on foot at a moderate pace, سَيْر (sayr) also refers to strolling in a leisurely relaxed manner characterised by spontaneity. The category of walking for leisure includes many more words with nuanced differences such as تَجَوُّل (tajawul) that emphasises the meaning of

wandering with a sense of exploration/sightseeing and نُزهة (nozha) which involves a walk/outing in nature for pleasure. Walking in the Arabic Islamic tradition also holds a spiritual significance; طواف(tawaf) which refers to the act of circumambulating the Kaaba is a religious practice and pilgrimage ritual that symbolises spiritual and cosmic unity. This circular movement of pilgrims (around the Kaaba) is in alignment with the cyclical nature of the cosmos and life, reflecting the oneness of God and the unity of people in the community.

In Thoreau's essay 'Walking' (1862/2000, p. 658), a deliberate and mindful approach to walking is explored as a means of attuning to the natural world and the self by 'sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields'. Thoreau (ibid., p. 657) perceives the art of walking as that of 'sauntering', a word that could have been derived either from 'going *a la Sainte Terre,* to the Holy Land' or from 'sans terre, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering'. If we link the two meanings, this leisurely stroll of 'sauntering' could be spiritual in its essence and therefore lead to a consistent sense of 'home everywhere' even in exile. The spiritual endeavour that Thoreau prescribes is based on a return to the senses; he gets 'alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit' and therefore in walks he 'would fain return to my senses' (ibid.). In the urban world, however, the soul-nourishing aspect of walking becomes challenging to attain amidst the structures of industrial labour and capitalism. As seen from the various expressions of walking mentioned above, this basic act of mobility has deep philosophical and spiritual meanings across cultures.

Walking remains a tool for the exploration of human experience, offering insights into the relationship between different individuals and societies with place. Olivia Mason (2021) asks an important question about how walking is shaped by cultural and political contexts. Walking studies in Palestine, for instance, reveal a practice aimed at the reclamation of place and the right to exist (Mason, 2021; Meneley, 2019). Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* (2010/2007) is a memoir about walking under the Israeli occupation that takes the reader on six walks (plus a seventh new one added to the latest edition) taken between 1978 and 2006 in the endangered 'hills around Ramallah, in the Jerusalem wilderness and through the ravines by the Dead Sea'. Shehada (2010, p. 2) refers to his walks using the colloquial Palestinian Arabic term سرحة *sarha*, which he defines as an act of spiritual liberation:

> To go on a *sarha* was to roam freely, at will, without restraint. The verb form of the word means to let the cattle out to pasture early in the morning, leaving them to wander and graze at liberty. The commonly used noun *sarha* is a colloquial corruption of the classical word. A man going on a *sarha* wanders aimlessly, not restricted by time and place, going where his spirit takes him to nourish his soul and rejuvenate himself. But not any excursion would qualify as a *sarha.* Going on a *sarha* implies letting go. It is a drug-free high, Palestinian-style.

Roaming freely in the occupied lands of Palestine, however, is a serious risk as 'nature and the hills have become places of fear' where Palestinian walkers get shot at by the Israeli army and settlers (Shehadeh, 2008). Walking in this context is an act of reclaiming these hills and a struggle for the freedom of movement confiscated by the Israeli checkpoints placed everywhere. Shehadeh in an interview with Eman Alasah (2023, p. 96) defines freedom as the attempts 'to deny the Israelis the possibility of trapping us', clarifying that 'trapping is not only accomplished by physical obstacles like checkpoints' but also by 'accepting to live in that confined space and confining the mind to that small space'. In a YouTube interview with John Rogers, Shehadeh (2013) points out that the occupation goal is 'to make you feel limited and restricted' and so 'when you go out to nature and see open space, you feel a sense of liberation that is extremely important'. He goes on to explain how walking helps liberate the mind when 'reminded of how tiny human existence is – you look at a rock and you think that rock has existed for millions of years before *me* and will continue to exist after *me*' (my emphasis).

Shehadeh's walking philosophy implies that liberating the country requires a liberation of the mind/psyche/spirit and a close knowledge of the land. To know the land is to ramble through its valleys and hills, an activity so basic and essential yet dangerous for Palestinian children under the occupation. Shehadeh (2013) identifies the problem of several generations growing up without familiar knowledge of their land. He observes that 'for decades now, schoolchildren have not been taken out to nature' as he used to be when he was in school in Ramallah (Shehadeh, 2013). This predicament of detachment from the nature of one's land extends to children in neighbouring countries who are deprived of safe and free nature walks due to a variety of reasons post the Arab Spring. In another political context, as mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, green spaces in Egypt since 2013 have undergone a systematic plan of destruction that aimed at restricting the

mobility of people and cutting off the nurturing connections with the landscape. In such contexts, walking has increasingly become a state-controlled or, to be more accurate, a state-restricted practice that ignores (and seeks to eliminate) the right of living bodies to exist and move. Returning to and preserving the concept of *sarha* therefore presents a survival need, especially if we consider its other meaning in relation to imaginative wanderings and daydreaming – this makes the *sarha* a liberation endeavour for the body, mind and spirit. It is in this sense that I adopt *sarha* as a methodology in my pilot study with Palestinian children and the main study with a diverse group of Arab young people (see Section 3.3). Sticking to the name *sarha* for the walking methods in this research is significant in as much as it embeds this practice in my participants' own ancestral history, somehow retrieving an everyday traditional activity that strengthens the links between generations.

In times of blocked paths like that witnessed during the Covid-19 successive lockdowns between 2020 and 2021, mobility and lots of activities were limited. However, a *sarha* has become a way out of the pandemic confines – the means by which research participants (students, teachers and the researcher) could gain a sense of freedom. Walking with its obstacles and opportunities represents a 'site for a radical placement and displacement of self … locking down as well as opening up to the full view of potential horizons' (Labelle, 2008, p. 198). As listed by Anne Wallace (2022), the cultivation of new understandings, the appreciation of beauty and the reclamation of common lands are all enactments of freedom afforded by walking. The everyday mundane walks therefore take on a significant value for different individuals under different conditions.

3.1.1.2. Walking as a Means of Knowing

Walking ethnography is not solely defined by the act of walking itself; it encompasses the sensory experiences of our bodies, including seeing, hearing and feeling. Walking is a multi-sensory embodied activity that introduces new ways of perception 'not with the eyes, the ears or the surface of the skin, but with the whole body' (Ingold, 2004, p. 330). It is 'a form of circumambulatory knowing' as Tim Ingold (2004, p. 331) describes it, since 'we do not perceive things from a single vantage point, but rather by walking around them'. The many-sided way of knowing is facilitated by movement with others, through surroundings, in/between temporalities and across boundaries. Following Ingold's thinking (ibid.), it is 'locomotion' that 'must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity'. As perception takes place along a 'path of observation' (Gibson, 1979),

new fields of inquiry open and multi-sensory methodologies develop. Walking holds that potential of bringing forth a change and an expansion in the perceptions of researcher/research participants when attention is directed to the body's states and its interactions with the environment. This embodied nature of perception reflects simultaneously in the language used to describe such bodily experiences.

Walking as a practice that involves the whole body is considered the most suitable methodology to understand young people's mobile sense of place with which this study is concerned (see Chapter 2). As Lee and Ingold maintain (2006, p. 77), 'the meaning of the place is constituted by [the walker's] bodily presence' and so this principle is significant in designing a framework to attain new levels of awareness about how place is understood. Various research studies show that walking 'enables embodied and intimate accounts of territory to emerge' (Mason, 2021, p. 1). This immersive embodied methodology also goes with the ecological pedagogies that I seek to explore. Philip Payne and Brian Wattchow (2009, p. 16) describe ecopedagogy as 'a slow pedagogy of place', which 'allows us to pause and dwell in spaces for more than a fleeting moment and, therefore, encourages us to attach and receive meaning from that place'. The repetition of these transient moments sediments into the walker's dynamic repertoire of place relations/meanings and what Edensor (2010, p. 70) calls 'mobile homeliness'; the experiential flow created by walking moves through 'successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering' (Edensor, ibid.). Walking entails a paradigm shift from an absolute focus on the mind to 're-engaging the active, perceiving, and sensuous corporeality of the body with other bodies (human and more-than-human) in making meaning' (Payne and Wattchow, 2009, p. 16). Adopting this approach to embodied ethnography should enable me as a researcher to engage with the complexity and variability of young people's perceptions of the environment/place and pay attention to how they sensorially and reflectively interact.

Walking is a relational act that not only constitutes encounters with other people but also enmeshes the body within a network of materialities, flows and rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004; Edensor, 2010). Edensor (2010, p. 73) makes it clear that the walking rhythms are 'far from the repetitious re-enactment of identical footsteps, but are informed by a responsiveness' that intertwines body, mind and environment. The body-in-motion attunes to the surrounding host of affects that include 'seasonal, climatic and tidal rhythms as well as other non-human pulses of animal and plant life'

as well as urban materialities (Edensor, 2010, p. 69). The walker's body, according to Edensor (ibid., p. 72), responds to the rhythmicity of other movements through 'breathing, gestures, pace of movement and speech'. In paying attention to bodily practices, walking ethnography can reveal the ways of thinking and reflecting engendered by the different walking rhythms and mobile encounters. This dynamic process brings 'public concerns and private fantasies, past events and future imaginings into the here and now, into a relationship that is both sequential and simultaneous' (Rendell, 2006, p. 153). Through walking, new connections – both physical and conceptual – are continuously forged across space and over time.

Exploring the multifaceted aspects of this activity and its varied rhythms, Filipa Wunderlich (2008) distinguishes between three types of walking: the purposive, the discursive and the conceptual. 'Purposive walking' is undertaken with a specific destination in mind, like walking to school/work/home, and is therefore accompanied by a rushed pace/rhythm, sometimes anxious feelings and a physical detachment. Within this category, the walker is not fully present or engaged with their physical surroundings or bodily actions; attention is diverted away from the act of walking itself which leads to a reduced awareness of the immediate environment and physical sensations associated with walking. In contrast to the purposive type, 'discursive walking' does not require a destination to start with, as the event of walking (i.e. the journey) is what matters. It is a spontaneous mode marked by a fluctuating pace and rhythm. It is termed discursive because of the attunement with the walker's internal bodily rhythms in addition to the external rhythms of the surrounding environment. This understanding resonates with Solnit's description (2002, p. 213) of the city as a language: 'A city is a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities'. Walking in this sense is a communication with place using its own language where each step is a choice from countless possibilities; this is in line with the New Materialist view of language as an embodied assemblage of linguistic and non-linguistic resources as discussed previously in Chapter Two. Wunderlich (2008, p. 132) defines discursive walking as 'a participatory mode of walking, during which we half consciously explore the landscape while sensorially experiencing it passing by'. Attention to the multi-sensory aspect of walking brings about an awareness and an active engagement with the environment. This mindful mode of walking transforms the act from merely reaching a point to an exploration and appreciation of the spaces/rhythms encountered en route.

Wunderlich (2008) mentions a third practice of walking that she calls 'conceptual'. In conceptual walking, the journey matters less than the act of walking itself and the related practices. The key difference between this type and the discursive one arises from the added dimension of reflection. In this reflective mode of walking, the focus is on thought and interpretation rather than the sensory experience *per se*. If discursive walking involves a spontaneous and sensory-rich engagement with the surroundings, then conceptual walking is reflective and often planned. It involves a deliberate and reflective approach, where walking becomes a method to understand place and reveal aspects that are often overlooked in everyday life. It is this type that could serve as a method for 'gathering information, or critically building awareness' of environments (Wunderlich, 2008, p. 132). This category mainly includes expeditions and wanderings of geographers, artists and literary writers. A conceptual walk is 'choreographed' in a way that prompts critical readings and creative responses to the spaces that the walker navigates.

All three walking practices are significant in exploring people's mobile sense(s) of place, as each has its distinctive rhythm/character and they often overlap in time/space. Whereas purposive walking is habitual and entails predictable experiences, the discursive and conceptual practices of walking 'promote encounter and discovery' (Wunderlich, 2008, p. 133). The latter two could fall under Shehadeh's approach of *sarha* (2007) in its aims for liberating the spirit and knowing the land. In my research, I seek to try out such *sarhat* (plural of *sarha*) with the discursive and conceptual aspects in my methodology and research design so that both me and my research participants can rethink our understandings of space and rescript the cities we traverse. The embodied act of walking is integrated with poetry and filmmaking to capture the rhythmic dimensions of place and to examine the repertoires that underpin the young people's interactions with its elements and reflect on the development of a relational/ecological sense of self.

3.1.1.3. The Go-Along Method

The research method that combines walking with talking has a variety of names such as the go-along (Kusenbach, 2003), the mobile interview (Portrer et al, 2010) and the accompanied itinerary (Arias, 2017). Sociologist Margarethe Kusenbach (2003) introduces the 'go-along' method which aims to improve the study and understanding of people's experiences of their local residential areas, taking their specific social, cultural and historical contexts into account. While conducting an ethnographic study of Hollywood neighbourhoods, Kusenbach (2008, p. 466) identifies five

themes that the go-along method is particularly suited to explore: 1) people's perception of the environment, the knowledge and values that guide it; 2) spatial practices and how people engage with the environment; 3) personal biographies and the links to place; 4) the social web of connections between people; 5) and the various patterns of interaction. The go-along is a form of in-depth qualitative interview conducted while walking with the participant. According to Kusenbach (2003, p. 463), it lets 'fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their 'natural' outings, and – through asking questions, listening and observing – actively explore their subjects' stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment'. Offering a dynamic and context-rich understanding, the go-along as a qualitative research tool enables the researcher to examine the different dimensions of place and also understand people's perceptions, behaviours, relations and navigation within the environment. It provides an opportunity to see firsthand how urban landscapes, natural spaces, social contexts and the various environmental elements influence and shape the children's sense of place. The go-along technique is valuable to my research as it contributes to a nuanced understanding of ecological affect by gathering situated data on the children's bodily actions, physical movements and multimodal reflections. How children navigate and interpret the local landscape should spontaneously emerge from the observations and interactions taking place during walks with them.

The go-along method is a participatory methodological device that combines walking and interviews to access the participants' experiences, thoughts and feelings. A hybrid between interviewing and ethnographic observation, the go-along tool seems to overcome the shortcomings of both former methods. Conducting sit-down interviews can provide access to informants' interpretations/biographies but misses out on the areas that 'do not lend themselves to narrative accounting' such as the details of everyday environmental experience (Kusenbach, 2003, p. 462). The static nature of interview encounters does not allow for the natural sharing of perspectives either. In go-alongs/mobile interviews, there is a great deal of spontaneity and freedom when it comes to questions as 'unexpected situational elements may at any time produce triggers or new subjects of conversation' (Camponovo et al., 2021, p. 7). Walking becomes 'a catalyst of dynamic conversation' (ibid., p. 8), where research participants engage in 'a freer-flowing dialogue, moving from topic to topic, returning to previous topics, allowing unstrained gaps and pauses' (Ross et al., 2009, p. 619). There is room for silence that is not awkward during walk-alongs, which lets the body communicate through gestures and movement. Silence facilitates 'active listening', which

cannot be separated from observation in qualitative research, as it gives all parties involved in the walk enough time to reflect on thoughts. As Sara Camponovo et al. (2021, p. 9) phrase it, 'silence maintains the flow of the interaction; it signals knots and tensions; it helps strengthen the links between speakers, and is a space for negotiating what is or is not meaningful to the speaker'. What distinguishes the go-along method from the traditional interviews are the spur-of-the-moment questions intersected by moments of silence and listening that allow for an attentive observation of surroundings.

As far as solitary observation is concerned, it provides access to naturally unfolding events yet fails to understand the other participants' perceptions and interpretations of local place. Such observations might remain 'superficial, revealing more about the observer's own standpoint than anything else', writes Kusenbach (2003, p. 460). Walking with research participants, on the other hand, has the potential to dig deeper into the personal meanings that underlie their manifold engagements with the environment. The go-along method 'can also give clues as to how informants integrate memories of past events, and anticipations of the future, into the ongoing stream of their spatial experience', which seem quite difficult to find through mere interviews and observations (ibid., p. 475). It is argued that the strengths and benefits of each inquiry method accumulate when they are used in combination in the 'go-along' technique. While the go-along method might not be applicable in certain contexts where physical access or conversation is difficult, this hybrid methodological approach carries many advantages with regards to exploring how individuals connect the places of their lived experience and identities. The go-along becomes a collaborative practice that enfolds the place, the participants and the researcher.

3.1.1.4. Walking with Children and Young People

Walking presents the space to carry out research '*with* and *for* children rather than about them' and co-construct knowledge through the children's physical presence and their own words (Camponovo et al., 2021, p. 1). This go-along device addresses an ethical issue regarding how children are perceived in the research process. Children and young people are 'approached as knowledgeable participants as opposed to a "box" from which useful information is extracted' (ibid., p. 4). As a participatory form of embodied ethnography, children during go-alongs are invited as experts of their lives to provide their own perspectives, reflect on their interactions with

the environment and develop critical views. The shoulder-to-shoulder nature of walking helps mitigate power imbalances, allowing children to be seen not merely as informants but as co-producers of knowledge. Unlike traditional face-to-face interviews where the researcher's gaze is often fixed on the participants, walking side by side creates a more egalitarian atmosphere. In this setting, the focus shifts from the authority of the researcher to a shared exploration of the environment. This change in perspective allows children to feel less like passive subjects under observation and more like active collaborators in the research process. Walk-alongs, this way, empower children to express themselves more freely and to actively shape the direction of the research.

The main challenge in participatory research is to ensure and maintain a power balance between the adult researcher and child/adolescent participants. Camponovo et al. (2021) assert that walking alongside a young person can help balance the power dynamics, developing strategies that acknowledge the child/young person not just as a subject but a research partner. They point out that the 'feeling of being totally involved with their bodies and words creates a more symmetrical relationship' between them (ibid., p. 9). Just as the researcher-adult and child-adolescent-participants become walking buddies in this methodology, they are co-researchers in the process. In this collaborative process, the opinions/thoughts/experiences/feelings of the child are all taken seriously 'devoid of value judgement and with a direct connection to the child's environment' (ibid.). The expertise of children is acknowledged while walking together, as young people get the chance to reverse roles and lead the way: 'the children and young people become the guide of the adult and the adult becomes the guided' (ibid.). This point has been proven true in my walks with children of different ages, as will be illustrated in my discussion of the pilot study later (see Section 3.3).

This approach not only co-constructs knowledge with young participants but does so in 'a very concrete and sometimes even intimate way' (ibid.). As power inequalities are mitigated through the shared experience of walking, a relationship akin to friendship develops between the mixed-age walkers. It is observed (Camponovo et al., 2021; Carpiano, 2009) that walking allows the researcher to become part of the children's own community. Walking entails a crossing of boundaries in space and also in relationships (Gray and Colucci-Gray, 2019). Camponovo et al. (2021, p. 10) note how walking together fosters bonds between the researchers and the children,

creating ‘an environment conducive to intimacy’. Nurturing a relational sense of openness, walking turns from a mere research tool to a community-building practice and an act of connectedness with others in the shared environment. Walking is adopted in my research as a way to actively involve my participants in the research process and to gain deeper insights into the connections that young people make with their physical and social environment.

Walking in my process of data production is combined with poetry, which renders the walks more reflective and creative. These reflections on the dynamic environmental encounters are recorded through writing, sketching, photography and filmmaking. The different digital apps, to which young people are native, facilitate saving the multimodal data that results from the multi-sensory journey, including written texts, images, videos and maps. All of this diverse data should convey the plurality and depth of the children’s engagement with the environment.

3.2. Project-Based Learning: A Framework for Research Design

In designing my research project, walking is integrated within a Project-Based Learning (PBL) framework. This section discusses the relevance of PBL to the pedagogical design of my study and the intercultural construction of knowledge with the aid of technological tools in the process. Applied as a design approach, learning activities are organised around projects that involve students in all its stages and in decision-making. According to Markham et al. (2003, p. 4), it is a method ‘that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks’. PBL is basically an inquiry-based approach that encourages students to collaboratively investigate and critically respond to complex questions and real-life challenges. This gives students the motive to take responsibility for their own projects and learning, thereby achieving a high level of autonomy. It is argued that project work facilitates this by ‘preparing learners to approach learning in their own way, suitable to their own abilities, and preferences’ (Skehan, 1998, p. 273). Even though PBL entails the creation of an end-product, it remains a learner-centred approach that prioritises the process – ‘it is the route to achieving this end-product that makes project work so worthwhile’ (Fried-Booth, 2002, p. 6). It is the project route or the process that leads to the gradual development of the students’ critical skills while collaborating on a task (or a linked series of tasks) in the real world.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) goes far beyond merely adding projects to the curriculum. It can be effectively employed in bilingual, multilingual and multicultural settings (Stoller, 1997; 2006; 2012). Fredricka Stoller (1997, p. 3) promotes project work as a 'versatile vehicle for fully integrated language and content learning'. She establishes a theoretical foundation for the incorporation of project-based learning into language classrooms (Stoller, 2006). Project-based language learning (PBLL), as an offshoot of the general PBL approach, lends itself to an organic integration of language skills as it is based on the students' active engagement in real-world communications. For the effective implementation of PBL in language contexts, Stoller (2006, p. 24) specifies a number of conditions that include: 1) 'a process and product orientation', 2) an opportunity for students to take ownership of the project, 3) an extended period of time, 4) the integration of different skills, 5) 'a dual commitment to language and content learning', 6) the space for both student collaboration and individual work, 7) self-directed learning through the 'gathering, processing, and reporting of information from target language resources', 8) the introduction of new roles for both students and teachers, 9) the presentation of a meaningful final product, and 10) the engagement of students in reflections on the whole project with its process and product. Each of these conditions represents a link that connects with the rest of the chain where meaning is negotiated to produce a project outcome.

The above-outlined conditions are considered in my research, informing the design of after-school workshops and the direction of our sessions. One of the main reasons PBLL is implemented in my research design is its capacity to connect the learning that takes place in the context of school with the real world beyond its walls, narrowing the gap between both (Stoller, 2006; Markham, 2011). Bridging 'out-of-school learning (including encounters with popular culture) and in-school learning' has a positive impact on intercultural interaction and the construction of identity (Anderson and Macleroy, 2021, p. 236). The consideration of real-life situations is further linked to the development of active citizenship, as the meaningful learning experiences of PBL inspire action in the society/world they live in. The second reason for the choice of PBL in designing my project goals is 'the authenticity of students' experiences and the language that they are exposed to and use' during their project work (Stoller, 2006, p. 24). Authenticity characterises the different aspects of the project from tasks to materials, communications and the audiences with whom they share their product(s). For these reasons, I believe that an arts project-based approach will enable young people to reflect on their relationship with the environment and their use of language.

3.2.1. PBLL and the Digital Age: The Multilingual Digital Storytelling (MDST) Model

Studies have widely shown that the potential for project-based language learning to cross borders and connect learners/teachers around the world increases with the use of technologies (Sadler and Dooly, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Incorporating digital tools into the project is especially significant for young people who already have a great expertise in online communication. Today's children are digital natives who have grown up with technology and possess a deep understanding of it – they do not just use digital media but excel in creatively producing online content. This proficiency allows them to innovate and communicate in ways that can reach wider audiences, thereby maximising the impact of their projects. The switch to 'technology-mediated' projects has become a must with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the compulsory move to online learning. Valentina Morgana (2021, p. 87) points out that social media and digital platforms alleviated the isolation imposed by the emergency lockdown, providing students with 'an alternative social community' that they can feel part of. The digital platforms with their synchronous and asynchronous tools provide varied options for communication, collaboration, interaction and networking. In this context, this section presents an overview of the multilingual digital storytelling model (Anderson and Macleroy, 2012; 2021) that is employed for the design of my fieldwork.

Applying digital technology to PBLL, Jim Anderson and Vicky Macleroy initiated and developed the Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project (2012 - ongoing) to promote literacy education, locally and globally, across multiple sites of learning through the critical and creative use of digital media. As defined in the project handbook for teachers, 'multilingual digital storytelling is seen as a form of life writing about personal and shared experiences. As well as the multimodal focus, we emphasise the multilingual and intercultural dimension in the development of this type of literacy' (Anderson, Macleroy and Chung, 2014, p. 11). The MDST project has created a network of students (aged 6 -18) and teachers from 15 countries (Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Cyprus, Egypt, England, Germany, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Palestine, Taiwan, Turkey, USA) producing short films in over 44 languages (with English subtitles). Every year, there is a big theme focusing on social and environmental justice issues such as 'fairness', 'belonging', 'our planet', 'care, community and hope'. In challenging boundaries, Anderson and Macleroy (2021, p. 245) note the place of intergenerational learning that seamlessly occurs in the Critical Connections project as it has 'opened up funds of knowledge from parents, grandparents,

and community members supporting young people's stories, languages, and digital technology skills'. The crossing of various borders continues when young people engage with a variety of art forms, genres and media during their response to real-life issues. Consistent with PBL, the multilingual poetry and digital stories are shared at an annual film festival and could be accessed online through the project website.

The *Handbook for Teachers* (Anderson, Macleroy and Chung, 2014) breaks down the filmmaking/digital storytelling process into three stages as shown in the diagram it provides (Figure 3.1):

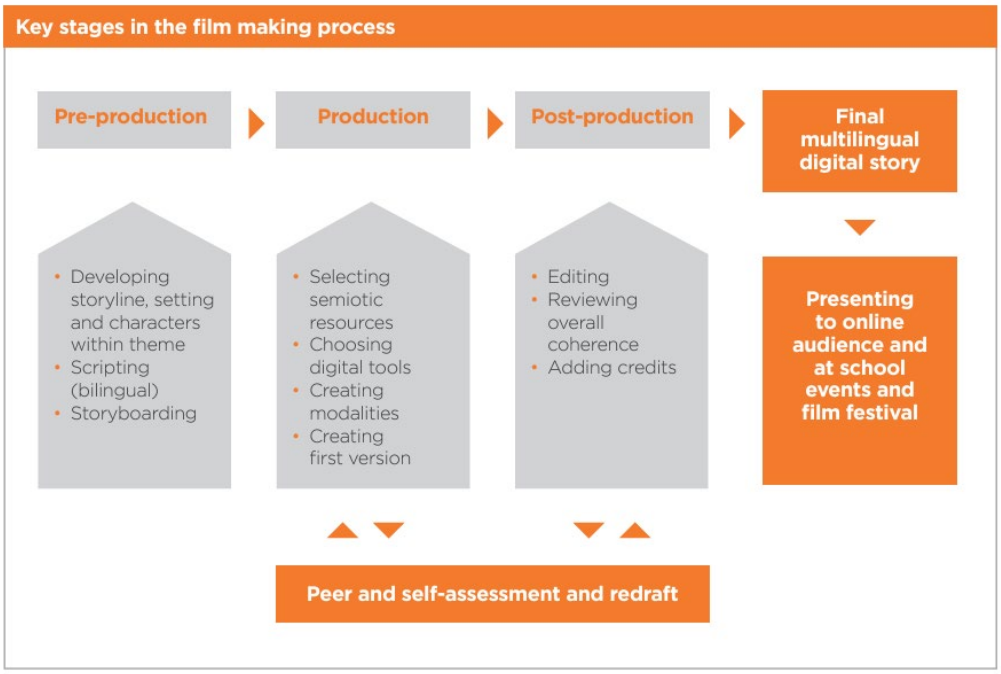

Figure 3.1: Key stages in the filmmaking process (Source: Anderson, Macleroy and Chung, 2014, p. 19)

In the pre-production stage, students first develop an understanding of what a digital story entails, brainstorm/research ideas, and do the scripting in addition to storyboarding. This stage is when young people get inspired to create their own work as they view and discuss examples of digital stories developed by other students/schools in previous years of the project. Moving to the production stage, the multimodal composition of the film starts by choosing the multimodal and multilingual resources as well as digital tools. Students use cameras/iPads/smartphones to film the different scenes and apply their knowledge of camera shots and angles. They also learn how to use

editing software to add voiceover/soundtrack and subtitles to their footage. The final editing and review of the film takes place during the post-production stage before sharing it with the local and global audience (at school and the festival). It should be noted, however, that these key stages do not necessarily work in a linear way; there is a common back-and-forth process that involves script revisions, re-shootings, image edits, voice re-recordings, etc.

The Critical Connections model provides a strong case for incorporating digital media into a project-based framework to revitalise language learning. Given its multidimensional nature, such a model demonstrates how digital storytelling with its 'creative use of technology' enhances project-based language learning (Anderson and Macleroy, 2021, p. 232). Throughout the filmmaking stages, there is a purposeful use of language integrated into the process – 'attention to language is an integral and iterative component of the model', to use the words of Stoller (2012, p. 41). What distinguishes this multilingual digital storytelling project is the special attention it pays to the area of heritage language and multilingualism. It highlights the value of digital storytelling in the context of migrant learners; it has the potential to 'bridge languages, cultures, generations, and communities' (Anderson and Macleroy, 2021, p. 235). Drawing upon a view of 'language-and-culture learning as a translingual-transcultural process', the model acknowledges the participants' different 'linguistic repertoires and the porous boundaries between language varieties so that translanguaging is perceived as a natural and potentially productive communicative strategy' (ibid., p. 238). This way, digital storytelling is recognised as a tool that creates a 'third space', fostering cultural hybridity and the development of 'transnational literacies' (ibid.). The multilingual poetry and digital storytelling project is particularly meaningful to young migrants, as their process of becoming poets/storytellers/filmmakers allows them to exercise their agency, voice their opinions, own their narratives and practice a citizenship of the world.

My research is embedded within the Critical Connections project, with my participants taking part in the project theme 'Our Planet' at Goldsmiths (2021). Conducting research within this global community is helpful in examining how the multisensory and multimodal interactions of young people with the environment through poetry and digital storytelling can foster ecoliteracy, intercultural and interspecies responsibility and an ethics of care (see Chapter 2). As young people produce multilingual poetry and digital videos, they should be able to express themselves and their communities and to realise 'the power of their own voice in the media' (Lambert, 2013, p. 4). Joe

Lambert (2013), founder of the digital storytelling movement, refers to the critical role of digital story work in the process of identity formation in the twenty-first century. Lambert (ibid., p. 12) acknowledges the dangerous influence of 'media ubiquity' on the fragmentation of identities and the need to 'wean ourselves from screen culture twitch'. However, the solution is not found in the total avoidance of digital tools 'but by ascribing more humanistic possibilities to these tools'. As shown in this section, the Critical Connections model for multilingual digital storytelling could integrate digital media not only for language-and-culture learning but also for environmental awareness. In this sense, this pedagogical approach is instrumental for guiding the overall structure of my workshops with young people.

3.3. Research Design

In designing my research, I have attempted to synthesise critical pedagogy with the transformative potential of ecopoetics as discussed in my theoretical framework (see Chapter 2). Matthewman in 'Ecocritical Approaches to Writing Nature Poetry' (2013, p. 77) outlines the ecocritical process of teaching poetry, arguing that 'working outside the classroom in a particular natural or built environment creates a shared stimulus of experience and place which can facilitate collaborative writing'. As Orr states in *Ecological Literacy* (1992, p.86), the 'capacity to observe nature with insight' develops when mindscape is merged with landscape. Unlike school-based pedagogies, an ecocritical approach to the teaching/learning of poetry emphasises the 'interplay between reading and writing texts and interacting with the environment directly' (Matthewman, 2013, p. 76). Extending Matthewman's 'ecocritical pedagogy' experiment in my own research, I attempt to explore how migrant children express both their environmental experiences and personal identity through poetry and filmmaking. My research exploration of the young people's poetic encounters with 'our planet', and the elements of nature, goes through two stages: a pilot study in London and the main study in Istanbul. I begin by discussing the pilot study to illustrate how my initial observations and fieldnotes informed the design of the subsequent main study.

3.3.1. Pilot Study: To Follow Participants through a Maze

I commenced my research with a pilot study that was conducted over the autumn term of 2020 to test out the ecocritical approach to poetry with 9- to 12-year-old children of Palestinian heritage in London. I had the opportunity to walk along with Jana (Year 8) and Hamza (Year 5), the Palestinian sister and brother, in their North London neighbourhood and nearby parks. I followed them down the streets, up the trees and through a green maze (Figure 3.2). I also joined them later in May 2021 on a protest outside Downing Street, against the Israeli assault on Palestinians in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, where both children were actively chanting. This significant activist aspect of their life, however, was made clear from the very first walk in the park when they were keen to recount the history of their grandparents and family house in the Palestinian city of Nablus. The walking experience proved instrumental in unfolding the children's life stories in addition to understanding the nature of my fieldwork. As I commented in my fieldnotes on the first walk with Jana through the Brent Lodge Millennium Maze (22 Aug 20):

> That was half an hour of going along with Jana. I was interested in finding out how the maze setting would affect our conversation, especially that I am not a friend of hers but a complete stranger. There were several times when she shouted 'dead end' – the flow of the conversation might have got diverted then to new courses, but it did not stop. Since we were walking through narrow passages, one of us had to be in front of the other. I let her take the lead in guiding me through the labyrinth of her mind. I did not know where exactly I was going, yet it all added to the thrill of the experience. The maze works well as a symbol for my first fieldwork.

Figure 3.2: Walk-along with Jana in the pilot study (August 2020)

My observations of Jana and Hamza's multisensory engagement with the environment informed the outdoor activities suggested for my main fieldwork with other migrant children. During the two park walks we went on, the children showed an interest in a range of physical activities such as climbing trees, collecting natural treasures, running around, rolling down grass hills, accompanied either by shouts of amusement or moments of quiet and contemplation (Figure 3.3). These captured moments in Figure 3.3 have shaped my view of walking as a methodology of joy in the sense that going out in nature results in pleasant playful and intimate encounters with the environment. The pilot study highlighted how walking for children is a highly embodied practice that involves the whole body in exciting adventures and not just putting one foot after the other along a linear path. The spontaneity of such experiences could reveal the children's perceptions of their physical and social environment. As the children seemed to perceive the environment with their bodies, I found it more effective to take pictures and record videos rather than just rely on anecdotal fieldnotes.

Figure 3.3: A collection of pictures showing the variety of children's spontaneous activities during our walks (2020)

The pilot study demonstrated that the walking method when owned and led by children themselves was helpful in cultivating ecological connections that move between the personal, local and global. The physical engagement with the environment translates into poetic reflections and creative art. For instance, when Jana realised that the sap of the tree she climbed stayed on her hand, she commented that the sap has become 'a part of [her] skin' (Figure 3.4). This physical merger seeps into her writing that takes the form of a dialogue with the tree and comes in response to reading Mahmoud Darwish's poem 'هكذا قالت الشجرة المهملة' (So Said the Neglected Tree). Jana gives her piece the title 'Circle of Life' and writes: 'we exchange life between the two of us' (Figure 3.5). Jana's encounter with the 'soul' of the tree alerted me to the power of touch in reviving a sense of wonder and expanding the ecological sense of self. In other words, this

example shows the process of identity sedimenting into texts over a period of time (Rowsell and Pahl, 2007).

Figure 3.4: The sap of the tree on Jana's hand (August 2020)

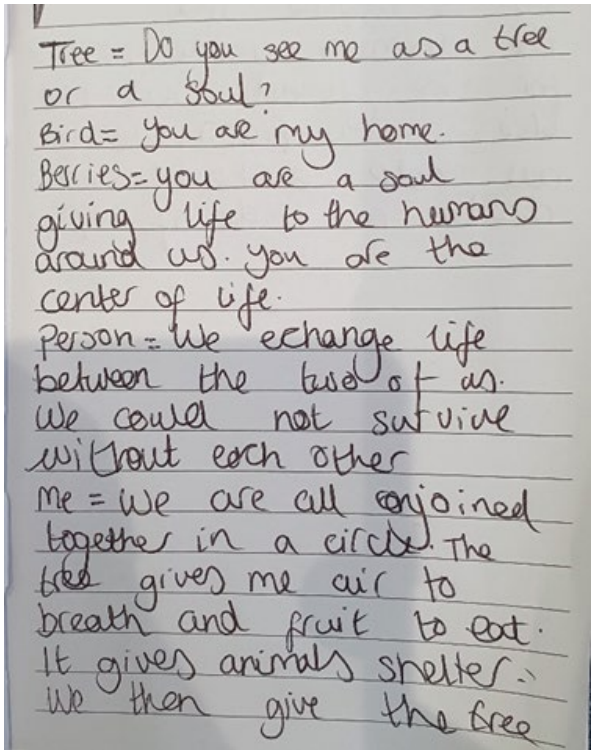

Figure 3.5: Jana's piece 'Circle of Life' written in response to Darwish's poem 'the Neglected Tree' (November 2020)

The link between language, self-exploration and ecoliteracy was initially explored during the pilot study phase of my research. The selection of poetry we read together explored themes of displacement, belonging and transitions. It included Arabic poetry by Mahmoud Darwish and other English works such as Imtiaz Dharker's 'Front Door', Rudyard Kipling's 'The Way through the Woods' and some poems from Robert Macfarlane's *Magic Spells*. The exploratory discussions with Jana and Hamza about those pieces have influenced and helped me design my workshops based on real observations of children's likes and dislikes. While Hamza was into the mystery offered by hidden paths in the woods, Jana expressed her interest in poems with a multicultural focus as she could relate to them. Relatable poetry was then a criteria for selecting readings at the workshops. They both showed an interest in texts that provoked their memories of place and triggered conversations about different cultures. As Jana suggested she would introduce me to

Palestinian Dabka songs, I was alerted to how important it is for participants to bring in the poetry they would like to share and become workshop designers in the research context and perhaps curriculum-makers in the school context. I carried these observations over to the second phase of my research. Piloting my research methods and texts was essential to consider what the participants would find interesting and meaningful.

3.3.2. Main Study: Development and Changes

The main study was conducted with a group of ten children in Istanbul and built on what worked well during the pilot study. In line with a project-based design for the series of workshops, I found the idea of creating anthologies written and compiled by children themselves to be inspiring and motivating. *England: Poems from a School* (2018) provided an example of anthology created by young people who come from different migrant (and refugee) backgrounds and range between eleven and nineteen years of age. The principle that binds the anthology and all its different authors is that 'poetry is for everyone' (Clanchy, 2018, p. xiv). A look at the table of contents alone tells how significant issues of memory, language, place and belonging are for children. Among the titles varying from 'I Don't Remember' and 'How to Forget Your Mother's Language' to the twice repeated 'I Come From' and 'Homesick', there are 'The Doves of Damascus', 'Jasmine', and 'The Return'. The anthology is the accumulated work of students taking part in the after-school workshop led by Kate Clanchy, Writer in Residence at the school and editor of the anthology. In her introduction to the book, Clanchy points out the multilingual nature of the school where more than thirty languages are spoken and notes how this diversity is reflected in the musicality and originality of children's writing.[6] These are 'poems made in a new English, one inflicted by all the poets' languages, all their poetries and gifts, and by the mass migration of the twenty-first century' (ibid., p. xvii). The process of writing according to Clanchy is based on hearing 'a poem in English'; 'all we do in my workshops: read a poem, then write one', she states. While I agree with Clanchy's philosophy for the anthology, I do not quite agree with her approach. The writing process does not seem as simple as she describes it. In my workshops, it certainly involves a lot more than just reading a poem in English.

[6] Later in 2021, Clanchy was criticised for employing racial stereotypes to depict students in her memoir.

My workshops with a group of ten young people based in Istanbul ran weekly from late-February until June 2021 (14 online meetings in total). For a complete breakdown of the workshops and the detailed plan from Week One through Week Fourteen, see Appendix D. The project was split into two parts: poetry and filmmaking. The series of poetry workshops had a 3-part structure: 1) poetry reading, 2) creative writing, and 3) a follow-up outdoor task for children to do on their own. It took the form of an ecopoetic quest that encouraged participants to wonder how it feels to fly, to follow a river and to go on a hunt for the signs of spring. Each of the workshops was a meeting point for a variety of Arabic and English poetic voices related to the weekly theme. Arabic folksongs (of Algerian, Palestinian and Syrian origin) had a fundamental role in arousing the participants' interest in poetry. In addition to reading poetry by well-known poets like Ahmad Shawqi, Mahmoud Darwish, Michael Rosen, Mary Oliver, we brought in poetry written by poets in our families. As part of the ecopoetic quest, participants were invited to go on nature walks, the focus of which would change every week. The direct sensory experience of nature was then channelled through writing and filmmaking. What started as an investigative walk in my pilot study has become a poetic practice used by the children to survive the lockdown; to register emotions, memories and dreams; to express action and make sense of tenses; to question their relationship with the social and natural worlds.

With the COVID-19 successive lockdowns, my fieldwork which was initially planned using face-to-face methods had to turn to a remote mode. Doing fieldwork in a pandemic was challenging as I had to rethink my research design and adapt my methods to the pandemic constraints on travel and physical meetings. Moving from face-to-face to distant fieldwork, I tried to use a digital 'go-along' method which was enabled by asynchronous as well as synchronous mobile technologies that could capture events as they happened in real time. To facilitate 'real-time co-presence and interactivity' (Lupton, 2020), the WhatsApp platform allowed us to go beyond the limits of our one-hour Zoom meetings and share extra poems, pictures and videos at different points of the week. Participants were asked to take photos and make videos using their smartphones during the walks that they could then share with the rest of the group online (Copes et al., 2018). WhatsApp was used to keep the online discussions going and to give all participants access to each other's texts and responses. Recent studies tested smartphone messaging as a research method (Kaufmann and Peli, 2019), and some found that 'WhatsApp group chat does have the potential to generate well-elaborated responses and group interaction, particularly among younger, digitally fluent

participants' (Chen and Neo, 2019, p. 1). This was combined with a traditional diary method (Hyers, 2018) and writing journals that participants kept during their walks to record their encounters and free-flowing reflections in any form they preferred: written, visual or audio-visual. The students' digital journal entries and WhatsApp messages were helpful in gathering their perceptions of the physical-social environment and understanding their connections to different places. These methods also facilitated the children's work towards the final products of a poetry anthology and short film.

3.3.2.1. Setting

The main study was conducted online through Safir International School (SIS) located in Istanbul. The school has around 32 nationalities, and the majority of the students come from the Middle East. Following the Arab Spring, the school was founded in 2015 by a group of Egyptian and Turkish educators to meet the needs of Arab children living in Istanbul. The school website in 2021 included a statement about its location in Istanbul 'that bridges the West and the East', elaborating how the city has become 'a destination for Arab and Western Muslims who are seeking top educational opportunities while maintaining their identity and roots'. An emphasis on diversity as a core value within the institution was also expressed in an interview with the school principal who linked this to their language policy. There are three main languages taught as part of the school curriculum: English, Arabic and Turkish. English remains the main medium of instruction in the American programme they offer from Pre-K to Grade 12. The school principal explains that '90% of the school day is run in English' and that it is the medium of instruction (interview, August 2021). Arabic is a 4-credit class since most students speak Arabic at home and their parents are worried about its loss. The variety of Arabic dialects spoken by the students is recognised in school orientations and cultural activities. To enable the students to mingle with the Turkish society, Turkish is taught with an equal number of credit hours to Arabic. As the school website maintains, 'SIS is multicultural. Students from any nationality can join the school and study the core subjects in English, study Arabic as a second language and Turkish as third language'. [7]

[7] Safir International School Website: https://safir-school.com/who-we-are

The school operated entirely online for the duration of my fieldwork (late February to early June 2021) because Istanbul was under a full national lockdown due to a surge in COVID-19 cases. The students accessed our Zoom workshops using their school accounts, which were administered by the school principal and supervised by class teachers. With the principal and teachers present, the online meetings turned into a microcosm of the social dynamics found in the original school environment. While the school appears as the main research setting, my research is not school-based as the ecocritical approach that I follow seeks to examine the 'interplay between reading and writing texts and interacting with the environment directly' (Matthewman, 2013, p. 76). Adopting the digital go-along method, several settings could become part of the research – including the participants' homes, gardens and other places they walk and visit. My study could therefore be considered 'multi-sited' in the sense that I attempt to interrogate how children on the move relate to the environment, tracing their movement across different places to understand their experiences and texts (Marcus, 1995).

3.3.2.2. Participants

The school played a vital role in recruiting the participants for my study. I first approached the school administration via email, and the target group of ten students (ages twelve to fourteen) was agreed during a meeting with the school principal. Another meeting was arranged with Grade 7 and Grade 8 class teachers to discuss the project and get access to students who might be interested. Through the school, detailed written information about the research was made available to both children and parents as they gave consent to their participation. Five children were seventh graders and the other five were eighth graders. There was only one boy who joined the project, and the nine other participants were girls. My group of participants was a diverse group of children in terms of their place of origin and migration experience. Nine out of the ten students came from different parts of the Middle East: two from Palestine, one from Lebanon, two from Syria, two from Iraq, one from Yemen, and one from Egypt. One girl was Australian and spoke very little Arabic. Whereas some children resided in Turkey for as long as six years, other children were newcomers with less than six months in the country. This broad spectrum of national backgrounds was visible among the staff as represented by five teachers who had Egyptian, Syrian and Australian nationalities.

3.3.3. Ethical Considerations

My target participant group and their wellbeing were carefully considered when designing this doctoral project. Prior to commencing the research, ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths (see Appendix A). This approval ensured that the study complied with the *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018) and 'Good practice in Educational Research Writing' (2000) published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). The policies of Safir School were also fully adhered to throughout my fieldwork. The research proposal along with consent forms (Appendices B, C and D) were reviewed and approved to ensure that the research process was in line with ethical standards.

An important consideration in my study is the involvement of young children. Given that they were minors, they could not provide informed consent independently. Parents received detailed information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix C), while children were given a child-friendly information sheet (see Appendix B) to explain the research in an accessible manner. Assent was sought directly from the children to respect their agency and right to choice. All participants were provided with my contact details for any questions or concerns.

Another issue closely related to the age of participants is their vulnerability. I addressed this by prioritising the safety and wellbeing of children throughout the study. Age-appropriate and developmentally suitable methods were employed in all workshops and activities. Recognising the sensitive nature of topics related to war and displacement, the poetry workshops created a supportive environment which allowed children to explore their experiences safely. These workshops were designed with the intension to benefit the children and help them overcome distress during a challenging time. I was prepared to offer immediate support, and the school teaching team was present to offer help if needed. Safeguarding young participants was one of my ethical responsibilities as a researcher.

Confidentiality is another critical aspect of protecting research participants. Whenever audio or video recordings were made, it was with the participants' full knowledge and consent. Data management followed strict protocols: data was securely stored on a password-protected computer and only shared with the participants' permission. While I aimed to avoid fully identifying participants in my thesis, referring to them only by their first names, complete anonymity was not

preferred. My participants and their guardians were informed and supportive of using real names in the poetry anthology and film festival, ensuring proper credit and recognition for the children's creative work. I encountered this ethical dilemma of balancing the need for confidentiality with the desire to credit participants for their work. Such dilemmas were solved at the outset of the project through maintaining open discussions with the school, parents and children as decision-makers and co-researchers.

3.4. Data Collection

Data was collected mainly through video recordings of Zoom meetings, chat logs and children's own work (poems, notes, photography, illustrations and a collective short film). Multimodal data collection was one of the advantages of using online synchronous video-based platforms such as Zoom – it was easy to record meetings and save the chat transcript. Field notes were taken during several unrecorded calls with teachers where we reflected on the process as we moved along. With digital ethnographic observation, I could look at the interactions in our online environments and the children's use of educational technologies in their project-based learning. After the conclusion of the afterschool workshops, online interviews were conducted with some children to help contextualise and interpret the pieces they had shared.

Research stage	Method	Description	Data
pilot study Aug - Dec 2020 (2 Palestinian siblings in London)	walk-alongs	1 outing w/ the whole family in Hanwell Park 1 walk w/ the older sister and brother in Silkstream park 2 house visits 1 protest outside Downing Street	fieldnotes photos a few audio + video recordings children's pieces of writing and drawings

main study March – June 2021 (10 students from Grades 7 & 8 at Safir Intl. School, Istanbul)	poetry & filmmaking workshops	11 zoom meetings (1 hour each)	video recordings fieldnotes
	poetry writing	a collection of 44 pieces written by the students	poems and workshop transcripts WhatsApp messages
	multimodal text making	drawings photos a short film made by all the students	image/audio/video files
	informal conversations	calls and chats w/ 2 teachers	fieldnotes WhatsApp text and voice messages
	semi-structured interviews	4 student interviews (2 hours each) 1 interview w/ headteacher (1 hour) 1 follow-up student interview a year after the project in 2022 (30 mins)	video + audio recordings

3.4.1. Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, 'rhizoanalysis' serves as a methodological anchor for dealing with data (Alvermann, 2000; Masny, 2012), diverging from the traditional modes of qualitative inquiry. Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997; 2002; 2009) has extensively critiqued 'conventional' data analysis, pointing out problems with its linear manner (of collecting, coding, categorising, analysing and interpreting), its privileging focus on words/written texts and dependence on interpretivism. According to St. Pierre (2002, p. 404), what we encounter is rather 'transgressive data' that becomes 'uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category', reflecting the complexity and intricacy of observed phenomena. The different types of data collected in this research are thus viewed as 'stems and nodes that are constantly disrupted and rearranged into changed configurations of thought' (Knight, 2009, p. 54). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of rhizome, multiplicity and assemblage discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2), rhizoanalysis provides an approach that allows for a non-linear and non-hierarchical examination of data. As I acknowledge the fluidity, variety and interconnectedness of my data, I attempt to follow this analytical approach that Donna Alvermann (2000, p. 118) describes as 'rhizomatous map making'.

To map the transactions between children and the world within a rhizomatic frame, I integrate the use of close reading and multimodal analysis tools which together provide depth and dimensionality to the data examination process. I start the analysis with a close reading of all the literary texts, including the poetry we shared at the workshops and the texts that children produced. Through a deep engagement with each text, I examine language use, word choices, stylistic features, thematic elements and intertextual links (Richards, 1929). My close reading of texts involves repeated readings – alone; from the perspectives of children when reading with them; also applying the ecocritical lenses referred to in Chapter Two. This allows for a nuanced exploration of the multiple layers of meaning and the thematic threads connecting different segments of the data. Simultaneously, multimodal analysis broadens the scope beyond written texts to investigate other modes of communication such as visual images, audio, video, gestures and spatial elements (Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt and Kress, 2010). This tool not only explores how different modes of communication interact but also contributes to the creation of meaning assemblages from a wide range of data sources.

The analytical approach to rhizoanalysis that I use here, informed by both close reading and multimodal analysis, offers a comprehensive methodological framework for exploring how young migrants develop their ecological identities through critical and creative engagements. These integrated methods of analysis are in line with the 'cyclical and iterative' process of identity sedimentation into texts, which Jennifer Rowsell and Kate Pahl (2007, p. 395) describe in terms of 'intertextually linked clusters or sequences of texts and artifacts cross boundaries of modality and media in their meaning effects'. By embracing the multiplicity of interpretations, connections, contradictions and tensions within the data, the study aims to draw a map of children's poetic encounters with the natural world as well as to shed light on the different processes of creating what Jim Cummins and Margaret Early (2011) call 'identity texts'.

*

In this chapter, I have laid out the methodology employed throughout my research project with children. I explained my rationale for choosing participatory research methods that aim to mitigate hierarchy and power issues within the research environment. Walking as a mode of embodied ethnography has been explored in relation to different cultural and philosophical traditions, signalling its liberatory, multi-sensory and reflective qualities. The discussion has focused on methods of walking with children to collaboratively produce knowledge. Following project-based language learning as a pedagogical framework, I have outlined my research design which broadly aligns with the Multilingual Digital Storytelling model. In this chapter, I have traced the development of my approach to research through the two phases of a pilot study and the subsequent main study. Finally, I have introduced the sources of data and methods of analysis used in the following chapters.

4. Becoming-*with* the 'Breeze':
Avian Aesthetics and Ecological Identity

> Every wind that blows makes a difference in earth, water, and fire. Each change in air matters in the fabric of existence. It has the gift of movement … Swirling and flowing in multifaceted forms, as sky, wind, and breath, air is the primordial abode of life and a shaping presence of aesthetic and environmental imagination.
>
> (Oppermann and Iovino, 2015, p. 311)

In the first part of the thesis, the aim to chart how migrant young people develop a sense of ecological identity through poetry was laid out in relation to existing theory and to the adopted methodology. Following the discussion of the theoretical framework and research methods in Chapters Two and Three, the data analysis is carried out in the second part of the thesis which comprises Chapters Four, Five and Six. As previously mentioned in the introduction, the data analysis chapters are structured according to the elements of nature: air, water and earth.

This chapter is concerned with the element of air as it propels the children's poetic quest that culminates in the production of a short film entitled *Breeze*. Along their ecopoetic journey, young people discover the 'breeze' as an elemental force that generates and gives form to their ecological expressions of identity. In this context, I make a general reference to elemental ecocriticism as a mode of material ecocritical theory that recognises 'the agency of the elemental' and turns 'the elements into matters of concern, not only in terms of their ecological significance but also in terms of their profound effects on material imagination' (Oppermann and Iovino, 2015, p. 315). Using an elemental ecocritical framing (see Chapter 2), this chapter attempts to investigate how the 'breeze' becomes an essential source of both the material imagination that paints a variety of literary forms and the affective involvements with the environment.

I address the main question of my study on how migrant children perceive and represent their ecological identities in terms of the flow of air/breeze through the textual body of artworks. I therefore focus on the second session in my series of workshops, in which my participants explored their relationship with birds in their cultures and environments mainly through poetry reading/writing and birdwatching. This workshop was designed to investigate how migrant

students become-*with* air through a close interaction with literary and real birds. Stephen Moss (2023, p. 3) identifies two main reasons for the human fascination with birds, two aspects that represent their exceptional contact with air as a habitat and element: 'their ability to fly, and their gift of song'. Workshop Two presented the space for students to reflect on this 'ability of birds to take to the air and soar high into the skies' (Moss, ibid.). Following the children's own responses to the hypothetical question 'what is it like to be a bird?', the data analysis revealed themes that are connected with the presence or absence of air (see Chapter 3). This chapter maps the process of developing an ecological identity across four emerging themes: song and silence; flight and freedom; communication and connection; ease and relief. Each of the four sections starts with a close reading of one of the poems shared during the workshop and proceeds to examine its traces in the students' responses and creative work. The textual analysis leads to a discussion of how the aesthetics of language and avian poetics of migration intersect in the students' meaning-/identity-making, underscoring a tendency towards what Stacy Alaimo (2015, p. 307) calls 'an elemental sense of the world'.

4.1. Song and Silence

4.1.1. What Is It Like to Be a Nightingale?: A Turkish Ode and an Arabic Fable

Since my participants have all been residing in Istanbul, a background of Turkish literature and culture seemed appropriate as a springboard for and supplement to the workshops. The WhatsApp group chat made it clear that the students have had no knowledge of Turkish poetry about birds - 'I currently don't know any Turkish poems at all'; 'I don't believe I am aware of any at the moment'; 'I actually have no clue of any Turkish poems or folksongs about birds' (Safir students, March 2021). Upon the recommendation of a Turkish friend, we viewed on WhatsApp an English translation of 'Bülbül Kasidesi' ('Ode to a Nightingale') by Yunus Emre, the famous 13th-century poet. As one of the most influential figures in Turkish literature, Emre's poetry served as an introduction to the prevalent motif of the nightingale in Turkish (and Eastern) folk literature:

Bilirim âşıksın güle	I see you feel for the rose,
Gülün hâlinden kim bile	Who'd know of the rose?
Bahçedeki gonca güle	Beating around the rose bush, are you
Dolaşıp söz atma bülbül	whispering your song to the budding rose?

Ötme bülbül ötme bülbül	Don’t you fly away sweet nightingale
Derdi derde katma bülbül	Don’t add fuel to this fire
Benim derdim bana yeter,	My plight is enough for me
Bir de sen dert etme bülbül.	Don’t you add to this too, sweet nightingale

(Emre, translated by Lyrics Translate)

The nightingale, as it appears in Emre’s song, takes root in the Persian myth of a mute nightingale that falls in love with a rose. Being mute, he is not able to return the greetings of the rose who angrily decides not to talk to the nightingale anymore. In the midst of his sorrow, the nightingale prays to God and supplicates for a voice. God then grants the nightingale the most beautiful voice in the whole universe. So he goes back singing his love to the rose, but she refuses to listen to him. At night, the rose regrets her harsh attitude and cries. Seeing the tears on her petals, the nightingale rushes to hug the rose only to be stabbed by its thorns. The nightingale dies, dyeing the rose with the redness of his blood. This has been the foundational myth for the metaphor of the nightingale and the rose commonly used in Persian, Turkish and Arabic literature.

To trace this image of the nightingale back to its Persian root, one might look at *The Conference of the Birds* (Mantiq al-Tayr) by Persian poet Farid al-Din Attar (1177). Attar’s epic poem chronicles the long story of thirty birds who set off on a quest to find the Simurgh, a legendary bird that symbolises God in Sufi mysticism. In the poem, the nightingale is reluctant to join the quest because of his attachment to the rose. He describes the extent of this love in his dialogue with the hoopoe:

> My love is for the rose; I bow to her;
> From her dear presence I could never stir.
> If she should disappear the nightingale
> Would lose his reason and his song would fail,

(Attar, translated by Darbandi & Davis, 2005)

The nightingale's account in Attar's poem draws a link between beauty, love and finding one's voice. When the rose that represents love is gone, the nightingale loses its voice. He regains his ability to sing once his love returns:

> When love speaks in the soul my voice replies
> In accent plangent as the ocean's sighs.
> When winter comes I see my love has gone –
> I'm silent then, and sing no lover's song!
> But when the springs return and she is there
> Diffusing musky perfumes everywhere
> I sing again, and tell the secrets of
> My aching heart, dissolving them in love.
>
> (Attar, translated by Darbandi & Davis, 2005)

Like Attar (12th c.), Emre's ode to the nightingale (13th c.) also acknowledges this correlation between singing and love: 'I see you are in love with the rose / … / whispering your song to the budding rose' ('Lyrics Translate'). The sympathy sensed in Emre's lines allows the audience to imagine the experience of the addressee in the poem, destabilising the opposition between us/them. Emre identifies with the nightingale as he wonders: 'are those gardens your home? / is your plight just as mine?' The poet's plight is not only the same but is triggered by the sorrowful tune of the nightingale as stressed in the chorus: 'don't add fuel to this fire / My plight is enough for me / don't you add to this too' (ibid.). Both the poet and the nightingale appear to be bound by the same agony and their quest for love – which is the ultimate truth in Sufism: 'as Yunus adores you, / he claims there is no other like you, / with his twilight mantra, chanting: "truth, truth"' (ibid.).

The issue of the nightingale's voice, in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense of speaking up and expressing one's thoughts/feelings, has been at the core of our workshop. The second Saturday workshop (7 March 2021) started with reading the Arabic verse fable 'البلابل التي رباها البوم' ('The Nightingales Raised by Owls') written by Egyptian poet laureate Ahmad Shawqi around the years 1892 and 1893. Even though this poem does not mention the nightingale and rose couple, it refers to the early muteness of the nightingale in the Persian myth. It also has intertextual links to Attar's *The Conference of Birds* as Shawqi employs a dialogue between the characters of King Solomon

and his designated messenger, the hoopoe. In addition to the traces of the Eastern tradition, the argument of the fable seems to be based on the avian antagonism that makes up the medieval English debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* (12th c).

أنبئت أن سليمان الزمان ومن ... أصبى الطيور، فناجته، وناجاها

I was told about Solomon, the sultan of time, who apprenticed
the birds; to him they whispered and in them he confided.

أعطى بلابله يوماً –يؤدبها ... لحرمة عنده- للبوم يرعاها

He once gave his nightingales a lesson – a chastisement
for a wrongdoing – abandoning them to the owls' trust.

واشتاق يوماً من الأيام رؤيتها ... فأقبلت وهي أعصى الطير أفواها

One day, he longed to see the nightingales.
They approached him - those most powerful of mouths

أصابها العي، حتى لا اقتدار لها ... بأن تبث نبي الله شكواها

They suffered such an ailment that they had no power left
to complain of their suffering to the prophet.

فنال سيدها من دائها غضب ... وود لو أنه بالذبح داواها

Their illness fuelled their master's anger
that he wished to heal them with slaughter.

فجاءه الهدهد المعهود معتذراً ... عنها، يقول لمولاه ومولاها:

Then came the well-known hoopoe apologising
to his master on their behalf, saying:

بلابل الله لم تخرس، ولا ولدت ... خرساً، ولكن بوم الشؤم رباها

God's nightingales neither shut up nor were they born
mute, but the ill-omened owls just raised them.

(Shawqi, translation mine)

In the workshop, I attempted to follow Shawqi's method of dialogic reading with young people, which he explains in the preface to his volume of poetry (Shawqi, 1926/2012, p. 8; translated by Esmael in Shahwan, 2017, p. 43): 'I began by regularly reading every subsequent two or three fables to young Egyptian children. To my delight they grasped that instantly and found it amusing; and even nicely laughed at most of it.' Before reading the fable, we discussed the hypothetical question: 'what if nightingales were raised by owls?'. One of the students (Mohammed), however, asked to first play a video of a nightingale so that they, as he said, could imagine the scenario of the poem. His request signalled a need to get in contact with the real bird as a pre-requisite for an effective engagement with the imaginary one in the fable. This mediated experience of real nightingales, as represented by the video, emphasises the role of multimodality in shaping the children's perceptions of the world today. Searching YouTube for a nightingale, the students chose a video titled 'Singing nightingale. The best bird song'. After listening to the nightingale singing, the students engaged in a conversation about their *what-if* projections on the nightingales being raised by owls (7 March 2021):

> **Salwa**: I think they'll probably not be able to *sing* or they're just gonna make *sounds* like owls instead because they'd get affected by them.
> **S**: You said they won't be able to sing, why?
> **Salwa**: If no one is gonna teach them, how would they know?
> **S**: But they might copy the sounds of the owls …
> **Mohammed:** It's kind of weird because they [owls] do these loud and weird *voices*.

The participants' answers and responses to the title of the poem during the workshop all revolved around 'sounds' and 'voices'. They rightly predicted that the nightingale would lose its ability to sing, and their reasoning behind this prediction is interesting. The conversation reveals their understanding of the issue of voice, as both Salwa and Mohammed differentiate between the ability 'to sing' and the mere act of making 'sounds'. According to them, genuine singing is opposed to the copying of sounds. Salwa's argument refers to the strong effect of the environment on the individual nightingales – when they get raised by the owls, 'they'd get affected by them'. Singing, in her opinion, is not granted but something to be acquired and learned. Salwa points out to the lack of this learning environment that enables singing – 'If no one is gonna teach them, how would they know?', she argues.

Mohammed shares a similar view, focusing on the negative influence of the owls. He describes their voices as 'loud and weird' in a tone suggesting that both qualities are not desirable. This pre-reading impression persists after reading the fable. In his response to my question: 'Is there anything that struck you in the poem?', Mohammed comments on the total transformation that the nightingales had undergone. 'When the owls started to raise it [the nightingale] and he [Solomon] wanted to see it back, it was kind of the *worst* birds of all time', Mohammed says. In Mohammed's portrayal of the birds as 'the worst', he appears to be drawing a sharp contrast with the characterisation he encountered earlier in the video title 'the best bird song'. Mohammed's comment points out the paradox of Solomon's punishment of the nightingales presented in the poem, when an intended 'chastisement' turns into a startling 'illness'.

Even though the fable seems to maintain the common bird stereotypes, e.g. 'بوم الشؤم' ('ill-omened owls') that featured in the students' pre-reading discussion. Mohammed's comment indicates how the reading of the fable might lead to questioning authority, as represented in the character of Solomon. It seems for the reader that the omniscient narrator's 'superior knowledge' of Solomon's inner thoughts/emotions (e.g. anger) helps in destabilising the dynamics of power between Solomon's authority and the nightingale's muteness. A dialogic engagement with the poem opens the space to rethink the roots of such associations and consider the possible changes in representation. The students might not have got enough time during the online meeting to discuss all their opinions regarding Shawqi's poem, but they had the time and space to represent birds and the interactions between them differently in their own creative writing – as will be discussed in the following section.

4.1.2. 'The Bird Is Gone': Silence in the Students' Poetry

After reading a mixture of Arabic (Shawqi's 'Nightingale') and English poems (Rosen's 'Seagulls' and Mucha's 'Albatross'), the second part of the online workshop invited the students to use the writing prompt 'If I were a bird …'. It was striking to find the resonance of the mute nightingales' plight in the children's creative writing. A number of participants further explored the idea of 'voice' and 'silence' in their own writing and thinking *with* birds. Reemas takes the ominous lack of birdsong as a point of departure for her thriller piece where the shadow of death looms out of darkness (13 March 2021):

as it started getting darker and darker outside
the birds stopped making any voice
it sounded so calm that i can hear an echo
suddenly all the lights turned off
and there she was
a girl lying in the middle of a street
with blood coming out of her

The graphic description of the girl lying on the street is given no explanation; the writing abruptly stops just as the birds stop singing. The lines convey an overall breathless state for the girl and the birds. This correlation that the poem draws could be read in light of the lack of air that students complained about in the collective film *Breeze* as will be discussed later in this chapter (see Section 4.4). Without air/breeze, as implied in Reemas's writing, the birds/girls lack the ability to speak or sing.

The motif of the silent or missing bird is found recuring in Hanin and Leen's joint poem which they wrote on the second walk that they took together as part of our workshop programme. In the WhatsApp group chat, Hanin makes a note of the lack of birds in their horizon: 'today me and Leen went on our second nature walk. Unfortunately, we didn't find any birds but we did write a poem about a bird'. The bird they chose to write about is 'gone' and like Reemas, the poem takes place on a 'cold winter night' (13 March 2021):

the time has come
the bird is gone

the mother shed a tear
with a heart full of fear

they recall memories
and their long history

the mother is ready to go
and so

on that cold winter night
she slept alone

No voices are heard through the narration, and the departure is instead marked by ‘a tear’, ‘a heart full of fear’, ‘memories’ and feelings of loneliness. Again, the reason for the disappearance of the bird is not discussed. The first couplet ‘the time has come / the bird is gone’ is somehow reminiscent of Carson’s opening fable to *Silent Spring* (1962, p. 2): ‘There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example – where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund: they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices’.

If the absence of bird voices has been an indicator of an imminent environmental crisis for Carson, my participants have similarly found this silence alarming and tried to project it on to their personal and social lives. Silence features strongly in the outcome of another birdwatching walk that Aya and Salwa went on together (13 March 2021):

silence is what people hear
only if I can speak
only if I can say
my life is not your aim
my life is not your game

Despite the dominance of silence, the wish to ‘speak’ pierces the space of the poem and the voice of the subaltern finally rings with: ‘my life is not your aim / my life is not your game’. Through the first-person, Salwa and Aya’s piece seeks to make audible the voices that kept silent/were silenced. It’s this ‘I-me-my voice’ that distinguishes this account on birds from the previous examples (Galleymore, 2020). The link between voice and ‘I’ is striking when ‘only if’ is overlooked – the ‘I’ directly draws attention to the power in ‘I can speak’ and ‘I can say’. Of relevance here is Thoreau in *Walden* (1854): ‘after all, always the first-person that is speaking’. The poem demonstrates how the first-person could be a helpful strategy to ‘speak’ and reinforce one’s subjective viewpoint.

As the first lines of their poem show, the 'I' here speaks of a multiplicity of selves that include the bird narrator and each of Salwa and Aya as authors:

> a bird that flies over the night skies
> wondering when I will see
> a human aiming at me
> to him, my life is a game
> to him, my life is an aim
> as much as I run
> as much as I flee
> the gun is all I can see
> with burning eyes, he looks at me (Salwa and Aya, 13 March 2021)

The bird metamorphoses into an 'I', which reflects a sense of attachment and a more embodied position. The self-merger with a bird allows the girls to question the relationship between the 'human' and the natural environment. The personal account can be read as metaphor for the environmental account and vice versa. Through the first-person, the intersections of the ecological and the personal/social/political become more visible with the focus on issues of power and vulnerability. The 'I' is portrayed in conflict with 'he' who 'looks at me', 'a human aiming at me'. The pronouns 'he/him' extend links between patriarchy and the ecological crisis, calling into question all the forms of domination that 13-year-old girls would like to 'flee' or/and fight.

4.1.3. 'The Bird Is Burnt': Fire and the Apocalypse in Filmmaking

Carson's question about the birds: 'where had they gone?' seems to have occupied the minds of my participants for weeks to come (Carson, 1962, p. 2). In the following filmmaking workshops where students started to brainstorm ideas for their short film for the Our Planet Festival 2021, there was a return to the character of the bird in the storyline proposed by Salwa and Mohammed (workshop, 17 April 2021):

> Scene 1: A bird flies over a place where people use fire as a peaceful tool like cooking and protecting themselves.

Scene 2: The bird lands/rests on a tree and watches as the people camp using fire and enjoying their time eating and cooking.

Scene 3: The bird decides it's time to go back home and flies away.

Scene 4: The bird doesn't find his home but finds fire replacing the forest. The whole forest was on fire. It was filled with dead bodies.

Scene 5: People that were still alive were running.

Scene 6: The bird is burnt by the fire and lied lifeless with the rest of the species.

Fire emerges in this scenario as an element that is significantly present in the students' lives and therefore ignites their imagination. While silence was shown as associated with a lack of air (literally and metaphorically), the reaction of fire takes that silence to a larger scale of an apocalypse. On the elemental spectrum of metaphor and materiality, fire is explored as a matter with multiple effects and as a force of life and death at once. The bird's eye-view presents the human engagement with fire for the most basic survival needs of food and protection. This element, in the second scene, gains an aesthetic dimension by providing a sensation of pleasure: 'camp' and 'enjoying their time'. This force of joy is soon juxtaposed with the images of fire sweeping through the forest: 'the whole forest was on fire'. The remaining scenes set up fire as 'the violent element of nature' (cited in Harris, 2015, p. 28), influenced by the environmental catastrophes of wildfires that the students recently witnessed in Australia (2019) and Turkey (2021). The encounter of the bird with fire ends in death for all 'the species', with the graphic image of the bird 'burning in the flames' (Salwa, 17 April 2021).

The group discussion following Salwa and Mohammed's presentation of their storyline reveals a widespread endorsement of this apocalyptic discourse among many students. Leen thinks 'it's very relatable to the audience. A lot of countries right now are going through war.' This disturbing apocalypse in the narrative, according to Mohammed, is so real that 'sometimes you've got to live with it'. Leen argues for the empathetic value of such rhetoric, saying that 'the general message is that war affects everyone. It's a way of offering condolence to others. It should give awareness that we should help the countries that are struggling right now'.

The fire of war experienced by many students, which fuels their apocalyptic thinking, is not easily extinguishable. Even when they were asked to think of a different ending that could be more hopeful, the events still got worse. Reemas, for instance, says: 'Maybe I wouldn't make the bird die … Like maybe he went to another place and he got a few other birds with him and they tried to save the place, بس [but] it got worse'. When they got to express hope, it mainly took the form of migration (17 April 2021):

> Leen: the bird could run away … escape and migrate.
>
> Mohammed: the bird would be a symbol of human beings migrating out of their countries because of war.
>
> Salwa: Maybe we can make the bird run away ... we skip a couple of years and then he comes back to see what it looks like.

The students' consensus on migration is justified by drawing on their shared lived experience. Leen further explains: 'We can make him migrate because that's normally what happens in real life situations where the family ends up migrating or something along those lines. So, we can make it fly away to a new group of birds' (18 April 2021). With the reluctant acceptance of a hopeful way out, there emerges the importance of community building as expressed in 'got a few other birds' and 'a new group of birds'. The new host place tends to be defined in terms of the relationship and not the geographical location for example. In consistence with the common aesthetics of migration, return to the homeland is emphasised. As Mohammed speculates, 'After he [the bird] migrates, he can come back to his city and help turn it into a good place … and it becomes greener'.

As this section has demonstrated, song and silence appeared as a significant point of interest across the poetry that the students read and wrote during the workshop. Exploring the myths around the mute nightingale in Emre's ode and Shawqi's fable allowed the students to question their understanding of 'voice' and 'song' in relation to the different factors of love and authority. Silence as an issue resonated with many students as they created images like 'the bird is gone' and 'the bird is burnt'. Those imaginative encounters with silent/silenced highlight an interplay between the elements of air and fire. The data analysis also shows the role of dialogic engagement with poetry in revealing/shaping the students' opinions about themselves and the world.

4.2. Flight and Freedom

4.2.1. 'I Would Soar': Metaphors on the Move in Mucha's 'Albatross'

The second English poem that was shared during Workshop Two on birds is Laura Mucha's 'Albatross', taken from the anthology *Being Me: Poems about Thoughts, Worries and Feelings* (2021). Mucha (2022) acknowledges the feelings of young migrants as their worlds change: 'Sometimes new beginnings bring a lot of sadness with them. Change is never only good or bad, it can have a bit of both. Poetry can help us speak through metaphor what we can't say with words.' Mucha's poem is in line with ecological identity work, which extends an invitation to reconstruct personal identity using the metaphors of ecology and the environment; in other words, 'to consider how [one's] actions, values, and ideals are framed according to their perceptions of nature' (Thomashow, 1996, p. xiii). This section is therefore concerned with the role of metaphor in expanding young migrants' perceptions of self and transforming their ways of being in the world (Carpendale, 2015). Metaphor as a vehicle for vibrant matter animates 'elemental thinking', i.e. becoming-*with* elements on the move (Oppermann and Iovino, 2015, p. 134). It appears to be a valuable tool for young people to explore and reflect on their entanglement with the natural world, the connection that constitutes the essence of ecological identity. Through the examination of the students' responses to Mucha's poem, I ask if any emergent 'metaphors have the power to create a new reality' as claimed by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980, p. 145).

Through the metaphor of the 'Albatross', Mucha's poem could be said to offer a reading experience where the listener/reader would connect to the bird and heal-*with* the wandering elements:

> If I were an albatross,
> I would share my anger with the wind,
> drop my sadness into the depths of the valleys

and let my emptiness float above the trees.

If I were an albatross,
I would let my worries slip from the tips of my wings
leave my loneliness to slide from the curve of my beak
and wonder at the wild of the water below.

If I were an albatross,
I would soar above the Antarctic sea
and leave all the mess of moving home, moving school
and Dad leaving, behind me.

Figure 4.1: 'Albatross', by Laura Mucha, from *Being Me*, illustrated by Victoria Jane Wheeler

From an eco-psychological point of view, Mucha's poem provides a model that facilitates the 'interaction between the psyche of nature and the human psyche' (Aizenstat, 1995, p. 92). With the action words 'share', 'wonder' and 'soar', the listener/reader is encouraged to 'move beyond the personal-particular human psyche into an active psychological relationship with the other species' represented here by the Albatross (ibid., p. 97). In order for this to happen, the listener/reader is required to name all the negative emotions from 'anger' and 'sadness' to 'emptiness', 'loneliness' and 'worries' that result from 'the mess of moving home'. The remedy of each feeling is found in the elemental forces of the natural world – the wind, for example, could evaporate anger. The reader/listener is brought in touch/ in sync with the rhythms of 'valleys', 'trees', and 'water'. The young human self could find home in the body of the Albatross, which is evoked by the descriptive images of 'tips of my wings' and 'curve of my beak'. Aizenstat (1995, p. 98) believes that metaphors and the projection of human feelings on more-than-human beings 'might be seen as working the other way round – with human life carrying the projections and personifications of the soul that reside in the creatures and things of the world'. As the metaphor of the albatross pushes the young reader/listener to take to the air, the students connect to a collective ecological unconscious that includes the souls of the different creatures.

4.2.2. ‘Leading Themselves to Freedom’: Lines of Flight in the Texts of Young Migrants

Mucha’s ‘Albatross’ served as a transition to the participants’ own writing in the workshop. We used the prompt ‘If I were a bird’, each choosing a specific bird to imagine the journey of becoming-*with* it. Across the poetry written by participants, birds come in different shapes that inspire mindfulness as well as draw on one’s cultural capital. They are not ornamental nor arbitrary, but rather display distinct meanings that span freedom, resilience, escape, disappearance, belonging, homeland and hope. I look at what metaphors escape the essentialised notions of what it is to be and how those metaphors are lines of flight that connect up with one another. Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘lines of flight’, therefore, informs the analysis of the students’ writings in this section as to how they influence their identity construction, which is essentially a process of ‘becoming-’. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987, p. 238), Deleuze and Guattari explain what they mean by ‘becoming’: ‘becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal and one does not ‘really’ become an animal any more than the animal ‘really’ becomes something else … What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that becoming passes’. How do such becomings manifest in young people’s texts? Are they mere imitations, literary transformations or multiple ways of experiencing and understanding the self in the world?

The Arabic teacher in the school uses the writing prompt in Arabic ‘لو كنت’ (If I were) and goes back to the nightingale discussed at the beginning of the workshop. Unlike the earlier poems, her nightingale is not mute. It portrays an image of a caged nightingale whose voice/song is the way to flight and freedom (7 March 2021):

If I were a nightingale in a golden cage	لوكنت بلبلا في قفص من ذهب
I would fake a melodious song	لغردت تغريدة توحي بالطرب
Only to be set free into the wondrous world	ليطلق سراحي للعالم العجب

This orientation is shared among the group as many of the students seemed to echo the same meanings of escape/flight: ‘Birds flying around / Running away from problems / Leading themselves to freedom’ (Seema, 12 March 2021).

In addition to the pursuit of freedom, Mohammed imagines an eagle as a metaphor for strength. In a post-workshop interview, he tells the story of his fascination with eagles: 'Eagles are one of the strongest species on earth. They have their own personalities. The idea of being strong. They don't follow people' (18 Sept 2021). His piece balances the physical beauty of wings with the power of 360 rotation (Mohammed, 7 March 2021):

> If I were an eagle
> I would fly with my beautiful wings
> I would see the world
> I would fly above the sea
> Going 360 degrees
>
> If I were an eagle
> I would leave earth's tiring decrees
> I would fly free
> And nothing will stop me
> Wherever I be

Strength and power are reiterated by Salwa who has decided to break away from the cage of set writing prompts and instead returns to the meaning of her Arabic name that refers to a quail (7 March 2021):

> my name is not just letters written on paper
> my name is a signal sign
> which leads you to that mind of mine
> some people get lost
> and some don't even try
> but people who reach, find a creature with feathers
> people only see the power in their wings
> but what a bird can do is greater than anyone can think

She delineates 'a creature with feathers', portraying 'the power in their wings'. She extends her initial self-portrait in the first writing workshop on names to show that 'what a bird can do is greater than anyone can think'. This line sets a tone of resistance to existent thinking, an attempt

to overstep lowered expectations. Her words do more than reiterate aspirations/complaints - in writing, she wields the power to transform her name from just ‘letters written on paper’ to a ‘signal sign’ and then ‘a bird’ that she determines ‘is what I always will be’. Through her foray into poetry, she is capable of bringing life to ‘my name is Salwa’. Her name becomes a metaphor that she lives by and that informs her attitude towards the environment. Reflecting on the role of organic metaphor in reanimating her sense of identity, Salwa notes that it has become the ‘wire that connects [her] with others’ (6 June 2021).

It is interesting how ‘the power in their wings’ contrasts with the ‘misery’ that befalls the persona in Salwa’s second part of the expanded name poem. The bird’s signature verb ‘fly’ becomes ‘flee’ in a rather foreseen twist that might stem from personal experience or narratives about migration. The dominating image seems to be built around a common observation ‘I see’ in the Anthropocene where ‘a human comes / and cuts down the tree’. Salwa identifies this one act, the violation of the right to life, as the source of ‘misery’. Such awareness will be reflected later in Salwa’s description of their short film when she says: ‘Some people can use nature in a bad way – they can burn trees, they can cut them down, they can kill animals for fun or stress-relieving’ (interview, 20 May 2021). The pronoun ‘I’ in her poem (7 March 2021) expresses a sense of self that blurs the boundaries between the bird/tree/human. With this mutual process of becoming, Salwa and the bird appear to embody each other’s plight:

> I stand on a tree
> resting before I flee
> until a human comes
> and cuts down the tree
> my misery begins
> when I see
> that the tool used
> is an axe, made of wood

In Hanin’s case, her imaginary Cockatoo is itself an evocation of Sydney, the city she recently migrated from. It brings a sense of home and enjoyment (7 March 2021):

if i were a cockatoo
i would fly across the country
and enjoy the hightop view
and if i were ever hungry
i would enjoy the leftover stew

if i were a cockatoo
i would show off my yellow tail
to the people at the lagoon
and follow the trail which leads to a whale
and enjoy the afternoon watching the kangaroos

Figure 4.2: Hanin's drawing of her cockatoo

In the process of portraying the cockatoo in word and image, Hanin goes back to a video she had taken of the cockatoo at the lagoon when she was in Sydney. She shares the source video with me on WhatsApp to show the 'cockatoo spreading its yellow feathers' (6 May 2021). In a later chat with Hanin (31 May 2021), she explains that she was inspired 'to link her home country (Australia) to writing', which is why she decided to present 'the simple life of a cockatoo'. Trying to read/analyse the poem *with* Hanin, I sent her a few questions about the relationship between the cockatoo and the kangaroos, whether it 'is all about "watching"? Or watching over? Guarding? Taking care of them? When you experience joy, does it stem from idle watching or active caring?' (WhatsApp chat, 5 May 2021). Hanin replied with an explanation: 'When I said "watching", I meant idle watching because kangaroos themselves are interesting'. She added: 'Notice how sometimes birds just sit down and watch what you're doing?' (5 May 2021). It is interest then that is the spirit that gives life to the assembly of her words about the cockatoo and its relationship with others. To 'notice' is key in Hanin's argument for the perspective she adopted and captured in both her words and illustration (Figure 4.2). Noticing the nuanced behaviour of the bird and remembering it in relation to Sydney appear as two intertwining ways to the development of ecological identity.

From Mucha's poem to the students' various texts, birds emerge as metaphors for flight and freedom. The use of metaphor has appealed to young people, as it provides a safe space to examine their feelings towards and relations to the world. Metaphors become an important tool in ecological identity work, allowing young people to explore and reflect on their entanglement with the elements of nature. Discussing various examples written by the students, this section has presented metaphors as lines of flight that open up new ways of understanding the self. Through a process of becoming-*with* birds/air, an ecological sense of identity is reanimated.

4.3. Communication and Connection

4.3.1. 'Unique Creatures': Aesthetic-spiritual Relations

The outdoor task of birdwatching that was part of our workshop was instrumental in initiating meaningful communications across generations and spiritual connections with others in the world. In this section, I discuss these aspects in detail through the case of Mohammed's interaction with pigeons in the week following the workshop on birds. It is noteworthy how the direct contact with the outdoor world has developed the children's ability to notice beauty in the ordinary, extending ties that turn it into 'unique creatures'. For the lead-in activity of Workshop Two, I asked the students to type in the chat box names of the birds that they could see in the sky (Zoom chat, 7 March 2021):

10:11:30 From Rim: seagull
10:11:47 From SALWA: pigeons
10:11:48 From MOHAMMED: Seagulls, Crows
10:11:49 From REMAS J to Sara Shahwan(Direct Message): Birds
10:11:57 From MOHAMMED: piegons
10:12:12 From Reemas: pigeons
10:12:23 From Hanin: crow
10:12:56 From REMAS J : Bowerbirds.

Not surprisingly, pigeons appeared in this quick survey to be the most common bird in the skies of the city where they live. In spite of it being commonplace, it was interesting how the students started to view pigeons as something special. Paying attention to pigeons continued among students till the end of the workshops. Upon noticing a pigeon nesting in the late spring, Hanin decided to videotape the pigeon and share it via WhatsApp (Figure 4.3). This section, through an

in-depth discussion of Mohammed's work, shows how 'noticing' becomes a habit that changes how young people communicate and connect with the world.

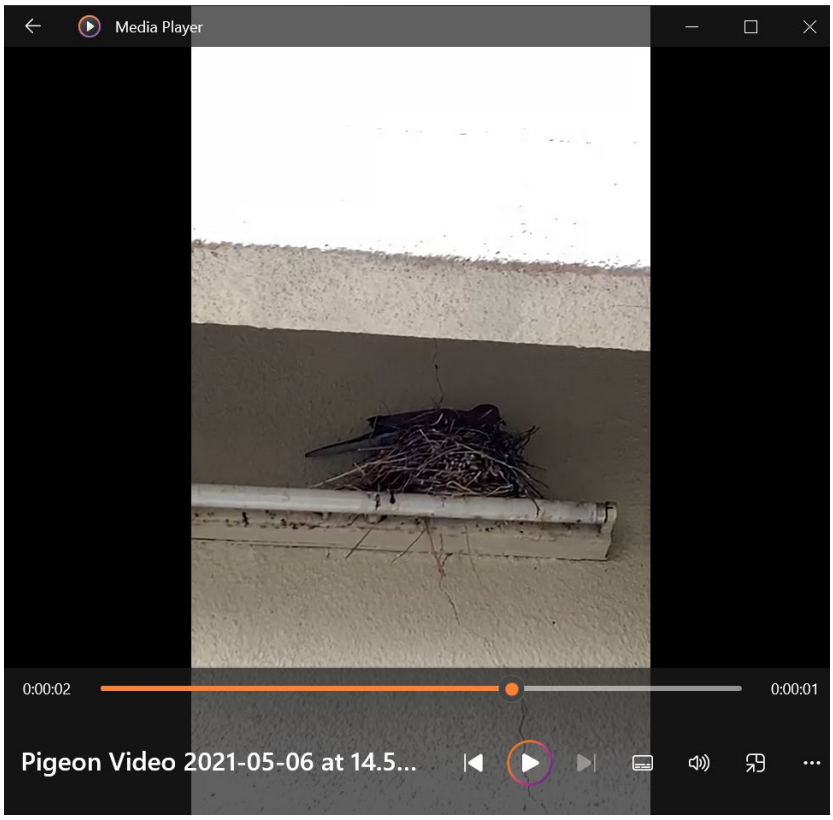

Figure 4.3: Hanin's pigeon video (6 May 2021)

In the case of Mohammed, watching pigeons from his house has connected him to his cultural roots, the aesthetics of Arabic poetry and the spirituality of his faith. Mohammed's birdwatching prompted a response to 'حمام الشوق' (Doves of Longing), a lyrical poem previously written by his grandfather Farid Barakat (1943-2019) who is a well-known Yemeni poet. Mohammed recounts (interview, translated from Arabic, 18 Sept 2021):

> as soon as we began talking about birdwatching and birds in general, I remembered a song written by my grandfather called "Hamam a-Shouq". My family suggested that I speak about the story of his dove poem. So, I listened to it and immediately started to think about what to write. Because it is related to my grandfather, I easily found the idea [for writing] because it is something close to me, not distant.

After Mohammed had shared his Arabic poem ‘Pigeons’ with everybody on the group chat (14 March 2021), he followed it next day (15 March 2021) with two other messages: one contained his grandfather’s poem and the other was a link to a Wikipedia page with information about his grandfather. The Wikipedia page tells of Barakat’s hundreds of lyrical poems that were published in Arabic newspapers and magazines, the *Yemeni Writers and Journalists Union* he co-founded and the high positions he held at the Ministry of Culture. It also reveals Barakat’s political activism represented in his opposition against the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh, which led to his political imprisonment and the murder of his brother. The grandfather’s legacy opens a window into a wider world of values associated with doves and pigeons in Arabic literature.

Barakat’s poem is a love song in which the poet pleads with the dove to send his sighs of longing to his beloved:

O heart, you poor anguished one! You linger into the night while your beloved is absent, Exhaling sighs of longing, as love relentlessly burns! Love burns lovers! O anguished heart!	اه يا قلب يا مسكين يا ذايب ياللي تسهر والحبيب غائيب ترسل الآهات أشواق والهوى حرّاق حرّاق الهوى يكوي الحبايب آه يا مسكين يا ذايب
Recall the past, the ethereal shadows of love and stars, Recall our rendezvous with each passing breeze, Where do you reside now? Where are the cherished ones? O eyes, how many tears have you shed in their absence! Love burns lovers! O anguished heart!	تذكر الماضي وطيف الحب والنجمة تذكر اللقيا معاه كل ما تمر نسمه أنت فينك والحبايب فين في غيابه كم بكيتي يا عين الهوى يكوي الحبايب آه يا مسكين يا ذايب
O dove of longing, I beseech you to send greetings to my beloved, To inquire about us,	آه يا حمام الشوق أترجاك تحمل له سلام تسأله عنا تشوفه كيف حاله يا حمام

O dove, check that he is well I cannot articulate the torment of his absence, the agony of separation, How can I portray it? How can I depict this love, with all its restless nights? Love burns lovers! O anguished heart! (Barakat, translation mine)	ذه اللي شفته في بعاده آه من نار البعاد أيش أوصف كيف أوصف ذا الهوى كله سهاد الهوى يكوي الحبايب آه يا مسكين يا ذايب

Through the mention of doves, the poem itself serves as a 'messenger' conveying one of the main motifs of classical Arabic poetry, i.e. love. The remembrance of the beloved has been an element of the Arabic poem ever since the 6th century when the oral tradition among the nomads of Arabia started to take an identifiable written form. As Barakat's doves send sighs of longing accompanied by heartache to the absent beloved, they put the reader (the poet's grandson) in (indirect) contact with the Arabic poetic tradition spanning Imru' al-Qais's *Mu'llaqa* (6th c.), the finest of pre-Islamic poetry, where he says: 'oh my friends, let us pause to weep over the remembrance of my beloved'; Ibn Hazm's treatise on love entitled *The Ring of the Dove* (11th c.); Ibn Arabi's volume of poetry 'Interpreter of Desires' (13th c.) that revolves around divine love featuring doves.

As revealed by Mohammed, Barakat's poem becomes a reference for Mohammed when deciding what his metaphor of pigeons might signify. 'الحمام' is used interchangeably for both doves and pigeons, but Mohammed's English translation features pigeons as does his photo. While Mohammed retains the referents of love and longing to the past, repeating the same words as 'أشواق' (longings), 'مرسال' (messenger) and 'سلام' (greetings/peace), he chooses to veer off his grandfather's example in both content and form. Besides the symbol of love, Mohammed explores new meanings as he relates his pigeons to beauty, purity and energy. The heartsick tone of the grandfather's song is reversed in the grandson's response; no traces of sorrow appear in the cooing of pigeons as 'a call for glory and dignity' is all that Mohammed's voice rings with when reading his poem out loud:

Figure 4.4: photo of a pigeon taken by Mohammed from the backyard of his house

الحمام

عرفت الحمام للسلام رسالة وفي عون الإنسان تجعل مرساله
تحمل الأشواق وتحمل سلاما وكانت في الأزمان تؤمن بالأمانة
جمالاً ونقاءً ونشاطً بلا كلاله هديلها نداء عزة وكرامه
عرفتها في شعر جدي ولها في قلبي مكانة
مخلوق فريد من صنع ربي سبحانه وتعالى

Pigeons

Pigeons are messengers of peace
In help of man, they carry messages

To deliver longings and send greetings,
they were the most trustworthy in the olden days

Beauty, purity, alacrity with no exhaustion
Their cooing is a call for glory and dignity

I met them in the poetry of my grandfather
In my heart, they have lived forever

Unique creatures made by Allah the Almighty

(Mohammed, 14 March 2021)

Mohammed, in his pieces as well as conversations, shows a tendency to avoid lingering over 'the past' or 'the hell of separation from loved ones' extensively portrayed in Barakat's lyrics. He explains his own philosophy, saying: 'We need to look at the bright side so we can understand. If you always look at the dark side, you'll always be in like a depression, you wouldn't live your life. It'd be like why is that happening to me?!' (18 Sept 2021).

The cooing, that spells the separation of loved ones in Barakat's poem, now signals a reunion between Mohammed and his grandfather. At the heart of Mohammed's poem is this newly established communication initiated by the image of pigeons, he writes: 'I met them in the poetry of my grandfather / In my heart, they have lived forever'. The post-workshop interview reveals that he has never talked to his grandfather in his lifetime: 'I don't know what was happening then … He lived in Aden while we used to live in Sanaa … We (my older sister and I) have never ever seen him … We did only in pictures … We have old pictures of him' (18 Sept 2021). He recounts how his observation of pigeons has reminded him (and his family) of his grandfather's lyrical poems, so they spent 'the following week or so listening to his songs and searching for him'.

In an instant, the relationship with birds and poetry takes on a new personal significance. To Mohammed, pigeons have become 'unique creatures'. Pigeons generally permeate 'our urban environments that most people hardly even notice them', notes Sax in *The Mythical Zoo* (2001, p. 98). By paying attention, however, much beauty is to be found in 'their enormous variety of patterns and tones', as evident in Mohammed's case (ibid.). In his commentary on the writing of the poem, Mohammed says that 'pigeons are such a unique thing … I mean beautiful' (interview, 18 Sept 2021). 'Unique' in Arabic appears to be no other than the first name of his grandfather 'فريد': 'I was trying to relate /fareed/ 'unique' to my grandfather's name … since it is all about my

grandfather, I thought about putting his name in the poem' (ibid.). The pun /fareed/ 'فريد' embodies the transformation of pigeons from commonplace birds to ones holding a special place in the young boy's heart. This one-of-a-kind relationship is expressed through his out-loud recitation: 'I felt while reading it as if there was something going inside me … I feel it is related to me' (ibid.).

The need for connection and communication underlying Mohammed's poetic response extends to his choice of form and language. Whereas the grandfather's poem is free from the constraints of rhyme and metre, Mohammed expends a great deal of effort to craft a poem in the traditional two-column style. Each verse is divided into hemistiches, emulating one of the examples shared in our Sunday workshop and what he studies at school. His poem does not follow a strictly prosodic form, yet it sticks to a single ending rhyme throughout. In doing so, he uses 'all [his] power' in an attempt to 'express [him]self' and to 'meet everybody with [his] poem', as he puts it in the interview.

This desire 'to meet everybody' explains his having refrained from using the Yemeni colloquial Arabic like his grandfather and resorting to Standard Arabic as a lingua franca among a group speaking different dialects (Enani, 2015). Many students have expressed an awareness of the polyglossia of their Arab homeland, which leads them to communicate in English at their international school setting. Mohammed did translate his lines into English eventually so 'everyone can read it', yet he preferred the Arabic version: 'Let me say this … It was better in Arabic. In English, I don't feel it that much' (18 Sept 2021).

Mohammed connects with Arabic through the aesthetics of the language revealed to him while interacting with poetry and the environment. With his attempts at translation, he discovers the figurative nature of Arabic – 'You can't translate it literally … it needs some work on this and that'. He seems to arrive at the concept of Arabic as 'a poetical language', coined by Egyptian poet and literary critic Abbas al-Aqqad (1960), when he experiences firsthand how the sounds suit 'the expression of [his] feelings'. The reason behind his preference of Arabic in this instance, while most of his friends choose English, is enigmatic to him just like poetry: 'I don't know why', he says. Puzzlement and pleasure, intertwined as they are, emerge from the dynamic engagement with Arabic as he relates it to his surroundings, his heritage and himself. Poetical language is re-discovered as a medium for the more-than-human mystery; language is no longer dull or flat but rather takes a multi-dimensional shape/presence that is 'felt' without being necessarily explained.

‘Beauty’ appears to be a key element that links Mohammed’s growing connections to ‘poetical language’ and to the environment. This raises a question about young people’s perceptions of beauty and how it contributes to ecoliteracy. The development of Mohammed’s ecological identity (as manifest in the identification with pigeons, eagles and rivers) seems to stem from the aesthetic value he attributes to nature. Reflecting on his direct contact with the environment while walking, he uses the analogy of the Mona Lisa. In reply to my question whether this kind of activity has led him closer to nature, he mentions going ‘to parks and to the Bosphorus’ and continues with an elaborate reflection on how a relationship has blossomed out of beauty:

> Seeing how beautiful the environment is, how green it is makes you love it …it makes you feel I wanna see this every day – even if it’s the same image. People go from all around the world to see the Mona Lisa, people go like every day, people even go twice because it is beautiful, and people like to see it. And that’s what happens when you look at our trees and the environment.

The word ‘beautiful’, as it appears in this excerpt, describes the experience of nature. Beauty makes the environment perceivable; it turns ‘seeing’ into an aesthetic experience likened to that of iconic artwork. The semiotics of fine art is present in Mohammed’s treatment of pigeons, with beauty highlighted as the first in a list of symbolic meanings represented by pigeons: ‘Beauty, purity, alacrity with no exhaustion’. This beauty perceived by Mohammed when looking at ‘pigeons’ is what has transformed the ordinary in the public eye to the ‘unique’ in a personal realm. It seems to define the poetic effect of an ‘image’ and how a young person relates to the natural world.

It is worth investigating the ‘Mona Lisa’ analogy made by Mohammed in relation to his perception of nature, to see whether this translates into an objectification of natural beauty or might lead to some sort of ‘ecological-aesthetic relationality’ (Chandler, 2011, p. 564). There is an emphasis on the visual side of sensory perception, as shown in the repetition of viewing synonyms such as ‘seeing’, ‘I wanna see’, ‘like to see’ and ‘look at’ in his discourse. Mohammed’s act of photographing a pigeon from his backyard (Figure 4.4) is an example of his interaction with what he perceives as ‘beautiful’, of how his thinking about beauty is reenacted. When looking at the pigeon, Mohammed attributes to it the relative quality of beauty before directing his attention in writing to the visible ones of colour and movement. Like the Mona Lise, the pigeon as it meets his

eyes is framed in a picture that fixes the gaze upon it. The gaze transforms the photographed pigeon/landscape into an object. As the central object of Mohammed's vision, the pigeon seems to mirror the epistemic subject (Mohammed) who stays behind the camera and outside the cadre. An outsider positionality is also implied in his usage of 'the image' analogy, when referring to it as something that people want to 'go … to see' as if reaching it would require 'people' to get out of their way.

The lens of the camera or the spectator's eyes could be said to objectify the pigeon if its subjectivity is not considered within an understanding of a common world. Applying Husserl's phenomenological notion of lifeworld '*Lebenswelt*', i.e. a collective field of experience characterised by a multiplicity of subjects, the flying pigeon as well as the surrounding green landscape appear to exercise a 'motivating force' upon Mohammed inasmuch as they invite him to focus his attention/eyes/senses on their presence. His consciousness is affected by the colour green – he explains 'how beautiful the environment is' in terms of the sensible quality of 'how green it is', as if 'beautiful' equates/means 'green'. The colour 'green' here is processed first by the body as evident in the impulsive sensation it causes: 'how green it is makes you love it'. Before any conceptual reflections, affection emerges as a mode of attuning to the environment. Rational thinking of these sensations comes at a later stage when colours are put in a comparative context: 'Here it is green. In Yemen, it's blue. So, you don't always find everything in the same place' (interview). In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962/2002, p. 246), Merleau-Ponty seems to describe a similar dynamic between the perceived and the perceiver: 'In the same way I give ear, or look, in the expectation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space known as blue or red'. The 'green' of the environment, in Mohammed's case, shifts paradigms of beauty and love, unlocking a potential reciprocity/interaction with the surrounding environment.

Attention to the sense of beauty seems to permeate Mohammed's interactions with all sorts of environments, even those damaged by war. All his descriptions of places in Yemen start off with the statement 'so beautiful' despite the war: 'Aden is so beautiful but because of the war etc. Yemen as a whole is destroyed – everything from electricity to water, everything. Places and people both suffered a lot. Apart from that, the rest is really beautiful – I mean family and so on Alhamdulillah

(thank God)'. This recognition of beauty brings about the intertwined themes of justice and action: 'Humans have to do something' (interview, 18 Sept 2021). During the brainstorming of ideas for the topic of their short film, Mohammed suggested: 'we can talk about war and how it affects our environment. I guess most of us have been through war or some countries instabilities. So, we can give this point in an advanced and more emotional way because we know how it feels like in war' (WhatsApp chat, 6 April 2021).

It is of great significance that the perceived beauty is capable of provoking senses and inspiring action alongside an evocation of emotions – 'how green it is makes you love it' (Mohammed, interview); 'In my heart, they have lived forever' ('Pigeons' poem); 'Places and people both suffered a lot. Apart from that, the rest is really beautiful' (chat). Such emotions or what Husserl calls 'empathy' indicate a recognition of 'other bodies as other centres of experience, other subjects' (Abram, 1996, p. 37). The pigeon photo and what it represents (Figure 4.4), in this sense, becomes an intersubjective experience, a means of connection. Engagement with the more-than-human world in host countries and homelands seems to stem from the attention to and appreciation of beauty as perceived in the 'space of bodily presence', to use Böhme's expression (2003). German philosopher Gernot Böhme (1995, p. 105), who developed an aesthetic theory of nature, argues that beauty is essentially 'an experience of co-presence, of the shared reality of subject and object'. This conception of beauty as 'co-presence' clearly features across the conversation with Mohammed; it particularly develops in his reflection on his walking experience discussed above. His argument shows the genesis of a personal philosophy in which beauty is the fulcrum between 'the environment' and 'people', between 'our trees' and 'you'.

Mohammed's environmental responsibility is based upon the same aesthetic reflection: 'the more you learn about [nature], the more you like it, the more you feel it should stay forever. The people who will come after us should feel the same as we felt about how beautiful our earth is' (interview, 18 Sept 2021). This statement might be considered anthropocentric on Kahn's framework for environmental reasoning, for it justifies the protection of the environment in terms of personal interests, aesthetics, human-centred justice and the welfare of humans including that of self and other individuals. However, Kahn (1997, p. 43) believes 'that the development of an aesthetic sensibility helps foster the move from homocentrism to biocentrism' which acknowledges the intrinsic value and moral standing of nature independent of its appeal to humans. Within a

relational context, I would argue that ecoliteracy becomes more meaningful to young people when the human is placed alongside the more-than-human. Chandler (2011), discussing the ecocritical potential of Böhme's aesthetic theory of nature, maintains: 'Addressing human relations with the more-than-human world – with other species, things, and environments – in aesthetic terms does not avoid ecological problems, but draws attention to them directly'. Mohammed's reflections present the capacity for ecoliteracy and ecological understanding to develop through an appreciation of beauty.

The recognition of beauty in nature that fosters a sense of connection seems to be closely linked to responsibility and spirituality. I asked Mohammed about the nature of this relationship he has with pigeons, rivers etc. and whether it is all about enjoyment as he seemed to emphasise the aesthetic aspect all along. In response to my inquiry about the place of responsibility within the context of enjoyment, he gives an inclusive meaning to the term 'responsibility': 'Everybody has a responsibility towards many things – towards our environment, our family, our planet … everything… and towards our God, being Muslims. يعني على طول (I mean always) we need to have a responsibility towards something'. With this articulated 'need', there is an acknowledgment of how central 'responsibility' is in deepening the engagement, interaction and connection with all forms of life. Mohammed's meaning-making of the word 'responsibility' interweaves the personal with the ecological, the social and the religious. He puts 'everybody' on the one hand in a direct relationship with 'our environment, our family, our planet' and 'our God' on the other hand. The use of possessive pronoun 'our' conveys feelings of belonging and the development of not just an individual identity but a collective one expressed in the plural.

The self can be said to be both embedded and transcended in the widening circles of 'environment', 'family', 'planet' and 'God' that Mohammed relates to. This awareness or 'consciousness of the surrounding world', according to Giesenberg (2007, p. 270), is nothing but spirituality when it includes 'a sense of compassion and love towards this world and anything in it shown through wonder and through activities and relationships'. Spirituality is all about such relationality and its core is always the experience of connection 'to all things, to nature and the universe' (Bone, 2008, p. 344). De Souza's research (2016, p. 127) explores the relational dimension of children and young people's spirituality, indicating that for some 'this connectedness is grounded in the human world but for others, it stretches beyond to a non-human world where they may encounter a

transcendent reality, which brings the experience of oneness; that is, being a part of the whole'. The relational understanding of spirituality could therefore be outlined in terms of the relationship with the self 'I-Self', with the environment 'I-World', or with a transcendent 'I-God' for the religious (Robinson, 2019; De Souza, 2016; Adams et al., 2016; Hay and Nye, 2006).

To look closely at the 'I-World' relationship portrayed in Mohammed's discourse, its multiple dimensions should be considered. Robinson in 'Young Children's Spirituality: A Focus on Engaging with Nature' (2019) demonstrates the horizontal and vertical views of this connectedness, which De Souza (2016) recognises as complementary. What stands out in Mohammed's case is the vertical dimension, i.e. 'the connection an individual feels to their past and future, for example the way a person may feel responsible for the future of the planet for the next generation' (Robinson, 2019, p. 342). This vertical connection is highlighted in Mohammed's sense of environmental responsibility as he links it to 'the people who will come after us' and his reasoning that 'this makes you feel the responsibility to make our environment better and protect it' (interview).

The 'I-God' relationship is brought up in the context of responsibility as expressed during the interview: 'towards our God, being Muslims' as well as in his poem about pigeons. The abstract thinking of responsibility 'towards our environment, our family, our planet … everything' is linked to that 'towards our God'. The latter extension of relationship towards the supreme being provides an understanding of connection in terms of religion. The addition of the explanatory note 'being Muslims' seems to indicate the importance of faith in the shaping of his responsibilities. By clearly uttering the label 'Muslims' to mark his faith affiliation, religion is being understood as a belief as well as an identity that he shares with others. Mohammed's religious meaning-making is present in his contemplation of pigeons, as portrayed in the concluding line of his poem: 'Unique creatures made by Allah the Almighty'. The engagement with pigeons plays a role in the religious-spiritual development, materialising Mohammed's belief in 'God' as the creator of the world. The plural 'creatures' might apparently refer to the pigeons, yet it embeds all those 'made by Allah the Almighty'. In light of the 'I-God' connection expressed, the 'I-World' relationship described earlier in the poem as one of service: 'In help of man, they carry messages' is viewed more equitably here. The final line seems to carry some implication for the relations with the nonhuman;

it brings the ‘I’ and the ‘World’ (represented by pigeons) together, implying that they are both creatures bound to the same power of ‘the Almighty’.

It is Mohammed’s reflection on the creation of those pigeons that leads to the naming of the creator. Interestingly, the English translation of the poem uses the name ‘Allah’ in referring to God, whereas the original Arabic version opts for ‘رَبِّي’, meaning ‘my Lord’. Mohammed did not say ‘رَبُّنَا’ (our Lord) but ‘رَبِّي’ (my Lord); the possessive suffix /ي/ in ‘رَبِّي’ denotes a close and special relationship that goes with the personal tone that characterises the whole poem. God is related to as ‘mine’ in one sense that sounds more spiritual and as ‘our God’ in another sense that indicates the group identity of ‘Muslims’. The religious understanding of creation is one dominant factor in his widening process of identification with others. The widening of oneself is achieved by means of connection to the essence of creation – only attained through a synchronous engagement with body, mind and soul.

To sum up this section, physical and literary and visual engagements with birds appear to have an important role in inspiring intergenerational communications and spiritual connections with the environment. This engagement could be triggered by the simple act of ‘noticing’, which proves instrumental in the development of ecological identity. In the case of Mohmmed, noticing the pigeons out of his window sparked a series of connections; it made him remember the Arabic poetry of his grandfather and respond to it. The response embodies the transformation of pigeons from common city birds to ‘unique creatures’. Mohammed’s poem showcases a dynamic engagement with pigeons in his environment as well as his cultural roots based on an aesthetic-spiritual relationality.

4.4. Ease and Relief

4.4.1. ‘A Simple Walk in the Breeze’: Healing Possibilities

This final section considers the effect of whole-body interactions with the environment on mental health, as enabled by poetry and filmmaking. It closely analyses the short film *Breeze* (2021) which the participants collaboratively made using the individual poems they wrote during the early workshops. With the aid of post-workshop interviews, the participants and I meditate on the healing potential that ‘a simple walk in the breeze’ holds for the human mind, the wider community

and the surrounding environment. The filmmaking process uncovers possibilities for ecological engagement triggered by the elements of nature, namely the breeze. In this section, I go down a path of material inquiry to signal the healing dimension of the elemental and its implications for ecoliteracy, embodied learning and critical pedagogies.

The collaborative film *Breeze* takes us to Workshop Four on Spring and the later meetings where the students settle on the topic of their short film. Workshop Four opens with a reading of a Persian poem by Hafiz (14th-c Persian poet) translated into English ('Song of Spring', trans. Boylan, 1988):

> The gentle breeze will blow a new
> Vitality to the barren earth.
> The old will become young.
>
> Persian Lilacs will offer the white lily
> Their fragrant red cup.
> The narcissus eye will glimpse the anemone.
>
> Because of the tyranny of separation endured
> The nightingale shall speed
> Into the rose garden bursting with song.

The healing brush of Nowruz reaches the nightingale encountered in Workshop Two, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The nightingale is no longer mute; it has recovered its ability to sing: 'The nightingale shall speed / Into the rose garden bursting with song'. This is all because of the 'breeze' as a life force: 'The gentle breeze will blow a new / Vitality to the barren earth'. What is striking here is the reference it provides for the students' title of their film *Breeze*.

The film provides a glimpse into the process through which the students have come to know about themselves in relation to their surroundings. Drawing on their experiences of engaging with poetry and outdoor activities in their urbanised vicinities, the students explore the effects of nature on mental health and the role of movement in learning. As Leen puts it in the introduction to the film (24 May 2021):

> Our film revolves around poetry and the environment. It all began a few months ago as we began participating in poetry workshops and taking nature walks. On our walks, we felt a

sense of ease, so we decided to share this experience with students our age, hoping the breeze could help release their stress.

Throughout the filmmaking process, the students tap into the healing power of their contact with the elements of nature which they found interwoven in the fabric of their life – healing comes with optimising this contact. The opening and ending shots, taken by Salwa and Reemas, feature a notebook that depicts the impact of the lack/presence of open air on the mind as they perceive it: a blank page, furious scribbles and eventually a smooth flow of lines (Figures 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7).

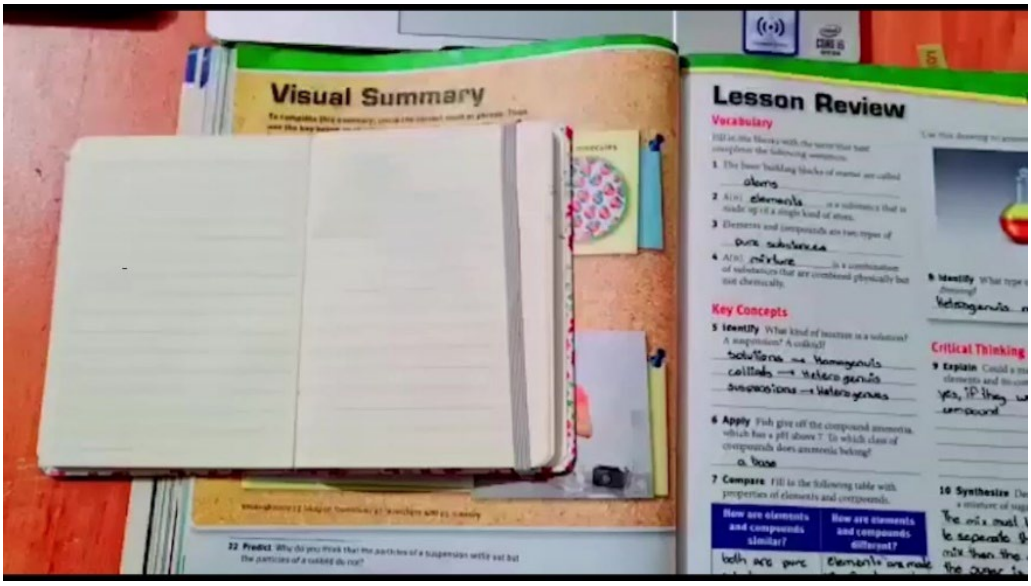

Figure 4.5: the opening scene

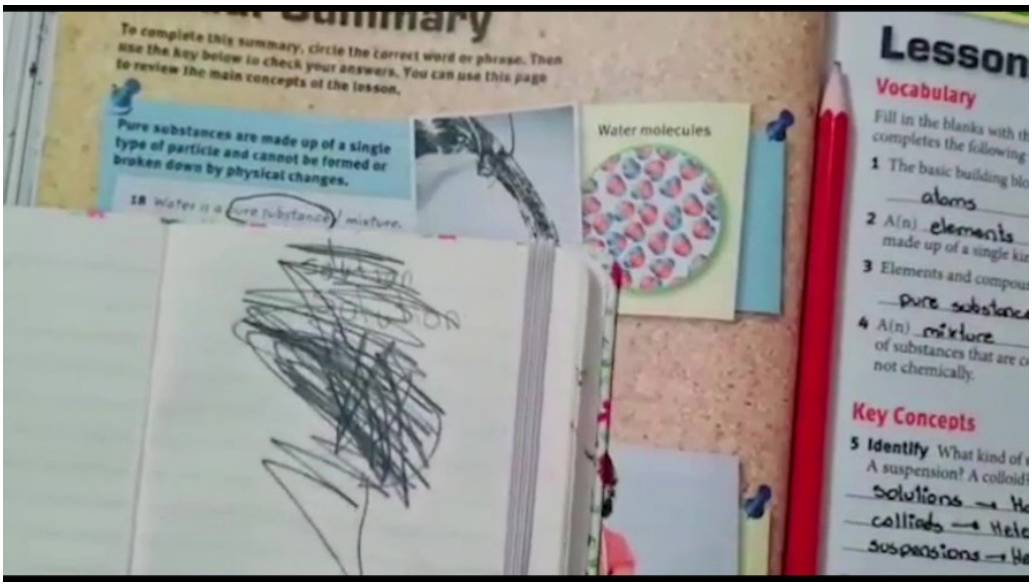

Figure 4.6: scribbles

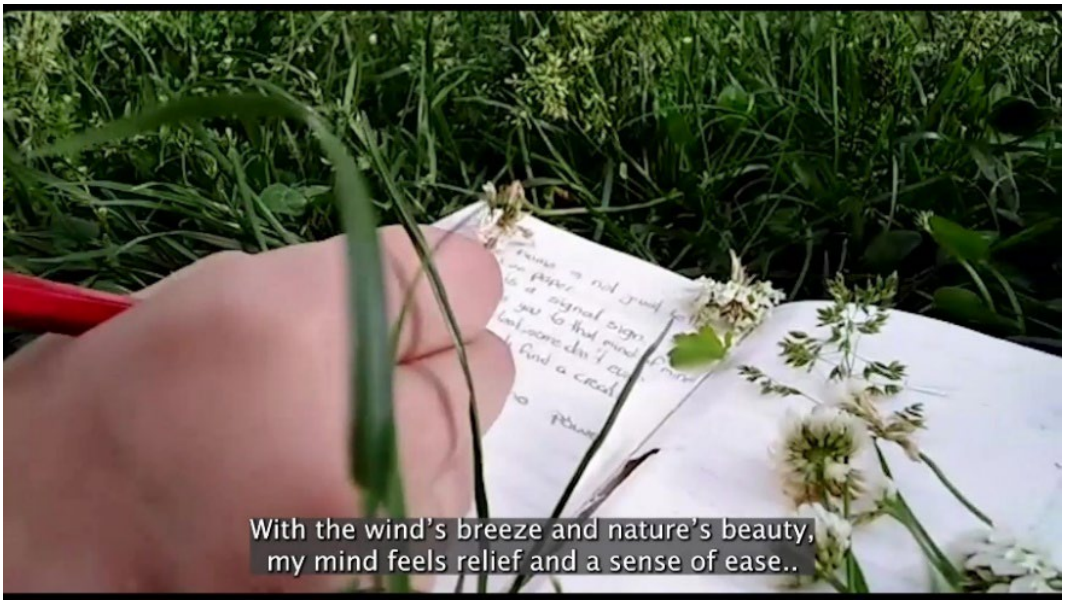

Figure 4.7: the final scene

The background that they chose for the notebook in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 is a science textbook opened on a 'Lesson Review' with three subheadings of 'Vocabulary', 'Key Concepts' and 'Critical Thinking'. Salwa appears to have filled in the blanks using words that range from 'elements', 'pure substances' and 'mixture' to 'solution', 'colloid' and 'suspensions' (Figure 4.6). This frame offers an interface of words and world, calling for an exploration of what these concepts mean for students when applied to their personal life. The elements they study could offer a frame for conceptualising the world, based on how the elements wander or connect in different mixtures, forms or stories. The digital story *Breeze* provides a glimpse into the students' attempts at interpreting the world, making meaning of their own entanglements within the spiralling motions of its elements. It explores the dynamics of elemental activity in relation to the students' mental health. In my analysis here I therefore borrow a few guiding questions from Cohen and Duckert's introduction to *Elemental Ecocriticism* (2015, p. 6): 'what invitations do the elements extend?' and 'Can materialities long surpassed precipitate new modes of ecological engagement? Can the four elements assist in imagining a world that is postsustainable, intracatastrophic and yet a place for hope?'. Closely examining the film (Figures 4.5, 4.6, 4.7), I look for traces of ecological engagement and imaginings of hope prompted by the elements of nature.

While the film could be said to represent a space for engaging with elements on the move, its title specifically foregrounds the element of air and its effect on a group of young people who are trying to overcome the stress of school, exams and lockdown after the world was hit by Covid-19. 'Breeze' comes without a determiner to chime in with the action word 'breathe', imparting the urgency it carries. *Breeze* could be received as a rallying cry on behalf of other students who can't breathe due to the stressful school conditions – as Leen explained, 'we decided to share this experience with students our age, hoping the breeze could help release their stress' (24 May 2021). In this short film, the participants criticise the literal and figurative lack of air within the confines of a traditional classroom setting that causes schoolchildren to choke. The opening phone call conducted in Syrian and Egyptian dialects communicates a cry of 'I can't breathe'[8]:

سلوى: والله ماشي الحال.. بس المشكلة إنو كتير عنا ضغط بالدراسة. عندنا واجبات كتير، اختبارات.. حتى الأمراض الي عم تنتشر

ما بتخفف عليّ الصراحة. ما بعرف شو بدّي أعمل؟!

ريماس: بصي هو مفيش حل غير إن احنا ننزل في البارك نتمشى شوية..

[Salwa: Fine … but life is so stressful with schoolwork, exams, and the current coronavirus. What shall we do? Is there a way out?!

Reemas: How about we go for a walk in the park?] (0:47 – 1:11)

Reemas, who is half Palestinian half Egyptian, opted for the Egyptian dialect to be inclusive in the film's representation of more groups as she explained (May 2021). Both Reemas and Salwa insisted on using their dialects, resisting other suggestions from some teachers to use Standard Arabic. Salwa (20 May 2021) makes a heartfelt case for the inclusion of vernacular Arabic(s) in the film:

I did not want to speak بالعربي الفصحى [in Standard Arabic] because it puts a lot of pressure. I argued a lot with them. I seriously spoke up a lot. All they told me was "You're good in Arabic. You can do it". I know I can speak Arabic fluently cause I'm Arab. I just don't feel

[8] 'I can't breathe' as a slogan originated from the last words of Eric Garner who was put in a chokehold position by a New York City police officer in 2014, and most recently was the last words uttered by George Floyd in 2020. The phrase has become the slogan associated not only with the Black Lives Matter movement but with struggles against all authoritarian forms of power. The participants in this study seem to join this movement of liberation by their critical expressions.

> comfortable. It doesn't feel like I'm expressing my emotions. It feels like I'm reading off the script.

The issue of Arabic diglossia, that results in the long-running debate around Standard Arabic vs Colloquial Arabic in literacy studies, has resurfaced in the filmmaking process. The diglossic nature of Arabic sparks off some tensions due to speaking one variety at home and learning a different one in school. It is normal for such heated debates to take place in schools, especially in diasporic contexts where Arabic is a heritage language (Albirini and Benmamoun, 2022). The colloquial, for Salwa, is the medium that gives expression to feelings without masking anxieties, stresses and struggles. It is not a matter of inaccessibility or lack of proficiency in Standard Arabic, but one of comfort for Salwa. She argues for the use of dialects in their film as 'this is all representing our daily life, which should make it more realistic' (ibid.). Salwa and Reemas stood their ground in the battle of standard vs colloquial Arabic. The girls could not get themselves to speak in other tongues while expressing the plight of migrant children choked by educational systems that limit freedoms and choked by the effects of war and spread of diseases – 'we can't do this, it's very hard. It won't sound natural to us nor to the audience', they insisted. Speaking in the vernacular dialect is an act of breathing for young migrants recently arriving in a new country, for it is their most intimate, animated and natural way of communication. The students' insistence on local dialects reveals the significance of rhythms that break the mainstream limit, escape pressure, defy hierarchy and represent their lives. Salwa and Reemas's negotiations signal the need to transform literacy lessons from spaces that control breathing to environments that allow for a free flow of air through different languages, home dialects and other semiotic resources.

Salwa believes that 'the film is like a map. We just put signs for the audience to interpret' (20 May 2021). The scribble in the notebook is one of those signs that the filmmakers leave for the audience to understand (Figure 6). It is a pictorial image that materialises physical and psychological breathlessness, a swirling shape spun out of and around the word 'solution' (Figure 4.6). The pencil lines and loops make an 'infinite twisting line of flight' from the chaos that involves the mind and the world (Guattari, 1995, p. 116). Salwa comments that her scribbling was not planned but was a spontaneous venting out of the anxiety experienced at the time of shooting that scene. Scribbles also appear in the writing of Reemas, after the end of the workshops, about a haunted house (11 June 2021):

It was burned and the floor was full of burned notes and scribbles

……

The note had a lot of scribbles on it, it seemed like the person had a lot of the things to say but got mad

……

She started writing down while tears rolling down from her watery red eyes. She started writing about how she felt, but the page was full of scribbles

Reading Reemas's lines explains the use of scribbles as an indicator of the unspoken chaos haunting one's inner and outer worlds, manifested in anger, pain and heartbreak. When emotions are too strong to translate into words, the page becomes 'full of scribbles'. The visual structure of scribbles (Figure 4.6) depicts a hyper-mobilisation of the hand muscle resulting from the chaos of one's consciousness, that could be understood in terms of Guattari's 'chaosmosis' (1992). Chaosmosis is 'the process of rebalancing the osmosis between the mind and chaos', as Berardi explains it in his essay on poetical therapy *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* (2019, p. 22). It is all about finding a new balance, a new harmony or order within the chaos expressed by the furious scribbles (Figure 4.6).

Following the scribbling scene, the film shows the students going on a journey where they try to fight the wind, then ride its 'humpy' currents like birds, fly 'with the soft breeze', and reach out for 'the shining skies' while 'weaving radiant threads' into poetry that calms their minds down (*Breeze*, 2021). The film is intended to be 'as if the person is going out on a nature walk and expressing their thoughts and how those thoughts are able to make you feel more relaxed and calmer', Salwa says (20 May 2021). What Salwa and her friends attempt to achieve in the film is regaining the ability to breathe in stressful situations – their walks that make up the film show how bodies could breathe together in a collective way. The students as young poets and filmmakers translate their walking rhythms into poetic voices that could heal themselves and others – 'we want it [the film] to have an idea for the audience to actually feel they benefited from watching this in their life' (Salwa, 20 May 2021). Their voices alternate between colloquial varieties of Arabic and English as they pursue their poetic quest on screen, equalising the rhythms of both languages. This polyphonic nature of the film, manifested in multiple poetic voices, dialects and languages, represents a plurality of worldviews and subjectivities. The poetic, being the mode of the film,

appears as a 'breathing device' (Berardi, 2019, p. 220), a medium of transforming chaos into new rhythms of power and hope.

The notebook in the last scene is filmed amidst the green, with wildflowers scattered on its pages (Figure 4.7). Salwa's hand is shown in contact with the paper, pouring out her thoughts and feelings in the form of running lines. The scribbles (Figure 4.6) now transform into legible words that read (Figure 4.7):

> my name is not just letters
> written on paper
> my name is a signal sign
> which leads you to that mind of mine
> some people get lost, and some don't even try
> but people who reach, find a creature with feathers
> people only see the power in their wings

This expression of identity Salwa originally wrote in the second workshop, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, concludes the digital story in a manner that balances the individual with the collective. The ending places the ability to express oneself at the heart of the healing process that works at individual and interpersonal levels.

The film creates a constellation of shared meanings/signs and communal power, based on an 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' for thinking about individual/collective subjectivities (Guattari, 1992). Such a paradigm is vital to facing the intersectant political and ecological crises. Guattari (ibid, p. 20) believes that 'survival on this planet' is bound by the refoundation of politics that will have to pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions implied in the three ecologies – 'the environment, the socius and the psyche'. The ethico-aesthetic subjective system seems to be at work during the production stage of the filmmaking, as evident in Salwa defining her individual sense of well-being within an environmental context. She links the wellbeing of the psyche to that of our planet, flagging the destruction inflicted on 'trees' and 'animals' when the human psyche is out of sync with the environment (21 May 2021):

> I think the film is trying to make people understand the connection between anyone, any person and nature basically. It is a way to connect your life with nature and let nature help

> you with your life. Some people can use nature in a bad way – they can burn trees, they can cut them down, they can kill animals for fun or stress-relieving. We're trying to show that just a simple walk in the breeze can help you relieve your stress and think again about your life.

Salwa's explanation demonstrates an understanding of the connection between people and nature, between the mind and the earth, between our inner and outer worlds. It is against the backdrop of this connection that 'your life' needs to be re-examined. The very same ideas expressed by Salwa underpin the field of ecopsychology which focuses on the synthesis of the ecological and the psychological. Theodore Roszak (1995, p.5) 'suggests that we can read our transactions with the natural environment – the way we use or abuse the planet – as projections of unconscious needs and desires, in much the same way we can read dreams and hallucinations to learn about our deep motivations, fears, hatreds'. Roszak argues that an 'ecological unconscious' in our deep self could be 'drawn upon as resource for restoring us to environmental harmony' (ibid., p. 14).

The film *Breeze* is a manifestation of the developing ecological identity and its therapeutic effect of healing the mind and restoring the earth. The significance of 'ecological identity work' for its healing aspect has been emphasised by Thomashow (1996, p. 7): 'there is no doubt that ecological identity work has therapeutic implications in the sense that people want to heal themselves through their experience of nature, which may summon up painful feelings of loss as well as expressions of joy and happiness'. The narration and subtitles accompanying the name poem written in the notebook at the end of the film crystallises this sentiment: 'With the wind's breeze and nature's beauty, my mind feels relief and a sense of ease' (Figure 4.7). The students articulate the impact of mindful walking on producing a subjectivity that attunes to the breeze/elements of nature and a healthy mode of ecological engagement. Salwa illustrates how this ethical-aesthetic system works (20 May 2021):

> Salwa: The environment would receive less harm – some people go out walk their dogs, plant some trees and flowers, that would really help the environment. It's also how other people would use the environment to relieve their stress. It's like a cycle.
>
> S: Where do you place your film in this cycle?

> Salwa: Well, actually we are part of the environment and if we are able to protect the environment by not harming it – that alone would count as protection. Maybe we can also – I personally had some scenes where we were watering the trees …

As this excerpt of conversation shows, students are aware of the value of their work and its effect on the wider community. They regard their poetry and collective film as part of a therapeutic cycle that includes the individual and the surrounding environment, inseparably. It is a full cycle that starts with nature healing individuals, who in turn would protect the earth. Embedded in this thinking/argument is a mutuality that disrupts social and linguistic hierarchies and divisions that separate human from nature, reinforcing an ecological identity that plainly regards the collective 'we' as 'part of the environment' – an identity that fosters a sense of response-ability and a development of an interspecies ethics of care: 'we are able to protect the environment'.

The film, overall, presents an embodied way of knowing the self and the world, that has therapeutic implications for both. From the perspective of an educator, I see it as an invitation to reconsider the existing school system characterised by stress and a sense of dis-ease. It provides a reminder that it is not textbooks that matter for children/young people; it's the lived experience that gives them an opportunity to breathe freely in the world. To use the words of bell hooks (1994, p. 15), learning is 'striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world'. The students, through the opening scene of the film, criticise what Freire terms the 'banking' model of education where information is passively deposited into their minds. The ecopoetic quest offers an alternative model where students are active participants, taking control of their learning path, engaging in dialogue with the world/each other/their own selves, and choosing their languages/dialects and modes of expression. Such a quest puts education in the frame of liberation movements, regarding it as first and foremost 'a practice of freedom' as hooks puts it (1994, p. 14). The model of ecopedagogy, recommended by the student's film *Breeze*, adopts walking as an embodied way of learning and becoming-with the elements of nature that necessitates care-full communication with other human and nonhuman beings. It stems from a belief not just in the 'union of mind, body, and spirit' (hooks), but a union that includes the environment as well. In this engaged model of education, the representation of power is balanced in the teacher/student and human/nature relationships by acknowledging the agency of all matter. The voices of students/participants and that of nature are all recognised, heard and responded to,

as part of a conversation that could effect change. Based on the engagement of young people with the environment as represented in their poetry and film, I argue that children are not inclined to read passively about the elements of the world but would personally benefit and heal from free encounters with the elemental in their own bodies and the surrounding environment.

*

In conclusion, my participants were able to discover the breeze as a gentle life force as they engaged in the activities of walking, poetry reading/writing, drawing, photography and filmmaking. They reached this awareness through a multi-stage iterative process in which they negotiated the meanings of song and silence, flight and freedom, communication and connection, ease and relief. The recognition of the restorative power of the breeze stems from the students' sensory interactions, where it could help generate and give form to their expressions of ecological identity. In a manner similar to the recirculation of air/ the breeze within bodies, intertextuality seamlessly connects the poetry that students read, write and perform multilingually. The poetic walk that the film features provides a space to breathe, which is essential for imagining alternatives to the status quo. As we follow the students' encounters on the walk, we mainly hear voices that ring with *what ifs*. The 'If I were a bird' imaginings were helpful in expressing the young people's feelings, offering an opportunity to become- and heal-with the *Breeze*. Through the combination of the *what if* embedded in poetry and the endless possibilities found in the natural world, young migrants could gain the capacity to expand perceptions of self as they establish ties with the other, be it human or more-than-human. This chapter has showcased how encounters with the elemental in poetry reading/writing and walking could invigorate young people as they enter into a conversation with nature. The students' conversations continue with the element of water, which will be the focus of the following chapter.

5. Water in the Imagination of Migrant Young People: The Flow between Self and Place

> The flow of water is also the flow of language: water and poetry are essential movements that affirm and shape life. Water can be conceived of as beginningless beginning and endless end; if water has no shape of its own, it can take any shape and has infinite possibility. (Sze, 2023, p. 56)

This chapter taps into the power of water as a lifeforce to restore fluid imaginations in troubled times. It comes in a sequence after the focused engagement with the element of air and the discussion of how breathing matters the most for children in the previous chapter. Through poetry combined with image, movement and sensory explorations, children engage with the multitudes of water as part of their ecopoetic quest. I pay attention to such elemental and emotional encounters, highlighting the potential of water in eliciting reflections on, and ethical responses to, human-nature interrelatedness. In the first section of the chapter, I closely analyse the three texts used as stimuli in the water workshop (see Appendix D): 'النهر الخالد' (The Eternal River) by Mahmoud Hassan Ismail (1954), the Algerian folk song 'يا بحر الطوفان' (O Flooding Sea) reperformed by Hamza Namira (2016) and 'The River' by Valerie Bloom (2000). They undergo a process of re-interpretation from the standpoints of all participants: students, teachers and myself included. The ecocritical analysis of the poems is interspersed with the participants' comments and my fieldnotes, following the course of workshop discussions. In the second section of this chapter, I focus on water bodies as depicted in young people's poetry, drawings, photography and film. Regarding student productions as 'identity texts' (Cummins and Early, 2011), I examine my participants' text-making as a process where identities 'sediment' (Rowsell and Pahl, 2007). My analysis therefore draws on the post-workshop interviews I conducted one-to-one with students. This investigation largely addresses the research sub questions: 1) How do migrant children exercise multimodal and multilingual ways of learning in their textual productions to make sense of 'place' and 'identity'? and 2) What therapeutic possibilities do ecopoetry and text-making offer?

5.1. Exploring the Heritage of Poetry: A Close Reading

5.1.1. 'The Eternal River'

A Union between Self and Nature

The poem 'The Eternal River' by Mahmoud Hasan Ismail (1954) is not specifically aimed at a child audience. Nevertheless, Ismail's poetry has been included in the national Egyptian curriculum for upper primary school years along with works of other poets whose topics centre heavily on nationalism. It is worth noting here that such curricula have faced criticism for prioritising classical texts at the expense of contemporary literature. Mahmoud Mostafa (2015) poses the question 'why is contemporary literature absent?' to a number of Egyptian professors and authors. The responses have varied, pointing to reasons such as the widespread disregard for free verse for example among educators and the 'detachment of education officials, especially on the primary education level, from the literary scene, its movement, and issues' (Kheir, cited in Mostafa, 2015). I would add that one more reason for this emphasis on classics is the shortage of high-quality Arabic poetry that addresses the needs and interests of young people nowadays. I agree with Kheir that the absence of contemporary literature can lead to 'a huge gap between the world as it is and the world that the student is taught' (ibid.). The gap is obvious to anyone looking for Arabic poetry that reflects the experiences of this generation and stimulates their minds. In my selection of poetry, I have been driven by a wish to introduce migrant children to a wide variety of forms, styles, languages and dialects in order to expand their access to literary texts. By incorporating classical Arabic poems in my workshops, I have not only sought to assess their relevance and significance in today's context but, more importantly, to encourage young people to take part in reviving their heritage. This involves critically reading poetry, grappling with its meanings and responding to its rhythms with their own voices and bodies.

The poetry of Mahmoud Hasan Ismail (1910–1977) belongs to the canon of Egyptian heritage poems, characterised by adherence to traditional forms and the use of a highly figurative language to explore themes of nature and spirituality. As a poet, Ismail was deeply influenced by the Egyptian countryside where he grew up. Elements from this environment like the Nile, waterwheels and cottages permeate his poetry; an overview of his poetry reveals nature as the main source of his poetic imagination. His first poetry collection entitled *Cottage Songs* (1932) centred

around the land and the daily life of peasants. ‘The Eternal River’ is one of his most famous poems, that was sung by the legendary singer Mohammed Abdel-Wahab (1902–1991).

In my close textual reading of ‘The Eternal River’, I ask: what kind of environmental sensibility does the poem convey? The poem personifies the river throughout, mythicising and mystifying it along the way. In the first stanza, readers encounter a traveller on his journey to find home, carrying the most intriguing luggage of all: ‘imagination’. The opening line immediately immerses the listener/reader into the water of the Nile – blurring the distinction between the poet, the reader and the river. This poetic confluence suspends any detached attitude that the reader/listener might have towards the Nile as an external entity; it swiftly personalises the river experience with the introduction of a ‘traveller’ and the invocation of ‘imagination’. This faculty of creation stretches the commonality between nature and humanity, allowing the audience to redefine themselves and reconsider the question ‘who am I?’:

A traveller carrying imagination magic, perfume and shadows	مسافرٌ زاده الخيالُ ... والسحر والعطر والظلالُ
Thirsty with a glass in his hands and love, art and beauty	ظمآن والكأس في يديه ... والحب والفن والجمالُ
Nights have grown on his land and mountains have lost their lives	شابت على أرضه الليالي ... وضيعت عمرها الجبالُ
He still seeks home day and night, he asks	ولم يزل ينشدُ الديارَ ... ويسأل الليل والنهارَ
People are drunk with his love wandering on the wide shore	والناس في حبه سكارى ... هاموا على شطه الرحيبِ
Oh, how terrible is your secret and strange is your wandering wave	آهٍ على سرك الرهيبِ ... وموجك التائه الغريب
O Nile, the magician of the unseen (Ismail, 1954, translation mine)	يا نيل يا ساحر الغيوب

Ismail paints a Romantic picture of the river, wrapping it in an aura of magic that bestows its powerful beauty on all land, mountains and people. There is a tendency to highlight ‘imagination’ as the source of the ‘eternal’, that sustains the river/traveller’s life. It appears as a power that invokes a feeling of immortality with regards to time and space: ‘Nights have grown on his land /

and mountains have lost their lives'. This Romantic image is reminiscent of Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (Book VI 1805; 1850) when he speaks of imagination as the power that makes us realise that our home is in infinitude: 'Our destiny, our being's heart and home. / Is with infinitude, and only there'. Ismail maintains his Romantic representation of the Nile in the second stanza where the persona identifies with the wandering waves and wishes he was a wave so as to tell the nights all about his agonies. He turns to addressing the river directly in mythical terms as the giver of eternity and the source of inspiration for songs and love. The myth of the river is grounded in its mystery and the 'terrible secret' that keeps echoing in the refrain of the song.

O you who gives eternity to time O you who pours love and songs	يا واهب الخلدِ للزمانِ ... يا ساقي الحبِ والأغاني
Bring me a drink, give me a drink and let me wander like a bird in heavens	هات اسقني واسقني ... ودعني أهيم كالطير في الجنانِ
I wish I were a wave so I could tell your nights, what ached my heart	يا ليتني موجة فأحكي ... إلى لياليكَ ما شجاني
I wish I were the wind's neighbour pouring light onto the confused	وأغتدي للرياحِ جارا ... وأسكب النور للحيارى
If longing tormented me the night winds would be my healer	فإن كواني الهوى وطارَا ... كانت رياح الدجى طبيبِي
Oh, how terrible is your secret and strange is your wandering wave	آهٍ على سرك الرهيبِ ... وموجك التائه الغريبِ
O Nile, the magician of the unseen (Ismail, 1954, translation mine)	يا نيل يا ساحر الغيوب

As he wonders about the secret of the Nile, Ismail merges his own self with water in a mystic symphony in which waves, wind and light are all players. Light is linked to the river, with a recognition of its role in guiding 'the confused'. In the whole body of Ismail's work, 'light' is a significant trope that takes on several symbolic meanings depending on the context of the poem. It is a part of his poetic quest where he seeks a revelation of 'the unseen' by connecting to and interacting with the material world. Jamal Ghareghashlaghi (2020, p. 80) analyses the mystic Sufi

traces of Ismail's usage of light, linking it to his pursuit of truth. He explains Ismail's contemplative vision: 'The truth is a secret that reveals itself to the poet's eyes but quickly disappears. The poet cannot hold it as it gets found and lost at the same time' (ibid., p. 80). This sounds like the secret Ismail investigates in 'The Eternal River': 'Oh, how terrible is your secret / and strange is your wandering wave / O Nile, the magician of the unseen'. This secret can be understood along the lines of mysticism when reading lines from other poems like 'God and the Flute' (1980), where Ismail writes 'I see Him [God] on the river'.

The secret reflected 'on the river' is the same as that carried by 'the wind' and revealed by the human imagination. Ismail's meditation on the 'terrible' secret of 'The Eternal River' seems to refer to that 'under-presence, / The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim / Or vast in its own being' described by Wordsworth in *The Prelude* (1805, 1850). What is common between both poets is the pantheistic sentiment that leads them to find God in nature and to 'see into the life of things', as Wordsworth puts it in *Tintern Abbey* (1798). Despite the fundamental difference in context between Ismail and Wordsworth, they share a conviction that the images of nature are the language of the sublime and that it is the imagination that reveals the invisible world. Ismail is preoccupied throughout his poetry by a quest to discover the secret of this universe, the mysterious light that shines through all creatures. Ghareghashlaghi (2020, p. 81) argues that 'nature in all its forms whether animate or inanimate, in Ismail's thinking, is but an embodiment of the Divine and so reveals the unity of being'. In relation to water, Samantha Walton (2022, p. 28) points out that 'the belief that running water is especially sacred is widespread across the world, investing places with special meaning and elevating some waterways to the level of the Divine' – which applies to the Nile as portrayed by Ismail.

'The Eternal River' is one example of Ismail finding the sublime in nature, of nature deriving its sublimity and power from an inherent connection with 'love, art and beauty'. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1825 [1757], p. 29), Edmund Burke defines the sublime in terms of 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling'. Ismail's 'The Eternal River' does revolve around a 'terrible secret'; however, it does not relegate the sublime to terror but to love – 'O you

who gives eternity to time / O you who pours love and songs'. This aesthetic experience of awe mixed with love stimulates wonder as shown in the repetition of 'Oh, how terrible is your secret / and strange is your wandering wave'. Calling the Nile 'the magician of the unseen' might lead the audience to more curious engagements with the surrounding environment. Awe here lies in the awareness of the infinite expanse of the river's power. This song could be seen as an encouragement to seek awe in the places we come from and the places we inhabit.

By recognising the 'magic' of the river, the value of this lyrical poem seems to reside in the awe it inspires in its listeners and readers - a 'feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world' (Keltner, 2016). Dacher Keltner in his online article 'Why Do We Feel Awe?' (2016) details the psychological and emotional benefits of experiencing awe. The main argument of Keltner (2016) that I build on here is the capacity of awe to embed the individual in a social identity, which I would extend in my study to ecological identity. Finding awe in nature deepens our understanding of the sublime, which in turn could stimulate care and kindness; 'being in the presence of vast things calls forth a more modest, less narcissistic self, which enables greater kindness toward others', writes Keltner (ibid.). Momentary experiences of awe could thus redefine the self in terms of the ecological. In this regard, Lee Rozelle (2006) presents the notion of 'ecosublime' that should lead people to an aesthetic-spiritual reconceptualisation of place and more responsible engagements with nature. The question that the poem raises here is about those aesthetic moments of awe and to what extent they could provoke the audience of young people 'to perceive their world anew' (Rozelle, 2006, p. 7).

Awe and Multimodality

A sense of awe at the river is heightened through the auditory aspects of music and singing in the original song and the added visuals in the YouTube video that we viewed during the workshop. The sublime aesthetic cannot be separated from the voice of the singer, given how strange it sounds to the ears of my group of 12-14-year-olds. Mohammed Abdel Wahab (1901–1991) is a legendary Egyptian composer and musician that reigned the world of modern Arabic music with the composition of over 1820 songs from the 1930s through the 1970s. He is called 'the musician of generations' and so introducing him to today's Arab young people is of great value in heritage-focused programmes. Habeeb Salloum (1995) sums up the unparalleled worth of his work to Arab

culture: ‘His rendering in melody of the classical poetry from the Arab’s golden age and that of their modern struggle against Western colonialism inspired in his listeners a feeling of pride in their rich heritage’. Abdel Wahab is valorised now as a classical icon, yet he was perceived as a modernised innovator who experimented with new musical forms and instruments back in the 1950s for instance. Abdel Wahab’s baritone voice is usually described as captivating; Arabs remember being ‘bewitched with his voice’ (Salloum, 1995). The students’ unfamiliarity with the voice of Abdel Wahab might make the cultural experience quite distant at first. This initial inaccessibility is compensated by an engagement with real images of the river and the text on the screen (Figure 5.1). Although the young people are far removed from the popular culture of the last century, the multimodal enhancement of the text has helped engage them with the poem, bridging gaps in style, relevance, meaning and language level (Burn and Kress, 2018).

Figure 5.1: Still from the YouTube video of the poem viewed during the workshop.

5.1.2. ‘O Flooding Sea’

An Ambivalent Embodiment of Survival and Death

The experience of water is not always pleasurable; the water in rivers and seas does not constantly carry the meanings of love and beauty discussed earlier. Whereas the river in our first song ‘The Eternal River’ is the vital source of life, the second folksong ‘O Flooding Sea’ presents the

opposite. The vastness and depth of seascapes establish the sea as a complex paradox, for it 'can bring hope and life, but also can create fear and destruction; it is a realm of possibility and potential, but equally a place of limitation and interruption' (McKinstry, p. 3). In migration narratives, the sea is specifically notorious for this ambivalent embodiment of survival and death. 'يا بحر الطوفان – O Flooding Sea' is part of the Algerian heritage that deals with the immigration issue, of people crossing the Mediterranean sea towards Europe. It was written and composed by Algerian artist Mohamed El-Baji (1933–2003) during his political imprisonment amid Algeria's revolution against the French occupation (1830–1962). The song was performed for the first time by the late Boujemaa El-Anqis (1927–2015), then it was later re-performed by Egyptian artist Hamza Namira (b. 1980) in his TV series *Remix* (2016). In the *Remix* interview with Namira (2016), El-Anqis's son recounts the background story of the lyrical poem written by El-Baji. It is based on a tragic incident in 1963 involving El-Baji's friend, a sailor named Mokhtar, who lost his life during an attempt at maritime migration. This remains a pressing global issue today (Zapata-Barrero and Awad, 2024; Hammond, 2015), lending renewed significance to the song's reintroduction.

Namira, the pop star who started his music career in Alexandria, is known to my group of young participants. They became very excited that we would include one of his works in our workshop; Reemas J. enthusiastically brought up a favourite song by him, exclaiming: 'I literally love that one' (14 March 2021). It is worth noting that Namira is himself a migrant in London who had to leave his country after the unlikely turn of events in 2013. Namira gained his popularity through his expression of the sociopolitical issues that the people of my generation have been experiencing; his name is associated with the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the subsequent forced displacement of revolutionaries. A sample stroll through his songs would chart the fluctuations between hope and despair in the past decade; from the 2008 dreamy debut song 'إحلم معايا' (Dream with Me) through his 2011 revolutionary 'الميدان' (The Square) to 'الوقعة الأخيرة' (The Last Fall) in 2021 which shows a struggle with despair. In the introduction to their book *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa*, Walid El Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman (2013, p. 7) find this kind of popular culture 'a manifestation of people's feelings and response to what is taking place around them, which makes it more accessible to lay people than other forms of cultural production'. In the context of a creative writing workshop with migrant Arab children, pop culture has proven valuable in sparking interest in their heritage language and providing a scaffold for various forms of Arabic poetry. I have selected texts from popular culture for their accessibility and their capacity

to overcome boundaries. As El Hamamsy and Soliman (ibid.) argue, 'It is also precisely in popular culture that people of different ethnicities, genders, orientations, etc. can find common grounds for expression and connection that transcend such differences and focus on what is common among them. As such, it is the true voice of the people.'

Since 2016, in his *Remix* TV programme, Namira has embarked on reviving folk songs from diverse cultures. His approach involves rearranging these songs and performing them with bands from around the globe. He has toured the world extensively, blending local traditional lyrics with various music genres in collaboration with prominent musicians. Namira's musical style is experimental; he overlays Western musical instruments onto Arabic songs and melodies, appealing to a broad audience of young people. Each of his 20-30-minute *Remix* videos begins with a historical overview of the folkloric piece, followed by an interview with either the original artist (if alive) or one of their family members or disciples, providing insight into the song's origins and context. The hybridity of Namira's works resonates with a generation in transition, where the binary of 'tradition' and 'modernity' is best challenged.

Figure 5.2: Namira's reperformance of 'O Flooding Sea'

The way Namira engages with the Algerian folk heritage of 'بحر الطوفان' (O Flooding Sea) and its modern reintroduction has been expected to inspire my participants of migrant young people. After his interview with El-Anqis's son in Algeria, the video takes the audience to London's West Point

studio where Namira meets Valkania, a London-based band that mixes Balkan rhythms with blues, jazz, rock, ragtime and reggae. The fusion of cultures that Namira has aimed for through the reproduction of the Algerian song is clear in the video clip we watched together online (Figure 5.2). The multi-cultural layers in this collaboration include the Arabic lyrics with the addition of Greek translation and subtitles, the bouzouki accompanying the guitar, and the subject of the Mediterranean Sea sung against the backdrop of the Thames. The footage of the bridge bears a twofold significance: it symbolically celebrates multiculturalism and positions art as a cross-cultural meeting point, but it also represents a symbol of power and colonial history with complex political tensions. Juxtaposing the folksong and the Tower Bridge background complicates the meaning, alluding to a fluid transnational space characterised by flows of culture but also of imperialism and capitalism. This Algerian song set to a Balkan rhythm provides the students with authentic musical and language experiences, fostering artistic collaborations, cultural crossings and critical questioning of history and the status quo.

The multimodal connection between the heritage of the past and contemporary pop culture provokes the audience's affective engagement. The multimodal brings the viewer in proximity with Algerian Arabic heritage, constructing the relationship between the text, performers, nature and the current issues of migration. Affect is 'inseparable from the sensory, from meaning, and from the social contexts and histories in which texts are designed', as Andrew Burn and Gunther Kress (2018, p. 15) maintain. The evocation of emotions is the result of the orchestrating modes of the moving image, the vocal performances and the musical composition. It can be added that affect plays a big part in the children's making of meaning. This is attested by the students' positive reception of the folksong, which has been surprising given that Algerian Arabic greatly differs from those colloquial dialects spoken by members of our group. 'I don't know why but I feel like I have understood what is said in an Algerian dialect more than in classical Arabic', Mohammed comments on the Algerian folksong we have watched together as a group (14 March 2021). To an untrained ear, Algerian Arabic might be challenging to understand as it is heavily influenced not only by Modern Standard Arabic but also Berber, French, Spanish and English. In the lyrics of 'O Flooding Sea', the difference in the usage of some vocabulary is represented by the word 'اديت' which would mean 'give' in other Arabic vernaculars but here suggests the opposite meaning 'take'. What Mohmmed has been trying to express by his comment might be related to the affect of language and the proximity felt through a spoken dialect charged with genuine emotions. The

multimodal dimension proves to have heightened the experience of familiarity with the Algerian dialect and the heritage of Arabic language in the lyrics:

O dark sea, what have you taken of men and women?	يا البحر الغامق ماذا اديت رجال ونسوان
Young women and men, girls and boys	شابات وشبان، صبيات وصبيان
O dark sea, what have you taken of men and women?	يا بحر الغامق ماذا اديت رجال ونسوان
Young women and men, girls and boys	شابات وشبان، صبيات وصبيان
Since you have taken them with their ship, they didn't appear –	من اللي اديته بسفينته ما بان وعدي
O flooding sea	يا بحر الطوفان

One of my participants has picked up on the image of the 'dark sea' and the feelings of 'betrayal and depression' that it has evoked in her during the workshop. She elaborates: 'He kept asking: where is he taking the girls? … He is taking from me someone that I love'. The sound of words crashing against their ears has foregrounded the destructive side of the sea. In his *Blue Ecocriticism*, Sidney Dobrin (2021, p. 22) states that 'not returning from the sea is understood to imply death, and such failures of return saturate literary and visual representations depicting ocean human graveyard, fuelling cultural thalassophobia'. The sea in the Algerian folksong reinforces this image of the sea as a space of loss that evokes a collective fear and risk:

They went out in the morning	ملي خرج فالصبحيـة
But didn't come back in the evening	ما رجعشي في العشيـة
I asked their beloved sailors	سولت أحبابه البحرية
But there was no news	حتى خبر ما بان
O flooding sea	يا بحر الطوفــان

What the sea presents in this folksong is a 'memorial journey' (McKinstry, 2019, p. 7) to remember 'أحبابه البحرية - beloved sailors' who crossed that vast space. As a 'memorial marker' (ibid., p. 13), the song shows how the trajectories of migration and diaspora influence people's relationship to the sea. Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007, p. 30) argues that the 'use of aquatic metaphors, a maritime grammar of the "peoples of the sea," helps us to recognize the importance of the ocean in the

transnational imaginary and in diaspora theory'. In the workshop, the folksong has served as an entry point to explore our diasporic intersections with the sea and other water bodies, including memories as well as imaginative interactions.

Lament and the Apostrophic Practice

In the workshop discussion around the folksong 'O Flooding Sea', another participant points to the dialogue with the sea and the use of apostrophe to address it directly. 'There is a dialogue between me and the بحر [sea]', says Remas J. (14 March 2021). She adds: 'I like the way he [the poet] sounds like directing the song to the ocean. He is speaking personally to the sea'. This tendency to speak to the sea suggests an intimacy, no matter how hard the feelings expressed are – the immediacy of the apostrophe conveys the strong emotions felt in the song. Despite the explicit accusation in the Algerian folk song, communication has not ceased between the 'flooding sea' and the poet and those who join in the song by extension. There is a paradox in the portrayal of the vast sea as both a refuge and an authority sought for answers to clarify this tragedy experienced by the poet and his beloved sailors.

Remas's reflection on the 'dialogue' taking place with the sea has reminded me of a similar conversation recorded in a verse entitled 'رثاء – Lament' (1935) by my grandfather Abdul-Halim M. Esmael Shahwan (1892– 1969). The context of my grandfather's poem is similar to Al-Baji's in that it was based on true events. In *Songs for Peace* (Esmael, 2005, p. 71), my uncle relates that the poem is 'an elegy lamenting the death of the poet's dear cousin (Abdul-Azeem Gabr Shahwan) who drowned while enjoying a swim in the Nile waterway (*Bahr Moweiss*) passing their village near Zagazig in the province of Sharkia (Egypt). The poem is dated 22nd May 1935':

Woe to the water that swallowed you!
Woe to that water that went berserk!
That water of [you] Mowiess is no longer blue;
I see it only as stagnant murk!

I declare with no deception:
Mowiess, [you] shall remain my foe;
That [you] may enjoy rejection,

ويح بحر مت فيه ... ويح بحر قد تمرد
لون مائك يا مويْسٌ ... صار في عيني أسود
طال عمري أم تراخى ... قط لا أبغيك مقصد
فانعمن بالهجر واشقى ... وابكينْ منا التودد

Or be damned and cease to flow!!

*

Curse that name of [you] Mowiess
Among the waters when mentioned!
May you Mowiess be blinded;
And never to catch a dear you chase!!

May you Mowiess dry or freeze,
And be crushed like mouldy cheese!
Please God grant my uncle solace;
As he faced a fate so callous!!

يا مويسٌ بئس اسمك ... في البحار إذا تردد
ليتها عميت عيونك ... عن عزيز قد تودد
غاض ماؤك شُل جريك ... فانسحق يا بحر واجمد
رَب صبر قلبَ عم ... بات مُضنىً وهو يحمد
موقنا أن البلايا ... من إله قد تفرد

(Shahwan 1935/2005, translated by Esmael, pp.72-73)

As I inspect my personal heritage for similarities and differences in the use of apostrophe as a literary device that connects us to the environment, it appears as one of the most powerfully moving strategies for processing disasters related to nature. Lyric, in other words, seems to be a fitting form for describing the relationship between water bodies and heavy hearts. Just like 'O Flooding Sea', my grandfather's elegy is plunged into the darkness of water that drowned his cousin: 'That water of [you] Mowiess is no longer blue; / I see it only as stagnant murk' (Shahwan 1935/2005, translated by Esmael, p. 72). Despite being grief-stricken, the poet still addresses the waterway in his village by its name 'Mowiess'. The apostrophe to Moweiss conveys the strong emotions that Shahwan opens the elegy with: 'There is this fire raging / It set my bosom ablaze' and 'My heart is scorched with grief' (ibid.). It implies a turbulent connection with this local waterway: 'Curse that name of [you] Mowiess / Among the waters when mentioned'. The connection is cursed and rather turns into a relationship of enmity and abandonment: 'Mowiess, [you] shall remain my foe', '[you] may enjoy rejection' (ibid.). The poetics of grief and poetics of place intersect in the apostrophe to Mowiess, which becomes a site of mourning and memory. Water, with its creative-destructive forces, becomes a space that generates ambivalences.

'Lament' is an honest account of the tragically changing relationship to nature, highlighting those human-nature tensions. Grief and anger complicate the human relationship with seas and

waterways. Disbelief arising in the face of destructive forces like floods and death, in the form of repeated questions or anger and cursing. Addressing the sea, and directly speaking to the forces of nature, affords the writer and reader a mourning outlet. The sorrowful calls for the water at the end of the poem 'Lament' to 'cease to flow' and to 'dry and freeze', however, foreshadow a crisis to be lived by later generations – which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

5.1.3. 'The River'

Personification and Affective Entanglements

As we move in the poetry workshop towards a more in-depth examination of the thoughts and feelings experienced during our literary interactions with water, we listen to the Jamaican-British poet Valerie Bloom (b. 1956) reading her poem 'The River' (Poetry Archive).[9] Taken from the poetry collection *Let Me Touch the Sky* (2000), Bloom's poem speaks to children of a river that has a simultaneously personal touch and a universal appeal. Migration again serves as the springboard for this personal meditation on the course of the river. It constructs a mobile sense of place inspired by the river, thereby normalising nomadism and the relation not to only 'one place' but to a multiplicity of sites:

> The River's a wanderer.
> A nomad, a tramp,
> He doesn't choose one place
> To set up his camp.

Bloom's personal background of crossing the Atlantic to settle in another country seems to be at the heart of this reflection on what a river is. In this respect, Bloom presents another relatable example of a migrant poet who came to the UK in the late 70s – 'I came from Jamaica', she emphasises in her interviews (Bloom, 2019).

The influence of Bloom's Jamaican birthplace on her relationship with nature in general can be found in the description of her creative process. She links her literary productivity in the conservatory of her current study with her homeland in Jamaica: 'I sit in here [conservatory] and

[9] https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/the-river/

I look at the bougainvillea, I look at the orchids, the anthuriums, I look at the bromeliads and think I am back in the Caribbean' (Bloom, 2019). She traces the roots of the inspiration she finds in either the conservatory or the garden back to the Caribbean: 'I used to have a secret place in the Caribbean where I used to climb up into a tree and write up there and make up stories in my head, so when I come in here [conservatory] I feel a little bit like that and so that's why this is one of my favourite places' (ibid.).

The rich heritage of music that Bloom gets from Jamaica can be heard not just in her voice, which exuberantly combines modified Caribbean dialect with Standard English, but also in the rhythm and rhymes of 'The River'. The fifth stanza of the poem is dedicated to the sounds of the river, where the auditory imagination can depict the river as a 'singer':

> The River's a singer,
> As he dances along,
> The countryside echoes
> The notes of his song.

Bloom organically incorporates music into her works, drawing on Jamaican oral and cultural traditions. In an interview with *The Poetry Archive*, Bloom (2019) clarifies these links:

> In the Caribbean, the art-forms are not separate. You don't just have poetry in one section and music in another, they are all inter-related. And so you would get a poem which has singing and dancing and so on and I draw on that culture when I write, so a lot of my poetry draws on folk songs quite a lot and I use rap in my writing and all those musical forms that I grew up with influence my writing.

Just like the sides of a prism, each of the poem's six quatrains reveals a different facet of the river in relation to the poet. It approaches the river from the multiple viewpoints of a 'wanderer', 'winder', 'hoarder', 'baby', 'singer' or a 'monster'. This allows as many diverse listeners/readers as possible to personally connect to the river, and so the workshop participants have been asked to think about the aspect of river that they most identify with. Many of the children's writings, as shown later in the chapter, echo Bloom's images, especially those portraying the river's movement:

Through valley and hill
He twists and he turns,
He just cannot be still.

Mohammed responds to the poem during workshop (14 March 2021), saying: 'I feel that it is making the river the same person – it is like a human being in different moods every time'. Seema comments: 'I love the usage of personification' before adding also 'nice rhythm, nice lyrics'. Throughout the poem, the 'River' appears capitalised, personified and is constantly referred to with the pronoun 'He'. The attribution of a human character to the river in each stanza can be claimed to present cases of 'pathetic fallacy', a term that John Ruskin coined in 1856. The term denotes a 'falseness in all our impressions of external things' (Ruskin, 2006 [1856], p. 1323), which takes place 'when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy' (ibid., p. 1322). Describing the river in terms of human conduct like wandering, choosing, dancing, burying, humming or happily sucking thumbs, for example, could be regarded as '*un*true' and criticised as anthropocentric if conceived in a literal sense (ibid.).

This literary device of personification or 'pathetic fallacy' is re-evaluated through the lens of material ecocriticism, offering new meanings and implications (Tamarkin, 2017; McLane, 2017; Arsić, 2017). Stefano Rozzoni (2021, p. 117) argues that such 'occurrences of "pathetic fallacy" … become useful a) for reflecting on how forms of agency can be acknowledged in reference to the nonhuman world, and b) for discussing the material and discursive entanglements of human and nonhuman entities along the line of contemporary ecocritical epistemology'. In countering the critical discourse associated with anthropomorphic images, Rozzoni (2021) builds the argument around Iovino and Oppermann's (2014, p. 451) material-ecocritical viewpoint which is 'not only a way to contrast binary models of nature and knowledge, but also to redraw the maps of ecological interactions, restructuring ethics and politics in the complex, non-linear, co-evolutionary interplay of human and non-human agency'.

By applying this lens to Bloom's poem about the river, the personified images can be said to communicate to the readership a complex sense of human-nonhuman entanglement, suggesting the existence of agentive acts within the nonhuman as well. From a material ecocritical perspective, ascribing acts such as singing and dancing to the river 'not only corroborates, again, the idea of

agency to nonhumans, but also underscores an intimate form of entanglement', i.e. 'affective attunement among human and nonhuman entities in the poem', as Rozzoni (2021, p.124) puts it. With the river described using the feelings of 'happy' and 'vexed', the lines encourage the listener/reader to expand their environmental imagination. The linguistic effects not only set the mood of the stanzas but also paints the river in relatable terms. The correlation of feelings between the human and the river imparts a sense of emotional connectedness between the two entities.

Bloom's poem concludes with a metaphor depicting the river as a 'monster': 'Hungry and vexed, / He's gobbled up trees / And he'll swallow you next'. Reemas J. (workshop, 14 March 2021) picks up on this image, connecting it to the rest of the stanzas: 'I think they use the idea that the river is long and deep to like make it into a monster, because you can get lost there easily'. Reemas's comment shows that this image is perceived as much more than a humorous ending – it discloses the other side of nature that is not always benign. Extending the discussion to the troubled human-environment relationship, this image becomes particularly alarming when considered in the context of the Anthropocene and its environmental crises, such as sea level rise, that could literally 'swallow you next'.

*

5.2. Children's Reflections on Water

In the second part of the chapter, I consider the use of the above-discussed themes and devices in the texts produced by my participants. I attempt to find out how far they encourage 'affective attunements' with the environment in the real world and how far they inspire them to 'reflect on human-nonhuman entanglements beyond the text' (Rozzoni, 2021, p. 128). Through the children's articulated encounters with water, I follow the development of the participants' ecological identities. Included in this investigation is the flow between children and places whether 'textual, material, or imaginary', so I examine how they are affected 'not simply by boundaries but also by practices, structures of feeling, and sedimented features of habitus', as Nedra Reynolds (2007, p. 2) puts it in *Geographies of Writing*.

5.2.1. ‘My Life as a River’: Fixity and Fluidity

The reading and listening to the three poems discussed above constitute only one part of the workshop, which included other creative writing and suggested outdoor activities for children. These activities aimed to provide the participants with an opportunity to reimagine themselves as ‘bodies of water’ and to tap into the embodied possibilities of fluidity (Neimanis, 2017). The water workshop has started with reflections on the waterways connected to each participant, leading to the poetry shared from Egyptian, Algerian and Syrian cultural heritages. The students then began writing their own poetry, considering how their inner selves could be understood in relation to those external bodies of rivers, seas and oceans. Throughout this engagement, they have positioned themselves differently in relation to water. The relationality characterising both their physical and poetic encounters with water raises an ethical dimension that eventually surfaces in their poetry.

Through the warmup question of ‘What rivers do you remember?’, the group has spontaneously drawn a map stretching from the Nile westward to the Euphrates eastward in our Zoom conversation (14 March 2021):

10:13:10	From HIBA: Tigris and Euphrates
10:13:28	From Fetnah: نهر العاصي
10:13:34	From SEEMA: The Nile River (the first thing that came to my ind)
10:13:36	From MOHAMMED: Arabian Sea
10:13:38	From SEEMA: mind*
10:13:49	From Reemas: wadi al batin

Seema chooses the Nile River even though she has never visited it but the acquaintance with it developed through her Social Studies class. Mohammed mentions the Arabian Sea, describing its geographical location during our discussion in terms of the countries it borders: ‘beside Africa and Ethiopia, under Yemen and Oman, that area … the Gulf of Aden goes to the Red Sea … I am from Aden in Yemen, so I used to go there a lot.’ Mohammed continues with his portrayal of Aden as a ‘peninsula surrounded by the sea from three sides’, highlighting the ‘big coastline’ and saturating it with ‘more of blue’. Reemas talks about ‘Wadi al-Batin, a river that runs in Saudi Arabi, Iraq and Kuwait’ and goes on saying: ‘I visited it once because I used to live in Saudi Arabia’. Hiba

joins the conversation to tell everybody about the Tigris and Euphrates rivers: 'I visited the two rivers a lot and I really like the place in Iraq … when I heard the word rivers, they're the first rivers that came to my mind'. This exchange becomes a journey through memories of visiting rivers, allowing participants to express and further explore their attachments to certain places. Looking at the way rivers trickle through the different countries they mentioned, they realise the connecting nature of rivers.

From such river visualisations fixed to national geographies, there follows a collection of poetry written by the children exploring how they personally relate to their rivers. The prompt for the children's creative writing during the workshop has been: 'My life as a river …' (14 March 2021). As they experimented with ways of thinking with water in writing, they seem to have moved further from the fixity of national borders and deeper into the fluidity of their own bodies/selves, overstepping the limits between the inside and outside worlds. Seema, for instance, reflects on the clarity of the colour blue and relates to the river's nonstop motion through the image of a rollercoaster:

> The river is a rollercoaster
> Once you step a foot in it, it will take you to a long path
> The river never calms down
> It will keep on moving all in one motion
> The river is a reflection of the sky
> Has a blue colour but clear from the inside.

Mohammed is also drawn to the motion of the river, projecting onto it a state of uncertainty. He then chooses to identify with the quality of it being unstoppable despite all the tough conditions:

> My life is a river not finding a way
> Sometimes left and others right
> Sometimes up and others down
> But whatever it is it never stops
> Although it goes through harsh times

The run-on couplets written by Hanin capture the same spirit of unstoppable rivers. She echoes those statements of the ability to continue regardless of any obstacles, juxtaposing blocks and locks with dreams and streams:

> my life as a river isn't easy
> sometimes it could get a bit too breezy
>
> the path may be blocked
> it may also be locked
>
> but that doesn't stop me, I will continue
> and begin
>
> to follow my dreams
> to join the streams
>
> emptying into a waterfall
> I might often fall

'Fall' is accepted as participants begin to get in touch with the watery bodies they are. The flow of rivers presents the students with a material example of resistance and continuation. The students follow the possibilities presented by the motion of water, not just thinking but feeling with and as a river. The affirmations inspired by those aqueous metaphors of rivers, waterfalls and floods seem to introduce a consciousness of fluidity that develops in the shared space of reflection on and with water.

5.2.2. From 'My River' to 'Dear Sea': Glory and Debris

The children's own writings have varied like the lyrics they read in the first part of the workshop. They too developed a variety of texts that reflect the changing forms of human relationships with the different bodies of water. The texts range from marvelling at the sublime beauty of rivers/seas to lamenting their ailment and loss, conflating the personal with the collective and the

psychological with the ecological. This section analyses two examples: ‘My River’ and ‘Dear Sea’.

‘My River’ by Aya provides an embodied example of how the imaginative engagement with water develops over time as the illustrations show (Figures 5.3 and 5.4):

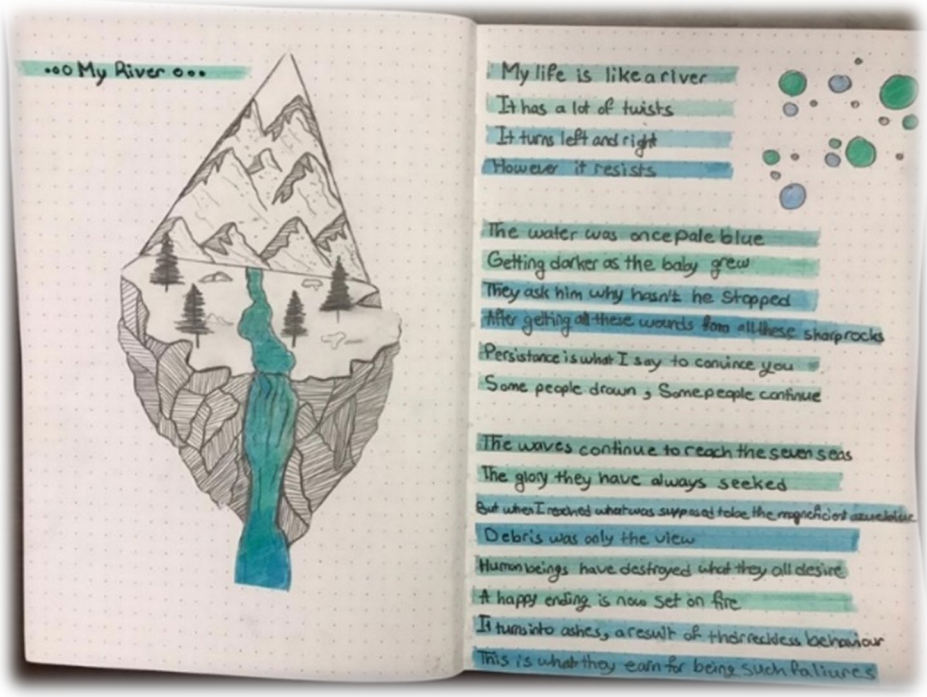

Figure 5.3: Aya’s first illustration of ‘My River’ (20 March 2021)

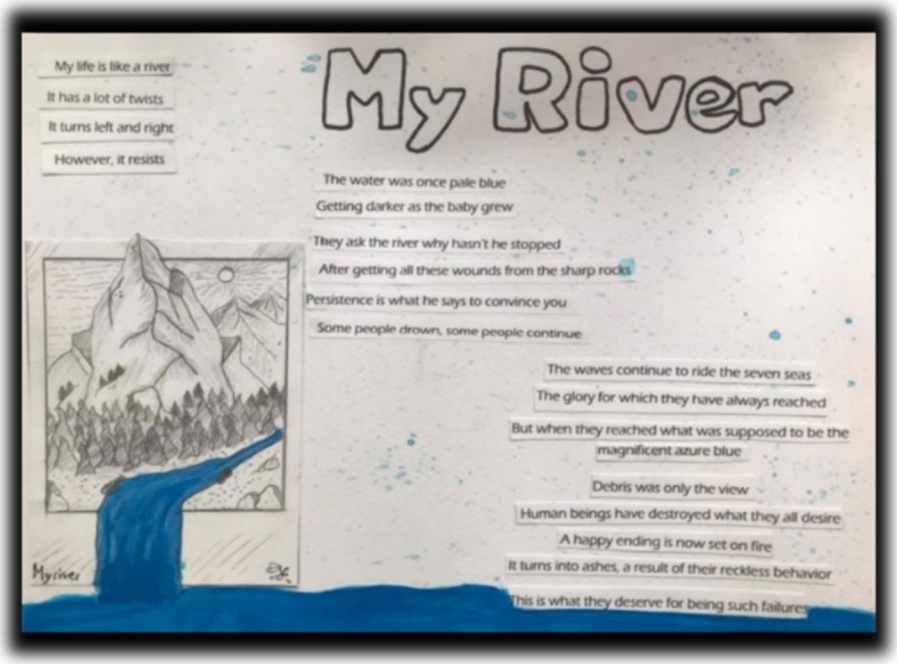

Figure 5.4: Aya's second illustration of 'My River' (30 May 2021)

Aya's drawing of the river evolves in the span of two months, from the time the idea was introduced during the week of the Water Workshop in March until the end of May, when she decided to share it at the Multilingual Poetry and Digital Storytelling Festival 'Our Planet' 2021.[10] Her vivid evocations of a mountain waterscape explore what it feels like to traverse this space, relying on specific images, colour gradients and texture effects. She approaches the river in a highly imagist style in the sense that precise images precede and inspire the written text. Aya explains her creative process, saying:

> Before I start writing, I **draw my ideas** and think about how I can **turn this image into words**. I really like to draw what I'm thinking about … so when I read the poem and look at my drawing next to it, I feel like they're **connected** in a way. (Workshop Five, 28 March 2021)

[10] Aya's poem and illustration are published on the Critical Connections MDST website: https://goldsmithsmdst.com/safir-international-school-turkey/

The placement of the drawing on the left page of her notebook (Figure 5.3) clearly shows how the image starts the poetic encounter on the opposite page, which appears as a written interpretation that comes second in the process. It is interesting that this way, even though she writes in English, her illustration (Figure 5.3) follows the same positioning as in Arabic picture books, where the Arabic text usually appears on the right and the illustration on the left. The reader's eyes would wander across the double-page spread to follow the story of Aya's river, from scattered droplets into a steady stream carving its way through the rocky mountain.

As Aya strives to find word-equivalents to what she has initially perceived as images in her drawing, her language gradually probes the multiple dimensions of what she calls 'My river'. The drawings (Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4) consist of three distinctive levels (upper, middle and lower courses) paralleled in the structure of the poem, which flows in three corresponding stanzas. The stanzas themselves grow from four lines to six lines and finally eight lines, mirroring the 'baby' river whose life the poem depicts. The drops scattered on the page corner accumulate to form the 'waves' that 'continue to reach the seven seas' in the poem.

The merger of different-sized water drops, into highlighted lines of varied lengths, and then into the image of the whole river, reveals as much about the workings of Aya's mind as it does about the river. Her mind seems to filter and organise the sensory data it perceives through the juxtaposition between the summit and the waterfall, the source and the river mouth, its rootedness and motion, its persistence in place and its flashes of colour, the past and the present. All these tensions and negotiations are presented in the image combining 'water' and 'sharp rocks'. Aya shapes her observations into a narrative where the river is asked questions and is capable of giving answers. Lessons of resistance and 'persistence' are drawn from this dialogue in a self-reflexive manner:

> They ask him why hasn't he stopped
> After getting all these wounds from all these sharp rocks
> Persistence is what I say to convince you
> Some people drown, some people continue

Just as the river meanders through the illustration, Aya conveys her meanings by alternating between first, second and third person pronouns: '**They** ask him why hasn't **he** stopped',

‘Persistence is what **I** say to convince **you**’. The grammatical shift from ‘they’ and ‘he’ to ‘I’ and ‘you’ suggests a change in positionality or character. The lines transition from talking about the river, in the masculine third person ‘he’ to the river speaking in the first person ‘I’. In the first stanza, the river is originally referred to using the inanimate ‘it’: ‘**It** has a lot of twists / **It** turns right and left / However **it** resists’. The poem embodies a process of rendering the inanimate animate and the impersonal personal. Through the shift to ‘I’, Aya starts to acknowledge the river not as an inanimate ‘it’ but an agentic being that exits, resists and persists. ‘Persistence’, as communicated in this digression, seems to be all about finding an active voice: ‘I say’. An ecological identity that merges at some points with the river seems to emerge through the lines. This anthropomorphic style, which bestows personhood on rivers, according to Wankhammer (2017, pp. 56, 59), works ‘paradoxically … as antidote to anthropocentrism’ because it could ‘dislodge the dogmatic separation between human and non-human worlds’.

The poem changes direction from the personal to the collective, with some ensuing drama caused by ‘people’: ‘Human beings have destroyed what they all desire’. The third stanza constructs an image of ‘waves’ based on the conflict between ‘glory’ and ‘debris’, between ‘desire’ and ‘fire’, between ‘happy ending’ and ‘reckless behaviour’. The mood of the poem becomes pessimistic as the moving water approaches an eminent fall. The personal ‘fall’ previously mentioned in Hanin’s poem turns here into a collective human fall related to the ecological crisis. The tone is far from accepting and is full of anger at the destruction of the natural world, the failure of the hard efforts in ‘continue[ing] to reach’ and ‘always seek[ing]’: ‘A happy ending is now set on fire / It turns into ashes, a result of their reckless behaviour / This is what they earn for being such failures’.

Is there continuity for the depicted river? The waterfall in the first drawing (Figure 5.3) comes to a sharp stop, leaving some empty space before the page ends. The razor-sharp line between the coloured waterfall and the following void invites the reader to pause and ponder the future of rivers in an age when ‘Debris was only the view’. This visual interruption might serve as a call to redefine what it means to be ‘Human beings’ in terms different from ‘destroy[ing] what they all desire’. In the second illustration (Figure 5.4), water flows from the edges of the picture frame to cover the bottom of the page. Acting as a conduit between the written words and the changing waterscape, the watercolour here brings about the ‘magnificent azure blue’ which Aya has labelled in writing as ‘what was supposed to be’. The sun also comes out, whose warmth can be interpreted as a

positive sign, evident in the abundance of trees on the mountainside (Figure 5.4). The four trees in the first drawing (Figure 5.3) seem to have multiplied in the second attempt (Figure 5.4), yet a closer look might actually show them as sharp rocks or flames of a fire. The melting of the ice on top of the mountain, that was present in the previous drawing (Figure 5.3), could also be alarming if it points to the threat of global warming and sea level rise. This is likely the intention, as suggested by the half-flooded position of the last cut-and-paste line: 'This is what they deserve for being such failures'.

The text in its construction hints at a dynamic and relational conception of space. By experimenting with the placement of words and images in relation to each other, notions of fixity and fluidity are revisited in the creation of Aya's identity texts. In the second piece (Figure 5.4), for instance, the collage and cut-ups illustrate Aya's view of how words can overlay images in a poetic work of art and vice versa. Through textual superimposition, the poem conveys the multilayers of colour ('pale blue' – 'azure blue'), material ('rocks' – 'waves' – 'seas'), beings ('water' – 'river' – 'baby' – 'people') and meanings ('twists' – 'wounds' – 'failures'). The combination of both word and image communicates the juxtaposition embodied by the central figures of the mountain and the waterfall, providing Aya with opportunities to reshape spaces and potentially reimagine herself and world.

A poetic encounter between young people and water becomes an exploration encompassing the personal, the collective, the ecological and the ethical. The following year at the Multilingual Poetry and Digital Storytelling Festival 'Our Planet' 2022, my research participants take the lead of another group of students (across Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10) as they produce their short film *A Walk around Earth*.[11] In this second film by Safir School at the festival (Figure 5.5), the concern over people's 'reckless behaviour' and 'failures', as expressed by Aya, continues to be addressed. This time, the students take further action by making their own website about the beauty of Earth and the pollution it faces, which becomes a part of the digital story.

[11] The short film *A Walk around Earth* (2022) by Safir students is available at: https://vimeo.com/753605008

Figure 5.5: *A Walk around Earth* short film 2022

In the film, Dai (Garde 9) addresses the sea with a voice full of care and concern in her piece entitled 'Dear Sea'. Dai's encounter with the sea during her holiday when she took the footage of the sea (Figure 5.5) translates into an affectionate dialogue. In the poem, Dai admires the power and beauty of the sea. Gazing in awe at the 'powerful' sea leads the young writer to question the hubris of humankind:

> You are so powerful
> No man can ever move you
> If they try
> They will get lost in you

The direct communication with the sea seems to extend Dai's environmental thinking. Isabel Galleymore in her book *Teaching Environmental Writing: Ecocritical Pedagogy and Poetics* (2020, p. 81) states that imagining oneself in correspondence with nature might introduce 'an empathic practice that ultimately aims to realise environmental change'. As Dai brings in the current state of the endeared sea, she uses more expressions of genuine care and concern, highlighting our entangled fate:

> My dear Sea,
> I am worried about you

It is evident more than ever
These tired lines on your face
You are starting to overflow with litter
That will soon kill us all

My dear Sea,
I am deeply sorry
That they cannot see
Your never-ending beauty

It is interesting to see how young people appropriate the literary practices of animating, personifying and addressing nature that were common across the poetry read during the workshop, as discussed in the first part of this chapter. These poetic practices have sedimented in the environmental imagination and texts produced by my group of participants, inspiring the next group of students joining the Our Planet Festival in 2022. The students have made use of literary and multimodal tools to explore human-environment entanglements and to rethink this relationship from an ecological perspective.

5.2.3. 'My River Will Never Disappear': Heritage and Hope

During the water workshop (14 March 2021) and the creative writing activity, some of the students have found it difficult to write about a specific river due to a lack of experiential knowledge in their homelands. Leen, for instance, explains in the post-workshop interview (13 August 2021): 'I don't have any experience of visiting a river there [in Syria]'. Leen's experience in her country Syria is limited to the time when she was two years old and a short visit in the summer of 2018. This interview with Leen has revealed the value of poetry and folksongs that transfer the experience of places. It has been valuable that the Arabic schoolteacher, who participated in the workshops, could share a folksong about al-Assi river in Syria, as Leen points out in the interview:

> we stayed one week in our hometown Hamah where Ms Fitnah [the Arabic teacher] is actually from … So, when she talked about الناعورة [Noria/waterwheel]? Mm so I did actually go there – I was like aware of what she was talking about then.

The experience of living by Al-Assi river (whose Arabic name means a rebel) and its famous Noria in Leen's hometown Hamah has been saved through a folksong. The Arabic teacher shares it during the workshop using a video of the song and a picture of the Norias (Figure 5.6). The lyrics conjure up the melancholic rhythms of the 1500-year-old Norias lining Al-Assi/Orontes river:

I heard the moaning of the Noria,	سمعت عنين الناعورة
its moaning occupied my mind.	وعنينا شغل بالي
Its eyes are fixed on the water,	هي عنينا على المية
and mine on the beloved. (translation mine)	وأنا عنيني على الغالي

Figure 5.6: Picture of the Noria in Hamah shared by the Arabic teacher

By sharing the folksong, the Arabic teacher passes down to Leen and the other students her own connection to Al-Assi river through folklore that preserves the Syrian dialect, oral tradition, cultural music and the heritage of the place. In the participatory space of the workshop, the teacher recollects her memories as well: 'Since my early childhood, I have lived by this river and its water. My home was located there, overlooking al-Assi river. So many emotions are linked to it in my life … The people of Hamah live by the sound of those Norias'. The possibility of retrieving the sounds of the river and heritage through folksongs engenders hope for children in diaspora. Leen expresses this hope in a poem about her river, which she writes towards the end of the workshops (3 May 2021). It is this poem entitled 'hope – أمل' that Leen chooses to record in Arabic and share on the festival website:[12]

[12] To listen to Leen reciting 'Hope - أمل' poem: https://goldsmithsmdst.com/safir-international-school-turkey/

Hope

أمل

My life has been like a river
Full of memories and never-ending melodies
The river's running suddenly stopped
The memories, moments and happiness paused
Stepping in the river could have been a mistake
But with hope, this ache
Can finally end one day

حياتي كالنهر
مليئة بالذكريات والأغاني
فجأةً توقف جريان نهري
وأصبت بالنسيان
الذكريات واللحظات تركتني
قد يكون المشي في النهر خطأ
ولكن مع الأمل فإن الألم لن يطأ

Like Leen, the lack of lived experience in one's homeland has been expressed by Salwa, who is Syrian too. She introduces her poem at the workshop (14 March 2021) by saying: 'I haven't been experiencing going into the river that much, so I wrote it not as a literal river'. Salwa tries to overcome this lack of direct experience differently from Leen; Salwa turns to her imagination instead. Her imaginary contemplation of the river evokes the spirit of resistance recurring in all her poetry. During the water workshop (14 March 2021), Salwa imagines her personal river in relation to her world of ideas and writing:

a river is a place full of ink
where all my thoughts drown and sink
I dip my feather into the river
I write some words filled with things people love to hear
the silence lingers in my ear
what's in the river is what no one sees
and what's on paper is what people read
but I won't stop writing until the river dries
and until the last paper dies
as long as I stand here
my river will never disappear

The 'feather', that links this text to Salwa's previous expressions of connection with birds (see Chapter 4), poses a question about its role in offering Salwa the freedom to take a 'dip' in the river.

Freedom is associated with the function of the feather as a writing tool essential for survival: 'I won't stop writing until the river dries'. Among predominantly catastrophic verbs like 'drown', 'sink', 'dries' and 'dies' influenced by terminology of environmental and political crises, there emerges the positive action word 'stand'. Salwa's determination not to stop writing is what offers radical hope, with a sense of activism that could prolong and sustain the life of her river: 'as long as I stand here / my river will never disappear'.

Salwa's poem brings together the practices of eco- and scripto-therapy. A diffusion of thoughts occurs from the meditative exercises inherent in contemplating the movement of water and in writing: 'a river is a place full of ink / where all my thoughts drown and sink'. The meditation done with the river gives Salwa the space to think about what lies hidden in the depths of her own self. With writing come some quiet moments: 'silence lingers in my ear'. Is silence a sign of a clear mind? Is it a state of serenity or bewilderment? Or does it relate to the power of rivers in keeping secrets?

Even though the river is dealt with metaphorically to understand the workings of the human mind, 'what's in the river is what no one sees' retains one of the features of ecopoetry, i.e. 'obscure otherness' (Rigby, 2004, p. 430). The river is not perceptible to the human's omniscient perspective, even in writing. The inability to see what lies in the depths of the river compromises human power. Human authority and control are transgressed by the 'silence' and obscurity of the river. This way, writing becomes transgressive: 'ecopoetry is a genre that transgresses hegemony by definition, through its espousal of an anti-anthropocentric and anti-oppressive philosophy, and can be utilized to begin a series of pedagogical transgressions' (Alizadeh and Pitt-Alizadeh, 2009, p. 56).

The poetry written by children leans towards such transgressions that challenge the status quo, question authority and go beyond the traditional and disrupt established boundaries. All of this could bring about hopeful possibilities and inspire change in the poetry published for young people. As Leen reflects on the Arabic curriculum and texts offered at school (WhatsApp, 27 June 2022), she expresses the need for a different kind of poetry: 'In a poetry collection I'd probably look for something peaceful and calming but also inspiring and educational (e.g. mental health). I

think that most poetry today addresses negatives rather than positives of a certain topic so I think that's something that could be changed'.

5.2.4. 'If I Were a River': Memory and Materiality

While Leen and Salwa do not have a clear memory of rivers or places in their homeland, the water workshop stirs up vivid childhood memories for Hiba. She recalls the Tigris and the Euphrates that run through Karbala, her hometown in Iraq, which obviously play a central role in the development of her poetic imagination. Hiba approaches the creative writing activity about rivers in Arabic first, perhaps inspired by the Arabic poetry read at the beginning of the workshop or to embody the spirit of her beloved rivers. In the post-workshop interview (6 Sept 2021 – translated from Iraqi Arabic), Hiba reiterates: 'Whenever somebody mentions the word river, I instantly remember the Tigris and the Euphrates. It's true that I might know about the Nile and many other rivers, but it's the Tigris and the Euphrates that I really know and have seen.'

Even though the strong memory of the Tigris and the Euphrates running through Karbala is the foundation of Hiba's writing, the poem does not mention the rivers by name but instead focuses on the meanings of love and warmth they represent. Hiba's unnamed river in the poem flows from place-based encounters with the past. She revisits the rivers in her memory, blending the remembered physical experience with autobiographical self-reflection:

If I were a river, I would overflow	لو كنت نهرًا لفضت
with nostalgia and love	على جانبي حنينًا وخيرًا
A river that does not dry up	نهرًا لا يجف
like the warmth of the sun	مثل دفء الشمس
Weaving radiant threads	أنسج بأشعتها خيوطا
To charm eyes and cool hearts	فأسحر العيون وأثلج القلوب

The river is romanticised as it turns into a metaphor for love and warmth. The 'eyes' and 'hearts' that come in contact with it are enchanted by its beauty and the act of 'weaving radiant threads'. The news speaks of Iraq's Tigris and Euphrates rivers running dry by 2040, but Hiba attempts to save them in her memory and wishes for 'a river that does not dry up'. The poetic immortalisation of rivers seems to be inspired by Mahmoud Hasan Ismail's 'النهر الخالد – The Eternal River' we read

together (see Section 5.1.1). With its traces of 'nostalgia', the poem reflects Hiba's relationship with her birthplace that shapes her environmental imagination.

Hiba's river text serves as another carrier of a 'sedimented identity' (Rowsell and Pahl, 2007). The symbolic and mythical functions she endows the river with are grounded in experiential and embodied encounters. Part of the relationship with the river is this significance it holds as a 'lieu de mémoire' (Nora, 1989), or a reminder of heritage and identity. The other side of the relationship is an emotional and elemental belonging to waterscapes, which Hiba describes as one of 'friendship'. This expression of companionship comes in the context of the 3-second video clip that Hiba takes as she crosses an artificial stream in the compound where she lives in Istanbul (Figure 5.7). In the following excerpt of a post-workshop interview (6 Sept 2021), I discuss with Hiba her relationship with water and the segments she filmed for the short film *Breeze*:

Figure 5.7: Hiba's shot of the water from the film *Breeze,* 2021

S: Is this your hand?

H: Yes, feeling the water – I took several shots … I was walking with my brother on the bridge, then I just put my hand and took the picture.

S: Let's talk about your hand and the water … your feeling of the water then?

H: Perhaps like one of **friendship**.

S: Can you tell me more about your relationship with water?

H: I love swimming so much!

S: How does it make you feel?

H: When we were in Iraq, we had a big swimming pool where we used to swim. What a dream to swim with my cousins! We had so much fun … Everyday! We used to swim every day in the summer! (translated from Arabic)

The affectionate bond with water makes more sense when we relate it to Hiba's ritual of taking daily dips in the 'big swimming pool' at her house in Iraq and all the fun associated with this social activity shared with her cousins. My discussion with Hiba about her water pictures highlights the lasting effect of swimming on her life. The routine of swimming, with its sensory and social richness, initiates her 'friendship' with water and her subconscious acknowledgement of its animacy. The brief video of Hiba submerging her fingers in water, with ripples gently spreading out in response, is a spontaneous micro-representation of her valued swimming relationship: 'I was walking with my brother on the bridge, then I just put my hand and took the picture'. The 'hand' becomes a visual metonymy for the whole body/self, and the 'water' for the place she belongs. This sense of belonging to water is built upon in many migration stories such as Sarah Crossan's verse novel *The Weight of Water* (2012), where the twelve-year-old Polish protagonist mouths similar feelings to those of Hiba's. In a verse entitled 'Home', the effect of water is sensorially described in terms of a 'safe silence of submergence' (Crossan, 2012, p. 197).

Could this momentary 'silence of submergence' be therapeutic? The experience of immersion seems to create a sense of home by obscuring the boundaries between the body/self and water. The human relation with water is an example of what Stacy Alaimo (2010) calls 'transcorporeality' in her book *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. What transcorporeality does is 'the opposite of distancing or dividing the human from external nature', as it 'implies that we're literally enmeshed in the physical material world' (Kuznetski and Alaimo, 2020, p. 139). Perhaps it is this enmeshment of self with natural elements and with place that opens up possibilities of ecological belonging and understanding of the self. Walton (2021, p. 26), who questions the idea of 'water cure', makes a useful note of the etymological roots of 'wellbeing':

> It's fitting that the concept of wellbeing, in English, sprung from water. "To be well" can be translated as "to flourish", to be like or *with* water. In Old English and Norse, *wel* meant abundance. From West Saxon comes the word *wiellan,* meaning to bubble up, spring and

> rise … It came to mean the height of good health, a holistic sense of comfort, satisfaction and soundness, where the body, mind and situation of life all converge in peaceful accord.

From Hiba's responses to my questions, it is clear that water is intertwined with her daily activities and carries a connective meaning that transcends place and time. The dialogue is imbued with the same 'nostalgia' that characterises her personal river in the poem: 'If I were a river, I would overflow / with nostalgia and love'. Is this feeling of 'nostalgia' tied to a specific river, a distant place, a past period, a missed family connection, or a combination of all these? Such 'nostalgia' floods back in the form of memories whenever a reflective interaction with water occurs: 'What a dream to swim with my cousins! We had so much fun'. Water seems to have absorbed Hiba's deep affection originally related to family and home. Through contact with water and its materiality, those friendship values and homeland ties are naturally regenerated.

With filmmaking, the sense of elemental connectedness to water is captured on screen in a series of material transactions that vary in their nature and healing effect. Hiba provides a personal insight into how proximity to nature might help treat anxiety, which their film *Breeze* deals with. Reflecting on her choice of filming locations, she says: 'I felt it was beautiful to have water surrounded by some greenery; you instantly feel there is comfort and safety in such a view' (interview, 6 Sept 2021). This emphasis on aesthetics, that surfaces again here, makes me consider the function of beauty as a value in young people's thinking. Hiba's conception of beauty is linked to the 'comfort and safety' it evokes. Due to her extensive personal experience with swimming, water is a space where she feels comfortable and safe. This comfort shows in the confidence with which she approaches the water's edge in the film (Figure 5.8):

Figure 5.8: another scene of Hiba near water from the film *Breeze*, 2021

> H: My brother took this video of me … I thought I would walk and then pause for contemplation.
> S: I noticed that you were walking on the footpath first and then you moved to the edge of the water …
> H: Yeah … so I can get closer … for a better connection.
> (interview, translated from Arabic, 6 Sept 2021)

This still from the film (Figure 5.8) shows Hiba's body reaching for water, drawn by a force akin to gravity. Hiba explains the change of direction while walking, hinting at a desire to 'get closer'. All her past personal encounters with water, mainly in home settings, seem to have sedimented into a watery ecological identity expressed in the pursuit of 'a better connection'. The above excerpt from the interview maps a route that starts with movement, includes a 'pause for contemplation' in the middle and ends with connection. A contemplative engagement with the environment might generate a self-reflexive understanding of identity. Drawing together threads from memory and materiality seems to reinforce a sense of place that is concrete enough to be carried around, like particles of water.

*

This chapter has investigated how the flow of poetry and water can facilitate the development of ecological identity. Through interactions with the materiality of both poetry and water, young people have been encouraged to explore and celebrate connections to nature and heritage. From songs that instil awe at the sublime to other texts that lament loss, the water workshop discussed in this chapter has provided a space for participants to become connected *with* their shared heritage of poetry about rivers and seas. This chapter has attempted to shed light on the value of old poems and folksongs in preserving cultural heritage and understanding its relationship with the natural world in the present day. Examining the use of certain poetic tropes in the discussed texts has indicated points of continuity and discontinuity across different generations as well as the evolving forms of human connectedness with water bodies. Through their varied topics, structures, languages and dialects, the discussed texts have shown a potential to stimulate young people's environmental imagination. The students' multimodal texts and responses have been analysed to determine the different ways young migrants engage with the language and images of water. Towards the end of the chapter, my data analysis becomes more matter-oriented in the sense of how water as 'vibrant matter' could inform us of elemental entanglements, social relations and cultural values (Benett, 2020). Contact with water, on both literary and physical levels, has carried a wide range of meanings – from fixity to fluidity, glory to debris, heritage to hope and memory to materiality. Many of these themes continue to be explored in the next chapter that deals with the element of earth.

6. Kinship on Earth:
Arboreal Metaphors and Land Connections

> We are humans, and we are made to live on Earth. So, Earth is like a country for us. Although we are from different countries like Yemen, Egypt … but in the end we came to live on Earth … Of course, people would really like to be proud of where they come from like India, America, whatever the country is, but at the end we are all humans from the same globe. We didn't come from a different planet. We came only from Earth. In the end, we are all the same. I feel we're like one …
>
> (Mohammed, interview, 2021)

This chapter extends the discussion around young migrants negotiating the liminal in-betweens of their multiple identities as they explore the natural elements of place. From the sensory walks that they had over the period of our poetry workshops, my participants seem to develop an affective and embodied understanding of the self when entangled in the intersubjective relations of 'becoming-*with*' nature – as discussed in the previous two chapters (Haraway, 2008; Wright, 2014). The current chapter follows the students' trails where earth emerges as a dominant life force that is encountered through trees and land. In the dialectical exchanges between the participants and the natural surroundings depicted in their identity texts (Cummins and Early, 2011), students explore their own connection to the element of earth and the states of inner nature it reveals. My data analysis attempts to capture those moments of revelation, employing Gifford's new way of reading metaphor which he terms 'organic metaphor' (see Chapter 2). According to Gifford (2023, p. 122), metaphor could be an instance of biosemiotics where 'organic subjects read each other's sign systems'. I continue to analyse the interrelatedness of image and word in the students' multimodal texts, with a focus on the affordances of organic imagery and the relevance of biosemiotic exchanges to identity formation. While the first part of the chapter sheds light on the course of becoming conscious of trees and their incorporation into the students' text-/identity-making, the second part tackles the impact of thinking with trees and the process of 'earthing' on young people's views about homeland and citizenship.

6.1. Making Kin with Trees

6.1.1. Arboreal Metaphors: Models of Resilience and Recovery

My initial plan for the poetry workshops, which I had shared with the schoolteachers as well as the parents and children, included a session on trees in Week Four under the title: 'To bloom is to know your roots' (see Appendix D). I took this line from Lemn Sissay's poem engraved on the pavement tiles by Greenwich DLR station (Figure 6.1); my feet came across it one evening as I was walking towards the Covid test centre in that area. The sudden irregularity of the surface felt beneath my feet made me stop to look downwards and follow the lines I passed:

While sun circles the clocks
Flowers grow for those that know
To bloom is to know your roots
To give the Earth all its worth
Tend to the new shoots.

Figure 6.1: Poetry line from 'Shipping Good' by Lemn Sissay in Greenwich (February 2021)

I decided to incorporate the line into my workshop design not only because it springs from my city walks but also for the investigative avenue it opens into one's roots: Where are my/your roots? Do I/you know them? Are we in touch with our roots? The concrete link between 'roots' and 'to bloom' appeared to adequately frame my research interest in the interaction with trees and the relation to life stories unfolding in the personal time of past, present and future.

I therefore planned Workshop Four to examine the relationship with trees, real and metaphorical, by responding to two tree poems whose deep root network connects Palestine to the Caribbean with their entangled attachment to a celebrated homeland. The pairing of Mahmoud Darwish's 'هكذا قالت الشجرة المهملة' ('So Said the Neglected Tree') and Cheryl Albury's 'Poinciana Passion', in Arabic and English, also aimed to extend the lines of transnational solidarity beyond borders. Darwish originally wrote his poem for adults in 1977, and it was only turned into a children's picture book in 2018 by Egyptian-Canadian illustrator Sahar Abdallah. The Arabic poem could be read as a metaphor for the Palestinian refugee crisis even though it does not overtly mention Palestine. The tree rather gives a universal account of forced exile, standing for home that awaits

its people. I used this poem in my pilot study (see Chapter 3) with a Palestinian brother and sister, aged nine and twelve. The siblings engaged in a dialogue about the loss of home and poverty around the world after reading the following lines (Figure 6.2):

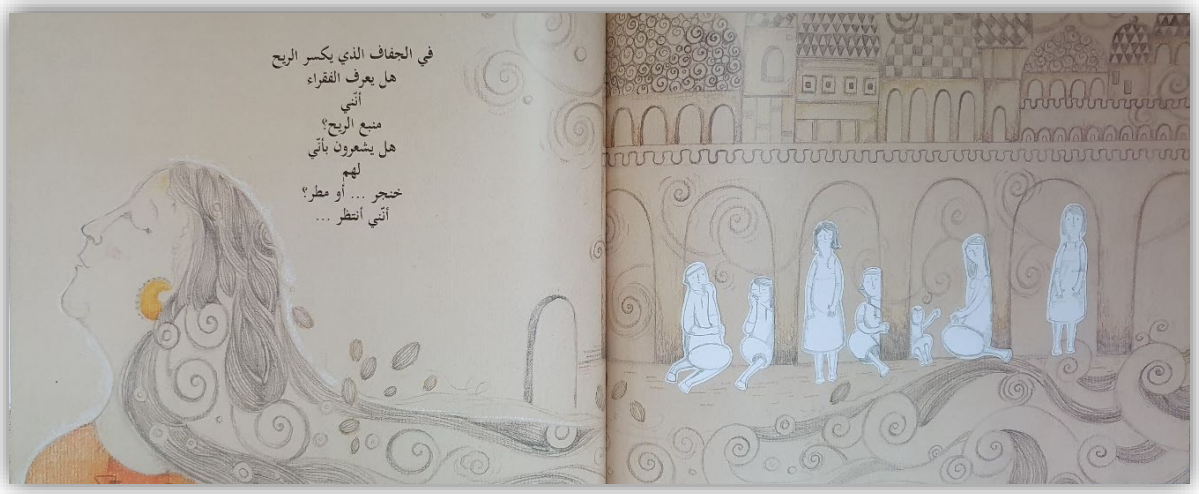

Figure 6.2: 'So Said the Neglected Tree' illustrated by Sahar Abdallah

In the drought that breaks the wind
Do the poor know that
I am
the source of wind?
Do they feel that I am,
for them
A dagger, or a rainfall?
I am waiting

(translated by Hasabelnaby and Mahmoud, 2022)

The subsequent decision of the Palestinian siblings in my pilot study to plant a tree, in the garden of their London house, pointed me in the direction of Albury's poem that begins and ends with the request: 'Plant for me a tree', 'One solitary tree is all I ask for me – / My royal poinciana tree'. The poem first appears in *Perspectives from Inner Windows* (1994) and is included in *Under the Moon and Over the Sea: A Collection of Poetry from the Caribbean* edited by John Agard and Grace Nichols (2002) to 'conjure up the sounds, tastes, smells and colours of the Caribbean'. The section where 'Poinciana Passion' is located opens with an invitation for the reader to listen to the

land: ‘Have you ever tried listening to the land? Every land speaks with many tongues, whether it’s the whisper of a tree, the rush of a waterfall, or the roar of a hurricane’, write Agard and Nichols (2002, p. 33). The whispers of Albury’s tree, a species tolerant of drought in summer, are loud enough to affect any ‘wilting spirits’. As the poem unfurls, the energising whispers materialise in the ‘flame-orange blooms’ that are described in fierce terms such as ‘stubborn’ and ‘bold red’. The ‘royal poinciana tree’ shows the capacity for stirring up the elements of earth and fire through the passion it ignites:

> Plant for me a tree.
> A tree whose flame-orange blooms
> Make wilting spirits soar,
> And lushly carpet summer morning walks.
> Just one magnificent tree,
> whose stubborn blooms
> Ignite each winding street and yard
> As far as eye can see.

The whispers of real trees reached my participants ahead of the tree poems planned for the fourth workshop. During the first week of the project, right after the introductory session where they created self-portraits embedded in nature, students started sharing various reflections on trees as they embarked on their walking journeys. The use of diaries/journals had been introduced by that point, but no specific outdoor tasks were set for the first walk unlike the following weeks. It is noteworthy how those free walks revealed an attunement to trees that would play a recurring role in their text- and identity-making. Hanin and Leen (WhatsApp chat, 7 March 2023), for instance, reported taking ‘a nature walk on Friday’ and shared with the group a list poem where trees feature as one of the most noticeable landmarks. The trees are portrayed in contact with the passing ‘wind’, the smiling ‘sun’ and the children themselves as they attempt to rhyme:

> In the garden we see
> a blue sky
> fresh green trees
> as the wind passes by

the sun smiles
as the children rhyme

The crowd of ‘fresh green trees’ is condensed into one personalised tree in Aya’s writing below which also belongs to the first week of walking. In a reply to Hanin and Leen’s text, Aya sends two pictures from her journal with a message that says: ‘I’m Aya. I just wanted to share the poems I wrote on my walk’ (Figures 6.3 and 6.4). Since Aya’s two texts were created during the same walk and were shared together, it would be useful not to treat them as separate pieces but rather to read them side by side. This might provide a glimpse into the intricate process of young people using the affordances of multimodality to make sense of their identities in relation to nature, and particularly trees in this case.

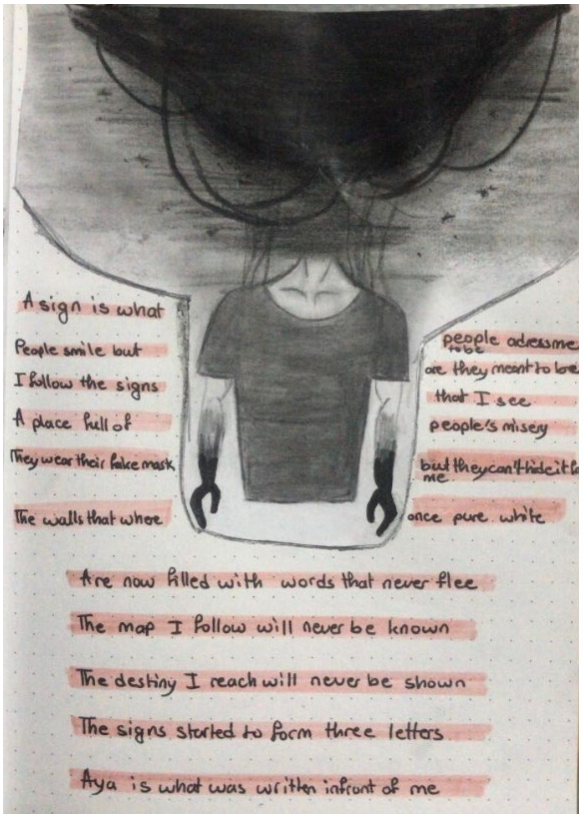

Figure 6.3: Untitled piece by Aya
(7 March 2021)

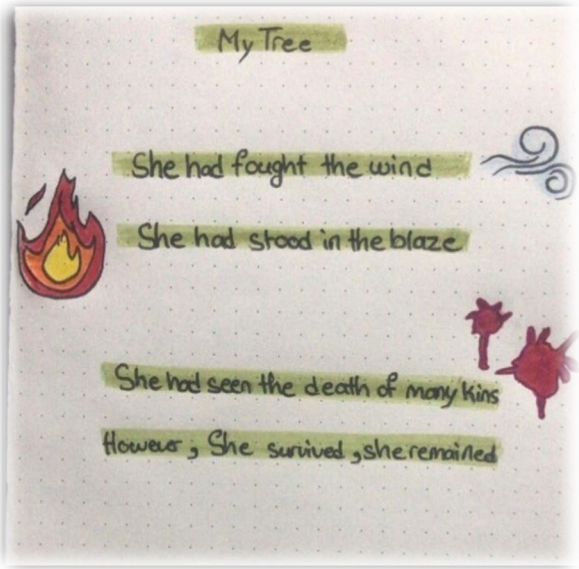

Figure 6.4: ‘My Tree’ by Aya
(7 March 2021)

Looking at the two pages combined, the image in the untitled piece (Figure 6.3) and the highlighted title ‘My Tree’ at the top of the second piece (Figure 6.4) would immediately call the viewing eye

to make links between both. The outline of the drawing (Figure 6.3) could be seen as that of a tree if compared to the silhouette of a tree trunk and its canopy. The figure sketched inside this outline has an analogous body and long hair, which could be related to the possessive 'My' in the opposite title. The correlation between the two pieces is further established by the use of the pronoun 'she' in the tree poem which appears to be referential to 'Aya' in the untitled poem. Superimposing them would position Aya as the tree and the tree as Aya, which disrupts the dichotomic way of viewing the human/nature relationship. When read in combination, the two multimodal texts complement the personal narrative that Aya constructs.

Aya turns her walking and writing routine into a quest for signs: 'I follow the signs that I see'. While walking usually requires a map and a destination, Aya accepts the ambiguity and uncertainty that mark her path: 'The map I follow will never be known / The destiny I reach will never be shown'. In order to navigate 'A place full of people's misery' and 'fake masks', the poem communicates the need to find the sign that is her own self: 'A sign is what people call me'. This perception of self as a sign is dictated by the 'three letters' of her Arabic name, which she defines in the first online workshop as 'a sign, a miracle or a verse' (28 February 2021). The walk directs Aya towards this 'sign', prompting her to contemplate the meaning of her name along the way.

Aya's sign-making is communicated through the self-portrait drawn within a tree frame (Figure 6.3). The face is completely smudged with pencil marks, erasing the traces of any recognisable features or maps. This drawing appears to embed a response to 'My Face is a Map', Jackie Kay's poem (2007) which we read during the first session. Kay's image of a girl with the map of Australia on her face vividly addresses the issue of facial deformity in a manner that merges the uniquely personal with the cultural. The poem sparked an emotive discussion among the students whose comments centred on difference and self-acceptance (28 February 2021):

> **Seema:** When I heard it, the only thing that came to my mind is that like her heart is a good heart, soft … like you know what I mean.
>
> **Mohammed:** … It shows that like whatever happens even though it got stared on, in the end you'll be proud of everything good you've done in your life.
>
> **Reemas M.**: I think it's talking about how you should accept yourself and be happy with who you are and try not to change yourself. That's how I felt when I was listening to it. I

feel like it says even if we look all different, it only matters in our hearts or how we are to other people. That's what I understood from it.

Remas J.: I think the poem was beautiful. The poem was talking about how like you shouldn't judge people from what's on the outside, it's what on the inside not the outside.

Aya seems to build on this inside/outside dialectic in her visual and verbal navigation of who she is. The sign quest that Aya pursues, which she describes as not 'known' nor 'shown', requires a different kind of seeing with that 'heart' that is brought up twice in the group discussion. Aya's quest for signs could be said to be a search for 'what is essential' since 'it is only with the heart the one can see rightly', to use Antoine de Saint-Exupery's words in *The Little Prince* (1943). The hidden eyes and face in Aya's drawing (Figure 6.3) seem to reiterate Reemas's view that 'it only matters in our hearts'. This is also Aya's way of challenging Kay's question about identities and place: 'Without my map, will I be the same person? / Will I know where I am, where I have been?'

Aya plays around with this idea of a map-less person, seeking alternative sign systems and different ways of knowing the self and the world. In this pursuit of finding 'Aya', one of the signs that she reads is a tree and its 'vibrant matter' (Bennett, 2010). Aya continues her thinking and writing *with* trees in the second piece titled 'My Tree' (Figure 6.4). Her 'arboreal imaginary' portrays an agentic tree (Nitzke and Braunbeck, 2021), acknowledging the tree's relationships with a variety of elements and forces, namely 'the wind' and 'the blaze'. The tree, as perceived by Aya, is capable of action: 'had fought', 'had stood', 'had seen', 'survived' and 'remained'. The narrative poem is dominated by past tenses, emphasizing the enduring history of trees and their deep connection with time. Out of the all the seasonal observations, Aya builds her verse around what has resonated with her personally. This renders the tree self-referential; in a sense, the tree becomes a site of identity assertion – 'employed as mirror images of human and memories, or as sites of cultural remembrance' as described by Solvejg Nitzke and Helga Braunbeck (2021, p. 344). The tree evokes the recurrent meanings and themes of resistance, persistence and survival.

It is 'many kins' that form the tree's network, suggesting a community of selves that have sentience, exhibit autonomy and engage in complex interactions. Kins are mentioned along with 'death', which appears in the context of kinship not only as a marker of affective capacities but also as testimony to the resilience of trees and the continuity of life. The physical, imaginative and affective engagements with trees could be said to draw the writer, Aya, into the tree's world of

kinship relations. Haraway (2016, p. 161) promotes such practices of making kin: 'My purpose is to make "kin" mean something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy … Kin making is making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans'. In her argument, Haraway (ibid.) utilises Shakespeare's wordplay on 'kin and kind':

> the kindest were not necessarily kin as family; making kin and making kind … stretch the imagination and can change the story … I think that the stretch and recomposition of kin are allowed by the fact that all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense, and it is past time to practice better care of kinds-as-assemblages (not species one at a time). Kin is an assembling sort of word.

6.1.2. 'My Tree': Animate Pronouns and the Development of Environmental Ethics

Aya announces her kinship with the tree, expressing a human-tree connection through her choice of pronouns in 'My tree'. Nitzke and Braunbeck (2021, p. 347) observe that 'vocabulary and grammar have a profound impact on how the relationship between the human and the more-than-human world is imagined, conducted, and represented'. Aya imagines a feminine tree that she keeps referring to as 'She': 'She had fought', 'She had stood', 'She had seen', 'She survived', 'she remained'. In doing so, Aya overcomes the limitations of English which treats trees as inanimate objects referred to with the pronoun '*it'*. She seems to have returned to Arabic that recognises the animate nature of trees by feminising them. Robin Kimmerer (2013, p. 57), in favour of animate pronouns, argues that:

> When we tell them [the children] the tree is not a *who*, but an *it*, we make that maple an object; we put a barrier between us, absolving ourselves of moral responsibility and opening the door to exploitation. Saying *it* makes a living land into 'natural resources'. If a maple is an *it*, we can take up the chain saw. If a maple is a *her*, we think twice.

When Aya translates her poem from English to Arabic as part of our multilingual project (WhatsApp, 8 May 2021), the animation is taken a step further by introducing direct speech. The pronoun *I* gives voice to the feminine tree and challenges the reader to perceive the world directly from the tree's perspective. The translation conveys the same meaning as in English, yet the shift

from the third-person pronoun *she* to the first-person pronoun *I* underscores this transformation into, or metamorphosis with, the tree.

قالت الشجرة:

لقد حاربت صرير الرياح
ووقفت في وجه النيران

لقد رأيت موت العديد من الأصدقاء
ومع ذلك نجوت
مع ذلك بقيت

This pronoun/perspective shift has been commonly used by my participants throughout their writing-*with* nature, be it a river or a bird as discussed previously in Chapters Four and Five. Heidi Moen in her chapter on 'Why Tree Poems Matter' (2022, p. 55) relates this common practice of turning into a tree or any other being to 'a need across the ages to live holistically in communion with non-human nature'. According to Moen (ibid.), 'It could also be seen as a response to seemingly constant human needs and yearnings for moving outside our own consciousness to experience things differently untampered by logic, language, and human egotistical subjectivity'.

No longer viewed as an external being, this linguistic metamorphosis could also lead to an acknowledgement of trees as 'kins' just by overcoming the nature/human divide. Kimmerer's (2013, p. 75) point on the link between animating nature through our use of pronouns and sustainability is illustrated in another piece of writing about trees by Salwa (7 March 2021). In the poem where Salwa imagines herself as a bird, biocentric thinking seems to follow from the expansion of the self into nature. This ecological sense of identity plays an important role in standing against the destruction of trees and the anthropocentric logic of domination. In Salwa's account, the other is not the non-human but the 'human' who 'cuts down the tree':

I stand on a tree
resting before I flee
until a human comes
and cuts down the tree
my misery begins

when I see
that the tool used
is an axe, made of wood

Both Aya's and Salwa's examples show how their poetic identification with nature, or what we describe as enlarging the boundaries of the self beyond one's body and consciousness, could underpin the development of an ethics of care. According to Naess and other deep ecologists, 'If people conceptualise themselves and the world in relational terms … then people will take better care of nature and the world in general' (Brennan and Lo, 2002; 2021). The dismantling of nature/human divides found in the children's texts through the use of animate pronouns leads to an understanding of the self in relation to the world. As this section argues, such practices in poetry could nurture the kindness and care necessary for kin-making.

6.1.3. Filmmaking-*with* Trees: Intersemiotic Translation and Intra-action

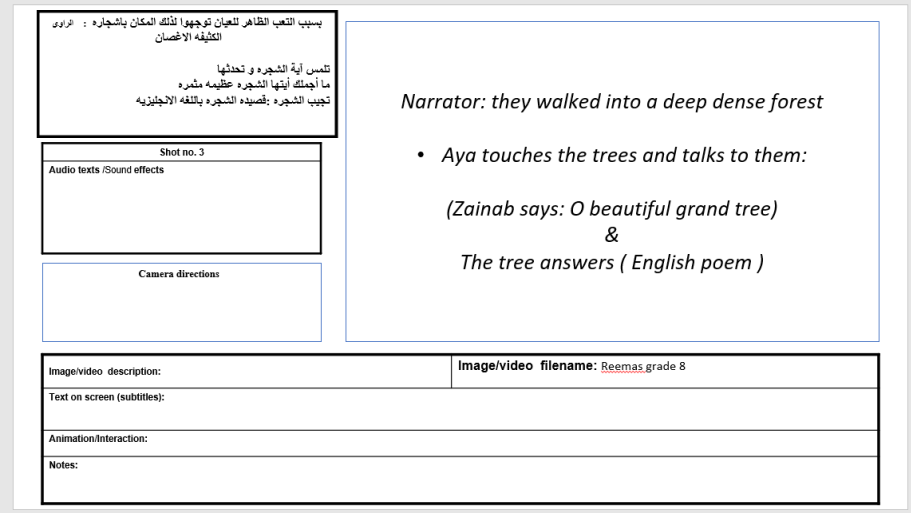

Figure 6.5: Storyboard of the tree shot (18 May 2021)

The whole group collaborates to bring Aya's tree poem to life in their short film 'Breeze'. As outlined in their storyboard (Figure 6.5), they choose a setting of 'a deep dense forest' and visualise the poem as part of a dialogue where the tree becomes a responsive character. The first-person pronoun is attributed to a real tree whose perspective is voiced by one girl, as clarified by the Arabic phrase 'تُجيب الشجرة – The tree answers' (Figure 6.5). It is interesting how the verbal

interaction begins with a touch: ‘Aya touches the trees and talks to them’. The scene is not dominated by Aya as the writer or owner of the words; rather, the script tends to engage more students. It distributes the narration, action, commentary and poetry recitation among different students – including a narrator and the tree in addition to Aya and Zainab. This democratic distribution of roles entailed in the process of filmmaking affords the group a communality of becoming with trees and a real engagement with the other-than-human.

Keen to perform the tree poem, Leen adapts the script a second time and engages with Aya’s written words in her own way (Figure 6.6):

1:21

1:25

1:26

1:29

Figure 6.6: Leen performing Aya's poem in the film *Breeze* (1:20 – 1:30)

Leen performs Aya's text, offering 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign-systems' (Jakobson 1959/2000, p. 114). In this 'intersemiotic translation', the verbal text transmutes through the materiality of the tree, the kinaesthetic signs of Leen's body and the oral recitation of the poem (Figure 6.6). A wide shot is used to capture the tallest tree in full and the figure of Leen from head to toe. The framing remains fixed from minute 1:20 to 1:30, foregrounding the subtle swaying of the leaves and branches in the breeze while allowing Leen ample space to walk back and forth between the trees in the shot. As she renders Aya's poem in

motion, Leen turns her back to the camera, concealing her face in a way similar to Aya's initial drawing (Figure 6.3). Just like Aya whose drawing depicts a blackened head with long hair standing up, Leen's filming mainly features the long hair in addition to the brief appearance of a black mask worn in compliance with Covid rules at the time. Watching the video three months later (13 August 2021), Leen's first comment is about her look there: 'Oh my hair was so long!'. By examining the non-verbal signs highlighted by both Aya and Leen, the translation across the semiotic boundaries is surprising, not only in the parallel effects produced but also in the indication of intersecting physical identities among my participants then. The motif of hair and obscured faces, utilised coincidently by both girls in the drawing and the film, seems to indicate a shared conflict between representation and invisibility.

Coincidence continues to play a role in this translational process, as it is not clear why Leen chose the location of her video other than it being one of the 'nearby parks in my [her] area' where she would 'normally' walk. The central tree in the shot is staked into the ground by two long straps (Figure 6.6), making the struggle of the poetic tree to survive a real one. The fight against 'the wind' and 'the blaze', as depicted in Aya's poem, could not have been dramatised more authentically than by this staked tree (ibid.). Gardening guides explain that it is common for young trees to lean (and therefore require support) when they encounter extreme weather conditions or are planted in unsuitable soil. As the viewer could tell from the background, the young trees are part of newly built gated developments in Istanbul, which are linked to the rapid increase in population and migration rates. Because of their shared young age, the tree might seem to mirror Leen or Aya in their expression of survival despite 'the death of many kins' (Aya, March 2021). The struggle of young trees is real and so is that of young people – each becomes an interchangeable metaphor for the other. Leen's encounter with the staked tree is more than a coincidence; it might be regarded as what Bennett (2010) calls 'vibrant matter' when 'the active participation of nonhuman forces' is recognized in events and situations.

By shedding light on the parallel lives and struggles of young trees and young people, an intersection between human and more-than-human identities emerges. The trees and the girls seem to have become entangled in a process of 'interanimation' (Murphy, 1995) or 'intra-action' (Barad, 2007), by which identities are remade through 'the mutual bringing forth of action' (Gifford, 2023). Leen's thoughts about the wide treescape shot show the web of human-tree relations expanding,

with added dimensions, entanglements and continuities. Commenting on this shot (Figure 6.6) during the interview that followed the workshops (13 August 2021), Leen reveals an environmental thinking behind her camera angle, a perspective that challenges the dualism of 'nature' versus 'city':

> It's me standing in a familiar place but looking at something up. The picture is in a familiar place to me, it's home. When I looked upward, I saw a combination of people and the sky … and that's something that I really like, because I don't like watching nature alone . . . and I don't like watching a city alone. I like it when they're in the same perspective, the same picture. You know when you see a city and at the same time you see a mountain behind it – I enjoy that type of landscape, much more than looking at both landscapes separately.

Leen here engages in a multimodal analysis of her own video as she explains the broader 'perspective' she prefers by means of her movement, gestures and the space where she is 'standing'. The video (Figure 6.6) shows Leen tilting her head upwards as she walks right and left, pointing up once to an apartment block and a second time to the tree. Through the balanced proportions of concrete, blue and green, Leen's shot communicates her view that rejects the separation of 'nature' and 'people': 'When I looked upward, I saw a combination of people and the sky … I don't like watching nature alone … and I don't like watching a city alone'. As she makes meaning across the gestural, visual and spatial modes, Leen underscores the value of integrating all these elements 'in the same perspective, the same picture' not just to her aesthetic experience but also to her 'relational understanding of place/space' (Bawaka Country including Wright et al., 2016).

The intertwined practices of walking, filming and talking have enabled Leen to question the human/more-than-human, nature/people and nature/city binaries that she begins to dismantle. Challenging such binary thinking is key to understanding the ongoing and mutually constitutive relationships among the various elements, entities and subjects (Barad, 2008). All of this leads to a reconceptualisation of what is meant by 'familiar place', 'home' and 'landscape'. The poem/film/interview show how young people make sense of place as constituted by relations between human and more-than-human worlds. Whereas Leen seemingly takes no pains to define

her ‘landscape’ in terms of its interrelated social and natural aspects, she continues to grapple with the meaning of ‘home’ and co-existence as will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Towards the end of the film ‘Breeze’, there is yet another encounter with the vibrant agency of trees (Figure 6.7):

Figure 6.7: Leen’s closing shot, *Breeze* (2021)

Compared to her earlier shot (Figure 6.6), the camera here comes closer, suggesting more of a mutual relationship between Leen and the tree. In this shot, Leen approaches the tree and films herself sitting under it (Figure 6.7). There is a reversal in the roles of supporter and supported, which foregrounds a relationship of mutuality. Whereas the staked tree was the recipient of human support in the previous shot (Figure 6.6), the tree here (Figure 6.7) becomes the giver of support to the human figure. In fact, both Leen and the tree are acting upon each other. The screenshot shows a relationship characterised by intimacy and balance – the support of the tree is accepted in a moment of connection with the body. The balanced posture of Leen, keeping her feet on the ground and knees pointing up towards the sky, parallels the voice of a narrator reassuring the audience that ‘minds’ have ‘now calmed down’. While she leans against the tree trunk with a book resting on her knees, the tree seems to give Leen support, calmness, comfort and ‘freedom’ in response. This sensory engagement allows Leen to develop a deeper understanding of the tree’s material presence and its nature as a healer, as the interview reveals (13 August 2021):

> I wanted to show how calming nature is. It's just leaning onto a tree – can also be comforting, not necessarily … nature can serve as like … you can do the same things that you do inside outside in nature. that's what I wanted to show. I can read inside, and I can read outside. I can walk inside, and I can walk outside. But outside, you have more of a fresh air, more freedom generally.

Leen mentions reading, which – in a different yet relevant context – she believes 'is not only for learning and stress in a way. It is also for calming and healing', she says (interview, 13 August 2021). Perhaps this act of reading 'inside' and 'outside' could be understood as a 'biosemiotic exchange' that involves the tree and Leen reading each other's signs (Gifford, 2023). This process is an 'aesthetic relation to nature' which 'consists in allowing oneself to be spoken to by it [nature]' according to Kate Rigby's translation of Gernot Böhme's 'Ecological Aesthetics of Atmosphere' (2011; cited in Gifford, 2023, p. 127). The multidirectional reading of the self/world is facilitated by the affordances of poetry and filmmaking, both of which entail an inseparable sensory/spiritual experience. Walking, as a spatial practice and a mode of participating in the dynamic movement of the world, could be said to be an 'embodied engagement' that fosters a type of 'land knowing' which could nurture 'a vitalist sense of co-existence, emplacement' (Country et al., 2016, p. 463).

6.1.4. Entangled Co-Becomings

6.1.4.1. 'Under the One and Only Surviving Tree': Co-Existence

At the *Our Planet Festival 2021*, which celebrated the multilingual poetry and digital stories created by children from schools around the world, Leen had the chance to further investigate the notion of co-existence. Michaël Vidon (11 June 2021), French poet and spoken word educator, led a multilingual poetry workshop as part of the festival programme where his focus was the exploration of 'places you know where humans and nature are side by side, fighting, or one is taking over' while writing across languages. Leen uses the writing prompt (see Figure 6.8) to go deeper into the forest space, mixing Arabic and English.

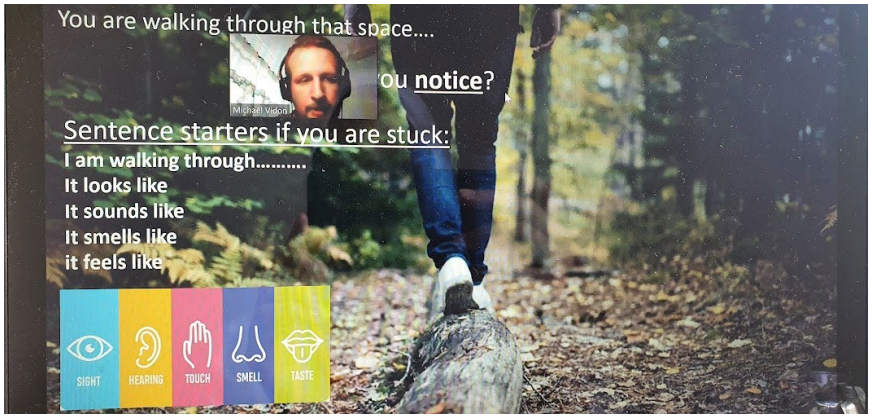

Figure 6.8: A screenshot of Vidon's workshop, *Our Planet Festival 2021*

In her bilingual poem 'Walking in a forest' (11 June 2021), Leen explores the co-existence of 'we and nature' with the aid of multisensory experiences conjured up by the medium of poetry. The poem opens with a sense of wonder about our place within the natural world and proceeds through a description of the 'sounds and sights' she experiences in the forest to an encounter with 'the one and only surviving tree'. The forest portrayal is devoid of any colours and is dominated by darkness: 'the colours of flowers evaporate / blackness and darkness surrounds me' (translated from Arabic). Throughout 'Walking in a Forest', the 'sounds and sights' are entangled with feelings of loss. Leen depicts the forest as a landscape of 'getting lost', in a way that conforms to the image ingrained in the (Western) cultural imagination – 'I started it in a normal forest', she says (interview, 13 August 2021). The structure of the poem follows the classic tale of a child abandoned in the wilderness, who tries to 'escape' and ultimately finds protection.

Walking in a forest
is like getting lost in a maze
the forest has turns and twists
i begin to wonder if we and nature can coexist

في الغابة أصوات ومناظر	[there are sounds and sights in the forest
فجأةً اختفت ألوان الزهور	suddenly, the colours of the flowers evaporate
السواد والظلام ينتشر حوالي	blackness and darkness surround me
أركض وأجري لأجد مفاري	I run and run to escape]
	(translation mine)

still lost in this maze
under the one and only surviving tree
with colourful leaves
it protects me

بدأت أسواط الأمطار	[the whips of rain cracked
drop drop drop . . .	drop drop drop …
أختبئ مع الشجرة وهي تحميني	**I hide with the tree, it protects me**
لكنها هي تشعر بالألمِ	but it is racked with pain]
	(translation mine)

Leen develops a twofold conception of co-existence, which she discusses at length in the post-workshop interview (13 August 2021): 'there's a mention of nature and co-existing and so I thought about it in two ways that *nature* and *us* can coexist. Environmentally, can we exist in this world and get along? But also from a personal perspective, like we – myself and other people around me and this new environment around me which is this new country'. For Leen, the environmental sounds inseparable from 'the personal perspective' and so she draws parallels between both. She goes on explaining that:

> in the forest, there are lots of sounds and destruction ... in your life, there are people that try to bring you down ... the colour of the flowers suddenly begins to disappear… that's like my hope or sudden happiness begins to disappear ... like your happy thoughts, your happy memories … they're going away because you're no longer feeling them.

Leen's interpretation of her own poetry can be linked to Thomashow's (1996, p. 13) ideas about ecological identity work and how we 'cannot separate memories and impressions of earth, community, and family: these all make up a sense of place'. Leen cannot help but return to her feelings and memories as she interrogates relationships between the human and more-than-human.

Framing the relationship in the binary of 'we and nature' might imply a separation between the two; however, maintaining this 'anotherness', i.e. 'being another for others', as Murphy (1995, p. 23) puts it, is important for 'the ecological process of interanimation'. In this sense, 'we and nature'

influence one another and consequently different patterns of human-human and human-more-than-human relations emerge in space. This mutual animation extends to the dynamic of English and Arabic used in this poem, not as identical mirror images but rather as two different stanzas working in tandem. Through the negotiation of relationships, the 'forest' offers a space for crossing boundaries and interrogating notions of co-existence.

Leen's ecological identity is constituted by extending meaningful relationships, for a 'person, more-than-human …comes into being through relationships' (Country et al., 2016, p. 461). While she keeps moving between points of disconnection and connection in the matrix of her personal geography – 'still lost in the maze', a tree appears with colours and protection: 'under the one and only surviving tree / with colourful leaves/ it protects me'. The sensory experience of sitting under the tree, which Leen previously filmed in the *Breeze* (Figure 6.7), is recollected while again alluding to the other tree depicted by Aya saying 'I survived, I remained'. In Leen's poem here, the tree is maintained as a model of resilience and a source of protection at once. The tree as a sentient being is also recognised, as shown in its capacity to feel 'pain'. The tree is affecting and is affected. The speaker in the poem (Leen) and the tree are facing 'أسواط الأمطار' ('the whips of rain') together, both co-becoming with the rain. The flow of the poem might be reminiscent of Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* (1964). In the interview, Leen elaborates on the fate of the tree: 'the rain causes the leaves of the tree to fall apart and so the tree is gone and I'm left alone in this maze' (13 August 2021). Unlike the tree-boy relationship in Silverstein's book that is based on the human exploitation of nature, the tree-girl relationship in Leen's account is built on the mutual loneliness and threats they face. This time, Leen does not sit 'under' the tree as in Figure 6.7, but hides 'with' it – 'أختبئ مع الشجرة وهي تحميني' ('I hide with the tree, it protects me').

The mutual caring relationships which Leen's words convey are grounded in kinship. Leen, commenting on the writing of the poem, maintains: 'that last part the tree is reflected as my family' (18 August 2021). This kinship view of the tree and the wider space helps Leen conceptualise 'home' in terms of responsibility and relationships (ibid.):

> **S:** Does going into nature make you think of home differently?
>
> **Leen:** The idea of like … nature and the environment – yes, it's home to everyone. The environment is home to all of us – it's ours. Home is a place that is yours and makes you

> feel safe and happy. So, in a way yes. The environment is home to all of us. It's ours – number one. We are the ones that should be responsible for the environment because it is ours. And we are the ones that should be improving the environment. We should continue to grow trees and keep forests, oceans etc. So, in a sense when we think about it now, no one considers the environment as home because we've forgotten about it ... You know also home is like people, home could be like that you are doing good things for you, you know the people who are with you, that support you and are fighting with you… while the environment doesn't actually have anyone with it anymore. It's like no one considers it home anymore when we should be considering it home. It's like a forgotten home …

This elaborate reply is linked to Leen's first environmental perspective of co-existence – 'I thought about it in two ways that *nature* and *us* can coexist. Environmentally … But also, from a personal perspective', as mentioned earlier. This understanding of home foregrounds coexistence as an act of responsibility, which stems from a sense of belonging to this natural space revealed in the repetition of the pronouns 'ours' and 'yours': 'We are the ones that should be responsible for the environment because it is ours'. Extending her relational thinking to the idea of 'home', Leen sees it as a relationship of mutually caring acts – it 'makes you feel safe and happy', in return we accept the responsibility towards the environment by continuing 'to grow trees and keep forests, oceans, etc'. What emerges from Leen's reflection is an ethics of care that hinges on mutual relationships (Lawson, 2007). Mutuality as a constitutive aspect of home can be understood in terms of what Bawaka Country et al. (2016, p. 461) describe as the 'infinitely recursive pattern that links places/spaces with other places/spaces, people with other people, and humans and more-than-humans in relationships of co-becoming'. Understanding mutuality in this way challenges the conventional view of 'home' as static and presents it as a dynamic, interconnected web of relationships. With the development of this sense of mutuality and co-existence, Leen becomes more aware and appreciative of the complexity of our interactions with the world around us, which leads to more empathetic ways of living.

Leen's second 'personal perspective' of co-existence has focused on her place in relation to her different countries of birth and residence. She compares the 'turns and twists' of the forest (poem, 11 June 2021) to the 'difficulties' in her life (interview, 13 August 2021). She rethinks the question 'can we exist in this world and get along?' from the perspective of a migrant trying to negotiate

her connection with three countries: Syria, the UAE and Turkey. Thinking of her relations with Syria, she states: 'it's not like I don't consider Syria a home … I just never had the opportunity to grow up there'. Dubai, on the other hand, is the only place she named in her introductory writing – 'my city is Dubai where I was born and raised'. She surprisingly does not consider it home, which adds one more dimension of disorientation to her sense of place: 'sometimes I don't consider it home because in the end it isn't home, you know? … still regardless we treated it like home because we grew up there. But when we turned ten or eleven, I was aware that this wasn't home and that I'm not gonna stay here for ever and I know that there'll be changes in my life.' As for Turkey, she says: 'am I welcomed into Turkey as a nationality? No. The Turkish people do not welcome me, you know what I mean? the way they'd welcome an American or a foreigner, but they do not welcome me as a Syrian. No country as of now will welcome me ever.' Drawing a map of 'home' is therefore a tough task for Leen as her relationship with places has been always entangled with mixed feelings. In this context, co-existence becomes a matter of 'myself and other people around me and this new environment around me which is this new country ... if I can survive in this new environment', Leen wonders. Even though Leen might not be able to think of a certain country as home, she reaches a reconciliatory conclusion: 'But the people … still the people make you feel at home'.

The bilingual poem 'Walking in a Forest' has become a space for 're-imagining geographies of co-existence based on an integrated notion of the self', to use Bawaka Country et al.'s words (2016). By intertwining Arabic and English, Leen creates a dialogue that transcends linguistic boundaries, echoing the interconnectedness she feels within the world. While English is employed for parts where Leen articulates her sense of loss in the maze and her reflections on co-existence, Arabic emerges as the medium for moments of urgency and escape. The strategic use of the two languages reveals the emotional and cultural nuances Leen associates with each language. Through English, Leen expresses feelings of disorientation and the search for harmony within the natural world, inviting readers from diverse backgrounds to engage with her reflections and existential queries. Arabic, on the other hand, seems to carry a personal and intimate resonance for Leen. She uses Arabic to convey a deeper, more visceral connection that acknowledges the tree's sentience, describing its pain and their shared response of hiding together.

Leen's acknowledgement of the sentience of trees, as expressed through her language, further develops and extends to other natural beings. In the following year, she joins the Our Planet Festival 2022 for the second time and contributes a poem about mountains to the school's film *A Walk around the Earth* - https://vimeo.com/753605008. In a film that presents pollution from the perspective of nature, Leen writes about a mountain that is 'the victim to your [human] assailant' and that states: 'Regardless to our inability to speak / I am still the witness and the watcher'. In an interview with Leen about her second experience of poetry writing and filmmaking, she explains the logic behind the voice of the mountain and what her poem does (26 June 2022):

> I think it is very important to think about nature as a human being, as a thing with feelings and emotions, you know. What I'm trying to do is to give the element of nature emotions, to give the element feelings … When you think about it now, animals and humans are the only things cared for because they show emotions, they have reactions. They react when in pain, they react when in joy, but the elements of nature – they don't really have that. So, in that respect, I felt like it should be considered. When we do see something that has emotions … that's when we care.

Leen's bilingual writing about the emotional entanglement with trees in 2021 and a year later about mountains as sentient beings shows a path towards the development of care. Leen's writing rationale can be understood in terms of Barad's (2007) view that a sense of ethical responsibility emerges from our inherent entanglements with the world around us. As Barad (2007, p. 393) argues, we:

> are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled, not through conscious intent, but through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails … Ethics is therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part.

Leen's forest trees and mountains show the writing of poems as stages in pondering the interconnectedness with the natural world that leads to an ethical relationality. The forest and the mountain are not just backdrops in Leen's writing but appear as participants in a shared existence.

Poetry writing, in this sense, has provided Leen with the space to examine and develop her ideas of co-existence.

The interplay of Arabic and English in Leen's poem can be seen as more than a metaphor for the entanglement of human and more-than-human relationships. Just as the two languages coexist and complement each other, so do the human and more-than-human elements in the poem. Leen's bilingual practice further demonstrates how language encourages young people to consider the idea of interconnected existence on multiple linguistic, cultural and ecological levels. This linguistic duality reinforces the theme of mutuality and co-becoming, suggesting that bilingualism plays a role in fostering harmony and embracing interrelations.

6.1.4.2. 'My Tree is a Palm Tree - the Meaning of My Name': Rootedness

Examining Leen's body of poetic work (2021), the tree seems to hold a strong personal significance for her. In Leen's untitled first writing at the introductory workshop, she establishes an intimate connection with a palm tree, a theme that could be traced in her subsequent work despite the various forms it takes. The stimulus for this writing comes from Arvon's *(M)other Tongues Learning Resource* (2014, p. 17), which was originally adapted from the *Pepeha*, the traditional Maori self-introduction that links oneself to the mountain, river, sea, land, tribe before mentioning the person's name. Leen introduces herself as follows (28 February 2021):

> my mountain is as tall as my goals.
> my river is filled with my memories of home,
> my tree is a palm tree - the meaning of my name,
> my city is Dubai where I was born and raised,
> my significant ancestor is my family's past pride,
> my name is Leen, and it is who I am inside.

When Leen processed her name semantically, the palm tree stood out as synonymous with 'who I am inside' – the palm tree is fully embraced and internalised through her name. The word 'Leen' in Arabic could either be the singular noun meaning softness or the plural of palm tree. Her preference of the palm tree referent over a more obvious meaning reflects an identification and a connection with the natural world by means of language. This Arabic name written in Latin letters

‘Leen’ materialises the links she made through the poetry workshops to an Arabic mother tongue, an unidentified home, and her ecological self.

Leen might have chosen to write and speak about herself in English, yet she had to return to Arabic to explain the palm tree connection embedded in her name. It preserved the seed of Arabic for her until she resolved what seemed to me a conflict with her national identity when she avoided mentioning her Syrian nationality at the beginning of the workshops. It is then the knowledge of Arabic that led Leen to proudly say: ‘my tree is a palm tree – the meaning of my name’. She emphasised that her name ‘means a baby palm tree’, referring to the fact that it is mentioned in the Qur’an. The word she quoted, however, is the singular ‘Leena’ while her name has to be in the plural form ‘Leen’ in order to give the desired denotation – in this case, the name would translate into ‘palm trees’. The immediate meaning that first appears in the dictionary would be the root word for softness and flexibility. She argued against this association in a post-workshop interview, saying: ‘that’s actually what Lana means, while my name is like the palm tree. But obviously it does have the other meaning’ (13 Aug 2021). Her preference of the palm tree referent over a more obvious meaning reflects an identification with the natural world as well as the Arab world by means of language.

This ecological connection has grown over the workshops in parallel with the integration of Arabic into her later poems, the appreciation of literacy practices at home and the reclamation of it as more of a heritage language:

> I really like Arabic history that was set a long time ago. I would read all the رسول [messenger, i.e. prophet Muhammed] books and أنبياء [prophets]. I really like those as I’m gaining knowledge … because it’s my religion. Also, I’m developing a skill of reading Arabic and also learning a lot of vocabulary. And also, because I’d read and study Qur’an a lot too. Now I know stories so when I read the Qur’an at least I understand it.

Arabic is apparently related to the ‘ancestor’ she described in her first piece of writing as ‘my family’s past pride’. However, there is a tension between the glory she finds in ‘Arabic history that was set a long time ago’ and her current sense of estrangement from the culture:

> it's not like I know anything about my origin. I've been there only once in my entire life. Like as a baby, I've been there once or twice but I don't remember anything. I was like a 2-year-old. And then I went there for a week. Because we were really afraid to go, we went for a week. So, I don't really know anything about my own … like … I don't have any experience of visiting a river there. I don't have any experience doing anything there.

Leen's feeling of 'getting lost in a maze' in her bilingual poem, discussed in the previous section, seems to stem from being deprived of a lived memory of 'home': 'I don't remember anything'. A loss of memory results in a loss for words, as can be seen in her inability to clearly articulate feelings related to her homeland: 'I don't really know anything about my own …' and 'if I were to go again, I would feel like a sense of …'. Her experience in the country is rendered in a confusing mixture of it being 'scary' but 'nice', and them feeling 'really afraid' even though they 'enjoy going there'. She does recount a short visit in the summer of 2018 that made her relate to the experiences of place shared at the poetry workshops:

> We stayed there for two total weeks – we stayed one week in like our hometown [Hamah] um where the Arabic teacher is actually from. She's friends with my mum (laughing). So, when she talked about الناعورة [Noria/waterwheel]? Mm so I did actually go there – I was like aware of what she was talking about then. And then I stayed another week in Damascus.

Despite all the mixed feelings of being 'still lost in this maze' ('Walking in a Forest'), the tree has remained a constant throughout Leen's poetry. This close relationship with a palm is transmediated in drawing. Her poem 'Hope', in both Arabic and English versions, likens her life to the course of a river that eventually leads to a bright field of palm trees. The palm tree appears not in the poetry lines but in the accompanying illustration (Figure 6.9):

Figure 6.9: Leen's illustration of the poem 'Hope', featuring palm trees around the sun

In the first part of this chapter, I have approached the main research question about how migrant children develop their ecological identities in relation to the element of earth by focusing on their interactions with trees in poetry, film and drawing. Through my data analysis, I make a case for the role of both multimodality and multilingualism in the process of kinship-making with trees as it appears in the children's texts. The path towards 'making kin and making kind' (Haraway, 2016) benefits from border-crossing communicative practices that include 1) translation across languages and media, 2) merging languages that form children's rich repertoires, and 3) the revitalisation of heritage language use. The above sections have demonstrated that the development of an understanding of ecological interconnectedness and coexistence as well as a feeling of rootedness in earth could be mediated multilingually and multimodally.

6.2. Land Connections

6.2.1. 'A Garden Full of Palm Trees': Memory and Materiality

The trees, previously discussed in relation to kin-making, emerge in this section as a connecting link not only to family but also to the land of grandparents. In an interview after the workshops concluded (6 September 2021), Hiba discusses connections she made to the palm tree mentioned

in Leen's poetry. She recounts that 'in Iraq, the most common thing is palm trees. In my grandfather's house, there's a garden full of date-palm trees. The house is entirely surrounded by palm trees. Everywhere I go, I see a palm tree … wherever I go! … Maybe this is the connection between me and my grandfather's house' (translated from Iraqi Arabic). Hiba admits her ignorance when it comes to the types and lives of trees; however, she could still describe the palm trees that were planted in the garden of her grandfather's house in Iraq. She remembers the family gatherings of her uncles, aunts and cousins in this garden, associated in her mind with leisure and laughter. She recounts that her grandfather *Geddo* was the one pruning and caring for those palm trees: 'He does things that I don't know but we have always watched him …'. Hiba narrates how her granddad would bring them dates, climbing up a tall ladder and cutting the date stalks off the trees with a hook knife. She then tells the story of her dad's visit to Iraq after migrating to Turkey and how 'he brought back a bagful of dates'. 'It's a must to have dates', Hiba concludes.

The 'bagful of dates' carries a strong sense of place, as manifested in Hiba's narrative of the connection to the palm tree and the family house. It produces a combination of identity expressions and cultural knowledge informed by the experience of her ancestral homeland. The date palm is claimed to have originated in Mesopotamia, and so it holds a revered place in the Iraqi culture as 'the immortal tree' and 'the first tree of life'. As one creation myth has it, the date palm tree was created from the remaining mud out of which Adam was created and was then planted in the gardens of heaven. The site of palm trees in Hiba's memory is specified as Karbala, her own beloved city in Iraq – 'I am from Karbala. My dad is Karbalai [from Karbala] and my mum is Baghdadian [from Baghdad]'. Following the affirmation of her affective ties with Karbala, the annual Ashura processions (that commemorate the martyrdom of Huseyn) are mentioned not in terms of their religious meaning/significance but the special dish distributed as part of the rituals, i.e. ثُمَّن وقيمة (Qeimeh). The attachment to place, commemorated through such symbolic elements, feeds into the process of individual and group identity construction.

As a token of group identity, the dates that Hiba's father brings back from Iraq fulfil the function of linking home and diaspora, people and landscape, young and old generations. They preserve the seeds of an identity rooted in the Iraqi landscape and its distinct dialect, which Hiba reverts to in her narration of life events – both past and present. The materiality of not only the dates but also the Iraqi dialect associated with them makes the family house and homeland memorable. This

combination of physical objects and spoken words fixes the Iraqi landscape in the young girl's heart and mind through the rich sensory experiences they evoke. The taste, texture, and aroma of the dates, coupled with the familiar sounds and rhythms of the Iraqi dialect, create a powerful and enduring connection to her heritage.

Of relevance here is the concept of a 'lieu de mémoire' which the French historian Pierre Nora (1996, p. xvii) defines as 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community'. Bringing those specific dates from the grandfather's garden and sticking to the Iraqi dialect in conversation here embody the will of Hiba and her family to remember their place of origin. Both the Iraqi dates and dialect become symbols of the value of family and the basic need of belonging. As embedded in Hiba's emotional and cognitive landscape, they hold a mnemonic value for the Iraqi community in diaspora and serve as potent anchors for identity.

6.2.2. Revisiting Homeland: History and Geography

Like Leen and Hiba, Mohammed returns to his homeland in pursuit of self-knowledge. The return that began in writing materialised in reality when he managed to actually visit Yemen in the summer of 2021 after the end of the project. In the first workshop, Mohammed introduces himself by his name and origin in Arabia, contrasting the happy past with the sad present (28 Feb 2021). The self-introduction highlights a direct connection to the Prophet whose legacy of being 'trusted and free' forms a link between the past and the future that Mohammed hopes for. The religious understanding that gives Mohammed a sense of connection with other creatures, as discussed in relation to his 'pigeons' poem in Chapter Four, seems central to his sense of self. Religion takes on cultural and historical dimensions in Mohammed's self-portrait:

> My name comes from a prophet
> Trusted and Free
> Hopefully me!!!
> Originated from the Arabia Felix
> Which is now Arabia saddest

Mohammed spends the following week reflecting at length on his name and homeland; the original five-line poem becomes an extended twenty-line piece that he shares with everybody on the WhatsApp group chat (7 March 2021):

> My name comes from the prophet
> Trusted and free
> Hopefully me!!!
> My name is 1400 years old we all agree
> But for me it is new as it fits 360 degree
> I will tell you why it is authentic
> Seeing it on doors, mosques and bookstores
> Makes me feel as if it is a new name
> When you hear it, you feel free and safe
> Because that is what happens to me
>
> Leaving the Arabia Felix
> Now turning to the saddest
> Having wars, having guns
> Having ways to separate homes
> Having lived predicament times
> Going up, going down
> I still believe that we will like our coming times
> Being 12 years of age
> I learned many ways
> Of looking through things

The 'prophet', after whom he is named Mohammed, appears not just as a person but a source of the values of trust and freedom which Mohamed aspires to embody: 'hopefully me'. As a young man, Prophet Mohammed was called 'the Truthful and the Trustworthy' before the revelation of Islam among the tribes of Arabia. Hope seems to stem from these values conveyed through Mohammed's name and heritage language. To make sense of his name, Mohammed looks back at its 1,400-year-old history and combines this with his own encounters with the name inscribed on

‘doors, mosques, and bookstores’. With this perceived aesthetic value, Mohammed comes to realise and appreciate a holistic view that the name ‘Mohammed’ offers: ‘for me it is new as it fits 360 degree’. The word ‘free’, repeated twice in relation to the name, eventually comes to represent safety: ‘When you hear it, you feel free and safe’. This association with safety further reflects meanings of home and belonging; the name ‘Mohammed’ stands as a place of safety in ‘predicament times’.

After all the safety and freedom mentioned in the first part of the poem comes the line ‘Leaving the Arabia Felix’, introducing a conflicted relationship with Mohammed’s place of origin. If read alone or out of context, it would sound paradoxical that Arabia Felix should ever be left. The choice of the name ‘Arabia Felix’ mythologises Yemen as it alludes to a history stretching back 3000 years. Mohammed’s knowledge of the Greek and Roman references to Yemen as happy and fertile starkly contrasts with his current experience of it, ‘Now turning to the Saddest’. Even though Mohammed has described his relation to the land in terms of departure by using the word ‘leaving’, Yemen retains a significant place in his poetry, memory, conversations and drawings. This enduring connection is vividly illustrated by the orange border that encircles Yemen on the map Mohammed draws a week after writing his name piece (Figure 6.10, 14 March 2021).

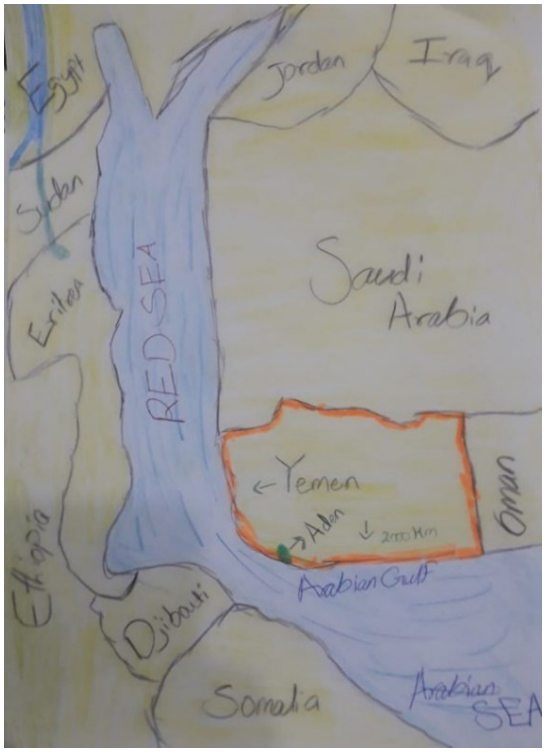

Figure 6.10: Mohammed’s map of Arabia

Arabia Felix for Mohammed is all about the green dot that represents Aden, his birthplace. Even though Sanaa is the capital city and is where he lived before leaving Yemen, it does not show on the map. The absence of Sanaa indicates a selective memory at work, as the emotional impact of Aden, where his grandfather used to live and write his songs (see Chapter 4), seems to overshadow other parts in Yemen. In my post-workshop interview with Mohammed, he shares his recent visit to Aden and starts describing it: 'Aden is like a peninsula surrounded by the sea from three sides. Since it is really hot, people always go to the sea in the morning or around sunset' (18 Sept 2021, translated from Arabic). On his sketch map (Figure 6.10), there is an indication of a 2000 km of coastline that surrounds Aden, stretching along the blue Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and Red Sea. He refers to this map when comparing his relation to nature in Yemen and Turkey: 'Yemen is not that greenish, it's more like sea and stuff. Here [Turkey], it is green. In Yemen, it is blue. So, you do not always find everything in the same place. Mostly all the cities there are on the sea. We have a big coastline. If you go deeper to the north towards Saudi Arabia, it is like yellow. But south, it is more of blue' (ibid.). As shown in his poetry and map drawing in addition to reflections, Mohammed's conceptualisation of place is influenced not only by his observations of the physical environment but also by an emotional view of geography. Mohammed colour codes his experiences and memories across different countries, blending these hues into his poetry as discussed in the previous chapters. The interplay of colours reflects a mobile sense of place based on the realisation that 'you do not always find everything in the same place'.

Examining Mohammed's developing ecological identity reveals that it is consistently anchored in the need for beauty and hope. The beauty of Aden as described in the interview is interwoven with the effect of war, paralleling the pattern followed in his poem: 'Now turning to the saddest/ Having wars, having guns / Having ways to separate homes'. Recounting his visit to Yemen a month before the interview, Mohammed explains that 'Aden is so beautiful but due to the war Yemen as a whole has been destroyed - everything from electricity to water, everything. The place and its people have suffered a lot. But everything else is beautiful, I mean seeing the family and all that is good, thank God' (18 Sept 2021, translated from Yemeni Arabic). These are very hard times for Yemen, and the war is present in all Mohammed's descriptions of the landmarks in Aden: 'We went to a place called *Al-Fanar*, a big green lighthouse in the middle of the water …but it's a bit broken because of the war'. Despite the war, Mohammed does not regard his homeland as a waste land (ibid.):

> I don't look at it as our country is bad; we are in a war. I learnt that we are going through good stuff always. We need to look to the bright side so we can understand. If you always look to the dark side, you'll always be in like a depression, you wouldn't live your life. It'd be like - why is that happening to me?

Mohammed has been holding on to hope throughout his journey. In his name poem (7 March 2021), he concludes: 'I still believe that we will like our coming times'. Embracing 'the bright side' through connections with the land and the Arabic heritage and values it carries forms a solid foundation for the development of an ecological identity that is in touch with reality.

Through what Duckert (2015, p. 240) calls an 'earthy thought process', i.e. thinking *with* the earth, new 'prospects' arise. In Mohammed's case, hope has been reterritorialised when migrating to Turkey. By the end of the ecopoetic quest, Mohammed expresses an extended sense of belonging that encompasses the earth itself: 'Earth is like a country for us. Although we are from different countries like Yemen, Egypt … but in the end we came to live on Earth' (18 Sept 2021). His statement recognises the differences of people, but these distinctions for him become secondary when viewed in the context of the shared residence on Earth. Thinking with the earth has helped young people transcend national borders and adopt an inclusive perspective that nurtures global solidarity among people from different backgrounds. Framing the Earth as a shared home has proved valuable in influencing attitudes and behaviours towards greater ecological awareness and sustainability. As Duckert (2015, p. 239) argues, 'Earthing frees us to be better inhabitants, to be true earthlings. The ways we narrate stories, and the stories themselves, can shape the earth/s to come.' This liberation that Duckert describes embeds a freedom from the constraints of narrow national or cultural identities as shown in Mohammed's evolving worldview. Earthing, instead, encourages a broader, more inclusive identity rooted in our shared humanity and planet.

A similar view of the earthing process is expressed by Leen in reflections on the Our Planet Festival 2021 (Appendix E). In her answer to the question of 'what did you learn about different languages from watching the films?', she writes: 'We might come from different parts of the world and speak different languages, but we share the same goals and share the same planet' (27 June 2021). The multilingual poetry and digital storytelling festival under the theme of 'our planet', with the participation of students and schools from 15 countries and featuring 44 languages, has provided

a space for celebrating how different cultures are routes for a common purpose, reinforcing a collective ecological identity and responsibility.

This understanding of Earth as a common world, that students obtained through multilingual poetry and films, is intrinsically linked with the development of an ethics of care. Leen elaborates in her festival reflections that the main message she received from the festival and participating films/artworks is: 'the environment is ours and it is our responsibility to protect it, and so we must begin to take action now in order to save it from any further damage' (27 June 2021). She notes that filmmaking has helped 'us [young people/students] collaborate and spread awareness and find solutions to protect the environment together rather than alone' (ibid.). As students attest, poetry and stories about the earth matter because they have the power to inspire collective action and a sense of interconnectedness among diverse communities worldwide. A multilingual multicultural dialogue, that values young people's heritages, is indispensable to fostering a wider planetary perspective that leads to care and responsibility for the entire Earth.

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This chapter has demonstrated how 'earthing' could offer a pathway towards greater ecological consciousness and global citizenship (Duckert, 2015). When young people practise listening to the land and earth, mediated by different languages and modes of communication, they begin to rethink their migration experience and become more open to the diverse ways of being in the world. Such care-full listening draws children and young people into a world of kinship relations with human and nonhuman others, as the poetic encounters show in the first part of the chapter. Kinship relations with trees have offered meanings of survival, co-existence and interconnectedness. Extending affective ties with nonhuman others leads to an ethics of care that stems from intergenerational relations with the land as discussed in the second part of the chapter. It shows how an ecological sense of identity expands children's notions of justice. Throughout this chapter, I make a case for the value of integrating multilingualism and multimodality to promote the development of ecological identity and citizenship. I argue that such an integrative approach to language has the scope to create a local and global assemblage of citizens who care for the earth as a 'common world' irrespective of national borders. The interspecies and intercultural encounters

enabled by children's literature promise hopeful possibilities as long as young people enter into a conversation with the earth.

7. Conclusion

Mapping the Ecopoetic Quest and its Hopeful Routes

> Poetry is not made out of thoughts or casual fancies. It is made out of experiences which change our bodies, and spirits, whether momentarily or for good. There are plenty of different experiences which do this, and there is no drawing a line at what the limit is.
>
> (Hughes, 1967, p. 32)

Along the ecopoetic quest that included a group of ten Arab migrant students in Istanbul aged 12-14 during the Covid lockdown in 2021, a volume of identity texts was produced based on the young people's interactions with the natural elements. My research aimed to investigate the value of multilingual ecopoetry in the development of young migrants' identities. The main research question was: how do migrant children develop their ecological identities through poetry reading, writing and filmmaking? In order to respond comprehensively to it, there were three sub questions related to 1) how migrant young people treat the imagery of nature and place in poetry, 2) how they exercise multimodal and multilingual ways of learning in their textual productions to make sense of 'place' and 'identity' and 3) what therapeutic possibilities ecopoetry and text-making offer. Drawing on ethnographic as well as project-based methodologies remotely, I attempted to investigate the poetic encounters between young migrants and the elements of nature using workshops, walks and interviews. The participatory approach immersed both me and the students as co-researchers within these encounters, allowing for moments of heightened reflexivity following the engagement with the data and research process itself. Each of the data analysis chapters addressed all four research questions in a rhizomatic-like manner. In this conclusion, I bring together what has been found in Chapters Four, Five and Six, charting the different paths to an ecological identity as facilitated by poetry and filmmaking. In addition to re-aggregating and synthesising the findings of my study, I highlight their implications in education, reflect on their significance, identify the limitations in the study and suggest directions for further research.

7.1. Findings

7.1.1. Breeze, Water and Earth: The Relevance of an Elemental Ecocritical Framing

Throughout the three data analysis chapters, an elemental ecocritical lens has proved useful in investigating the construction of ecological identity as it could describe the confluence between children's imagination and the elements of air, water and earth. I have attempted to understand how young people make meaning of their entanglement within these wandering elements as expressed in their combined modes of poetry writing, walking, drawing and filmmaking. Through such embodied ways of knowing the self and the world, children could grasp a better understanding of their interconnection with the natural world. In addition to the discovery of the elements as life forces, elemental ecopoetics highlights the materiality of both nature and language which binds the multi-faceted communicative repertoires of migrant children. Their texts materialise the flow between self and space while they navigate their place in the world, accommodating connections and disconnections. The young migrants' mindful encounters with the elemental have revealed an inclination towards the common meanings of resistance and survival as well as an exploration of the tensions between the fixity of land and the fluidity of water and air. The short film *Breeze*, which is a collage of the students' poetic voices, shows a journey that includes fighting the wind, riding its currents, feeling the force of the breeze and reaching out to the skies. The study finds the elements as central to the transnational imagination in diaspora. Tracing the emerging modes of ecological engagement, my study sheds light on the creative process and healing potential of reading/writing with the elements.

7.1.2. The Making of Ecological Identity: Noticing and Re-membering

This section responds to the overarching question of the study: *how do young migrants develop their ecological identities through poetry reading, writing and filmmaking?* From the analysis of the children's multimodal and multilingual texts over the period of my fieldwork, the process of elemental encounters 'sedimenting' (Rowsell and Pahl, 2007) into identity texts (Cummins and Early, 2011) appears to go through a series of overlapping stages. The texts show an identification with nature (e.g. birds, rivers, trees etc.) that figuratively enlarges the boundaries of the self beyond an exclusive human consciousness. Underpinning this poetic identification is an exploration of the material presence of the nonhuman and a sensory engagement with it. The elements of nature

embodied in the texts then become sites for migrant children to negotiate the liminal in-betweens of their multiple identities, acknowledging points of difference and intersection. These two stages of identification and negotiations lead to a third one of extending affective relationships with the natural elements of place. Such an affective sense of self is achieved through the inter-subjective relations inherent in the overall process of becoming-with the other in nature. This process is not a linear sequence of events but a cyclical journey where ecological meanings build up over time in relation to the cultures/discourses that come into play. My study shows that becoming conscious of the elements and incorporating them into the identity texts of migrant children takes two main pathways: noticing and re-membering.

7.1.2.1. The Pathway of Noticing

Noticing appears not only as visual or auditory but also haptic in that it includes the whole body's attention to life on the planet. Noticing as a multisensory practice is greatly influenced by poetry, the sensoriality of which draws the reader's attention to other beings. Noticing operates outwards and inwards simultaneously, for directing one's attention to the outer world usually involves attention to the inner world and the mutual relations between both. In my attempt to study what migrant children notice when turning their attention to the more-than-human, beauty stands out. The children's perception and representation of beauty are directly linked to their development of ecological identity. Across the workshops, the more-than-human (e.g. birds, breeze, rivers, trees, flowers) is attributed an aesthetic value. This sense of beauty, or ecological-aesthetic relationality, depicted in the texts transforms what is ordinary to the unique. It was the students who highlighted the power of 'noticing' in their discussions; Salwa, for instance, has reflected on 'the small, beautiful detail in the surroundings that can help us in many ways **if we manage to notice them**' (6 June 2021). The dataset as a whole demonstrates how the sensory experience of natural beauty unlocks a reciprocal interaction with the environment. With beauty, affection (appreciation, fondness, attachment, love and care) emerges as a mode of attuning to the environment before any conceptual reflections.

Attentiveness to the beauty of the natural world allows for noticing its disappearance, which leads to deeper considerations of its reasons and effects. The very same children who have noticed the beauty of pigeons and rivers, for example, subsequently turn their attention to the plights befalling them. The children reflect on the role of war in destroying the 'beautiful' environment in their

homelands and the failure of people in protecting the planet. What emerges is a critical form of attentiveness that extends the children's perception of beauty to the context of interrelated political and environmental crises. An aesthetic-ecological sensibility does not overlook problems but draws attention to them directly. While a limited focus on beauty could easily slip into a romanticised worldview, the critical reading of the world and the self opens up opportunities for ecocentric empathy and social/political action. The empathetic aspect of ecological identity, in this respect, develops from an aesthetic reflection on the world and a conception of beauty as a co-presence of bodies/subjects exchanging bodily sensations.

Closely tied with beauty is an attention to awe, of finding the sublime in nature. Arabic poetry has drawn the attention of the children to a form of the sublime derived from beauty, love and art. The aesthetic experience of awe contributes to the development of the children's ecological awareness – as in the awareness of the vast expanse of rivers and mountains calling forth a humble sense of ecological self. As shown in the discussions of poetry of the sublime, attention to aesthetic moments of awe and wonder has the capacity to provoke a spiritual conception of nature and place. The aesthetic concept of the sublime, as experienced in the Arabic poetry shared during the workshops, elevates bodies of nature to the level of the divine. There is a pantheistic sentiment that the divine is found and embodied in nature with all its forms.

The young people's texts link their attention to the aesthetic with an ecologically driven sense of spirituality. A spiritual dimension of ecological identity appears to follow the inter-subjective relations between the self/ the world/ their God that are facilitated by attention to the aesthetics of connection and communication. A spiritual understanding of creation, which is prevalent in classical Arabic poetry, seems to be a significant factor in the widening process of identification with others. The connection to the essence of creation is attained through a harmonious engagement with body, mind and soul. Faith is also drawn upon in the poetry of my participants as a key resource in creating spiritual perspectives that promote attentive response-ability and advocate for an interspecies ethics of care. The significance of faith in this pathway of attention lies in the way it transposes the sense of ecological identity from an individual matter to a collective one.

7.1.2.2. The Pathway of Re-membering

Revisiting rivers, trees and lands in memory appears as another significant route for developing an ecological identity in the context of migrant children. Triggered by poetry, the body re-members the physical experience with nature in a distant homeland and so includes it in the reflective process on the self and the world. Past encounters with the elements of nature in home settings 'sediment' into an ecological identity during the pursuit of a better sense of connection. Re-membering past experiences, practices, traditions, places, heritages, other cultures and languages into one's ecological repertoire maintains the multi-dimensionality of an ecological identity. The elements of nature, in this respect, become conduits for a wider and deeper connection with other geographical and cultural dimensions of the individual's 'lifescape' (Swidler, 1986). As discussed in the data analysis, the embodiments of water/air/earth in texts serve as 'lieux de mémoire' that preserve traditional ecological knowledge, thereby contributing to the development of collective memory and identity (Nora, 1996).

Drawing together threads of memory and materiality creates not only a multi-dimensional but also a transnational sense of place. A sense of place for migrant children, as some of the interviews have shown, is tinged with mixed feelings and multiple layers of belonging and sometimes non-belonging. Along the process of identity-making, they experience a fluctuation between feeling connected to and disconnected from various places within their personal geography. In this context, re-membering unreachable places has the power of dismantling (or at least shaking) the sense of placelessness that some migrant children grow up with. The act of re-membering is salient in folk literature and poetry and is enormously facilitated through intergenerational learning that involves teachers, grandparents and parents. My participant group of children from diverse backgrounds, grappling with meanings of home and co-existence, seem to have developed an interconnected understanding of place characterised by a flow of relationships across national and cultural borders. The way they integrated their attachment to specific rivers into the poetry they produced is an example of the fluid possibility of spatial relationships. Poetry might be shaped by places, but it most importantly seems to be shaping the children's ecological and cultural sense of place. The role of poetry/art is especially valuable when the direct experience of those places is lacking, as in the case with the Syrian/Palestinian landscapes in this study.

These two pathways are not separate; I would argue that noticing and re-membering are intertwining lines of possibility (or 'lines of flight' in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) that together could lead to an ecological identity. As it unfolds in my arts-based research, ecological identity links aesthetic engagement and political activism, spiritual connections and cultural practices, ecological awareness and ethical responsibility, a sense of planet and a sense of place. The study finds that while achieving a sense of place is important for identifying with the place(s)where the children live and come from, a sense of planet is also needed for a broader reconciliatory type of citizenship as expressed by the Yemeni student Mohammed 'We are humans, and we are made to live on Earth. So, Earth is like a country for us' (Sept 2021). The expansion of personal identity into the global sphere cannot dismiss the specifics of local areas. For the migrant case in particular, an integrative notion of ecological identity has the potential of strengthening transnational ties that bridge home and diaspora, people and landscapes, young and old generations. Given how multifaceted ecological identity is, it can be expressed in myriad ways.

7.1.3. Ecopoetics: Children's Literary Strategies for Common Worlding

In responding to the first sub research question 'how do migrant young people treat the imagery of nature and place in poetry?', my study has analysed the literary strategies and rhetorical devices used by young people in their ecopoetic journey with the breeze, water and earth. These poetic encounters highlight a combination of *what ifs* embedded in poetry and endless possibilities found in the natural world. The young people have selected what to incorporate from the poetry they read together during the online workshops, making these devices their own. In doing so, the children appear to have influenced each other, especially during their joint writing walks. Looking at the English-Arabic poetry they wrote, I have identified the common use of metaphor, apostrophe and animate pronouns, examining their role in nurturing an ecological imagination.

Having started my data analysis with a conception of 'organic metaphor' as the mutual process of human and nonhuman subjects reading the signs of each other (Gifford, 2023), I have been interested in tracing how far this manifests in the children's creative works. The students were found to be using metaphors spontaneously in their language from the very first workshop when they introduced themselves in terms of the more-than-human. Their use of metaphors stems from various sources that range from their exposure to poetry and folk songs in different languages to

their observations, experiences, and interactions with others. As discussed across the three data analysis chapters, the students create avian, aquatic and arboreal metaphors that serve as spaces for crossing the human/nonhuman boundaries. Through metaphor, linguistic metamorphosis is possible; as children figuratively turn into other beings, they expand their consciousness and creatively explore the question of 'who am I?' from different perspectives. This linguistic process of becoming-other with the forces of nature can transform ideas about the self and attitudes towards the environment. In metaphors like Salwa's bird and Aya's river, the children are inspired by the nonhuman to discover new/hidden aspects in their personalities that yearn for freedom and flexibility, resistance and recovery. The metaphors not only draw upon feelings shared with the nonhuman but are invoked by the presence of these other beings the students come in contact with (in reality and in poetry). The metaphor has become an encounter, exhibiting a mutuality that inherently acknowledges their inter-subjective agency. With repeated encounters, each of the human and the more-than-human subjects appear to stand as an interchangeable metaphor for the other. Metaphors as encounters with the world involve the attention of the senses and care-full response-ability.

The apostrophic practice of addressing an imaginary person, a nonhuman being or an inanimate object has also emerged in the common-worlding space of poetry. It has provided the students with the opportunity to have a dialogue with the sea, for example, encouraging emotional expressions about death and loss. With apostrophe, negative emotions like anger and sorrow are validated in a two-way communication that indicates affective ties with the addressee. The tendency to speak to/with the world using this literary device implies an expectation from the addressee to listen and respond. The apostrophe seems to work on an unconscious level to acknowledge the agency of the surrounding world and the human embeddedness in its conversations. Its use by students as a navigation and communication tool would help with the process of ecological identity work that involves a negotiation of different points of view. Stretching the environmental imagination, the apostrophic practice in poetry and education could redraw the maps of human and nonhuman interactions, and thereby enable healing to take place.

The inter-animation sparked by dialogue is reflected in the children's language and use of pronouns. In poetic encounters with the natural world, animate pronouns appear to further underscore the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman subjects, blurring the lines

between them. As observed in the data analysis, there is a common shift from the use of 'it' to 'he' and 'she' when young people refer to natural elements in their poetry, which allows for consequent changes in point of view. The pronouns thus facilitate perspective-taking, especially when a further shift occurs from the third-person to first-person pronouns like 'I' and 'We' in the students' evolving versions of the same text. This has allowed young people to connect with others on deeper and more intimate levels. As the animate pronouns personify the elements of nature and other species, what we find is not a pathetic fallacy but a disruption of the dichotomous way of viewing the human/nature relationships. It could be argued that animating the more-than-human through language work could be rather useful in initiating the children into the world of kinship where humans and others are intricately connected.

Examining how these poetic devices work to expand the children's cognitive and affective experiences, my study supports the claim made for the value of poetry in developing children's ecological identities. Poetry with its connecting practices is suited to a pedagogy of common worlds; it proves to be one of the effective tools that enable young people to think, feel and become *with* the outer world. The significance of poetic devices/encounters in common worlding endeavours can be summarised in the capacity to bring inter-subjective agency to children's attention, the capacity to challenge subject/object and nature/culture dualisms and the capacity to inspire response-able relationships within a kinship model. Through these figurative practices of co-existence with human and nonhuman others, my research indicates the pedagogical use of ecopoetry in formal and informal educational spaces.

7.1.4. Multimodal Ways of Becoming-*with* the World

The second sub research question 'how do young people exercise multimodal ways of learning in their textual productions to make sense of place and identity?' was investigated through the artworks shared by the students during the online workshops. With the digital platforms used for the workshops and the multilingual poetry and storytelling festival, the students' poetic encounters transitioned from the narrow focus on verbal expression to the rich tapestry afforded by multimodality and from the domination of English in their international setting to increased efforts of integrating Arabic and its varieties. An integrative view of multimodality and multilingualism is helpful in extending the process of inter-animation to include language. Multimodality reflects

the dynamic nature of communication as children draw on the wide range of linguistic and cultural resources in their repertoires. In the data analysis, meaning-making processes unfold in relation to not only the written text but also visual, auditory, gestural, spatial and tactile modes. Multimodal interactions were found to heighten the children's familiarity with both language and the world, breathing life into communication with the incorporation of multi-sensory elements.

The children's illustrations of their poetry as well as the filming activity contribute to the development of ecological imagination and identity. The multimodal texts present a visual and verbal navigation of experiences, allowing for a multi-directional reading of the self and the world. The students seemed to enjoy following and interpreting the signs in their environment through the multimodality of texts (e.g. Aya). In the combined activities of poetry writing, drawing and filming, young people whole-heartedly engage in the complex process of sign-making themselves. A multimodal text (poem or film) is 'like a map. We just put signs for the audience to interpret' (Salwa, 2021). While sign-making in the drawings is done individually, it encompasses the whole group in filmmaking which provides a spirit of communal becoming-with the world. What is striking about filmmaking is the way it highlights the active participation (and agency) of the more-than-human in everyday interactions.

The crossing of semiotic boundaries materialises the multi-dimensional senses of identity and place. Added to the visual and auditory signs are the kinaesthetic ones, attention to which is required in text-making. Textual presentations seek to translate the dynamic and fleeting qualities of movement into reflective critical and hopeful insights. The kinaesthetic signs and bodily movement within the material world are transmediated into the young people's texts as part of their creative process of meaning-making. As the study demonstrates, multimodality is useful in the development of ecopedagogical approaches to poetry. Multimodal learning appeals to students as it allows them to explore connections between word and image, language and movement, culture and nature. Multimodal learning can also cultivate ecological awareness by facilitating deeper engagement with and understanding of the environment across different media/contexts.

7.1.4.1. Walking into Ecological Identity

Reflections on ecological identity seem to spring naturally during the students' walks. The study reveals that free walks encourage young people to actively perceive the world through their

different senses, which introduces new perspectives. Walking is always done *with* others, if we consider the presence and engagement with the elements of nature. The walks reveal an attunement to the elements of nature that play a central role in stimulating the ecological imagination. Walking with others, nonhuman and human, opens up alternative sign systems and ways of knowing the self and the world. As a whole-body activity, it offers the space for negotiating relationships with places, cultures, memories associated with them. Walking as a spatial practice proves to be a participatory mode of dynamic movement of the self (including body, mind and soul) with the world, fostering an intimate knowledge of the children's inner and outer worlds.

My research participants, along the ecopoetic journey, have found walking to be an engaging way of learning-with the natural elements of the world. In this context, the film 'Breeze' that the students created sends a clear message about the need to integrate walking and outdoor learning into their educational system. As it appears in the film and the students' commentary, walking has crucial implications for education as a practice of freedom. Walking represents a model of ecopedagogy that provides a space for breathing, observation, contemplation, reflection, co-becomings, immediate action. Since walking can never take place in a vacuum, with the walker being a meeting point of earth and sky, this practice helps students conceptualise the self in relational terms. It offers a wide variety of learning opportunities based on what/who the students encounter and the inter-subjective agencies at play (of human, nonhuman as well as digital forces).

The effectiveness of walking as a learning method is found in the students' focus on the pleasures they gain from it, as shown in their film. The students' commented in particular on its fun, slow-paced and relational aspects. This practice, according to their creative artworks/walks, embodies the joy of discovery, the possibility of adventure when someone decides to go off the beaten path. To consider its function in the process of ecological identity work, walking appears to unite the two pathways of noticing and remembering. It does draw attention to the here and now of the surroundings as many studies have emphasised, yet we cannot overlook its capacity to extend lines of connection (in other words, re-membering) to other places, practices, experiences and memories. A peripatetic imagination does not only take young people to familiar/faraway places but also seems to supply them with the language, metaphors and symbols they need to express their changing identities.

In light of the findings demonstrated above, the present study advocates walking as an essential part of the ecopoetic quest where students take control of their learning as well as engage in dialogue with human and nonhuman others and themselves. Children readily make the walking practice their own, choosing their own paths and companions. With its stimulation of the imagination, children could incorporate the walks differently into creative writing, drawing and filmmaking according to their needs and purposes. Through observation and reflection, walking could also bring individuals back in touch with their inner and outer worlds. As a method of conversation with the earth, it has proven to be a 'restorative process and healing art' that goes both ways (Orr, 1990, p. 51).

7.1.5. Ecopoetic Awakenings: Hope and Healing

Responding to the third sub research question of what therapeutic possibilities ecopoetry and text-making offer, I have explored the affordances arising from the ecological approach to literacy and identity that rest upon the value of *with*-ness discussed earlier. In this study, I argue that ecopoetry could represent a making of possibilities for children and young people in times of precarity. As apparent from the students' poetry following their walks at the start of spring 2021, noticing the changes in nature has offered trails of hope. The students' hopeful reflections come out in the midst of their Covid-19 pandemic experience and reimposed lockdowns: 'Although you don't taste or smell / You feel everybody celebrating' (Mohammed). The body of the children's texts follows the recovery of the senses, without which hope might not be noticed - 'with colours of all vibes/ with odours of all types' (Salwa). On their walks, the students have paid attention to the smallest signs of hope: 'a red flower was spotted today' (Leen). They find the promise of hope in the unfolding scenes of 'coloured treasures' (Salwa) and of bees pollinating flowers (Reemas). Their observation of trees revives a lost hope; they notice how 'slowly the leaves/ grow back/ more beautiful than ever' (Zainab). The children's need for beauty that has been expressed across the workshops takes a new significance when associated with hope; hope is enabled by beauty as well as enables its spotting even in tough times. Young people appear to co-construct meanings of hope and beauty with the plethora of nonhuman life they attune to: 'the sun is shining brightly', 'the squirrels are outside seeking', 'the children are celebrating their mum', 'flowers are blossoming everywhere' (Leen). As hope is slowly and cumulatively animated in the images provided by spring, the

students understand that real ‘spring is when the whole world awakes’ – an awakening that would materialise on the social and ethical levels as well.

The ethical-aesthetic system that the students developed along their ecopoetic quest is clear in the filmmaking of ‘Breeze’. It shows how the elements of nature are channelled into a healing power: ‘With the wind’s breeze and nature’s beauty, my mind feels relief and a sense of ease’. Sensory engagement with nature as demonstrated by the students on screen appears to allow them to develop a sense of the materiality of the elements and consequently experience/feel its therapeutic effects. Regarding mental health, the material connectedness with the elements through the combined activities of walking, poetry writing and filmmaking results in a proximity that reduces anxiety. The students seem to agree that healing goes beyond mere individual survival; it encompasses the well-being of communities, fostering collective resilience, connection and growth. This understanding of collective healing is behind the students’ will to share their walking and writing journey with other young people – ‘we decided to share this experience with students our age, hoping the breeze could help release their stress’ (Leen).

By acknowledging the collective aspect of healing, young people are encouraged to consider the broader implications of their actions as they work together towards their own rehabilitation and the restoration of harmony among all the cohabitants on Earth. In their film commentary, one of the students (Salwa) highlights the link between mental health and the wellbeing of our planet – acts like ‘cutting down trees’ and ‘killing animals’ are read in relation to the human disconnection from the natural environment. Such reflections lead to an awareness that protecting the environment starts from a recognition of our ties with it. My research has demonstrated how ethical responsibility develops through cultivating/regaining the sense of entanglement with the world. Writing *with* rivers during the workshops, for example, has developed a concern for river health against the threats of pollution and drought. The will to save rivers is manifest in poetry either by mythologising those bodies of water or referring to the dangers they face. By the end of the poetry and filmmaking workshops, the students have expressed their insights about healing and nature. They note how the healing power of nature gets transmitted through poetry/film, which in turn could change people’s sensibilities/attitudes towards the environment. At the core of healing is a paradigm shift when others, human and nonhuman, become kin. Healing appears as a process of making kin with trees, animals as well as people. When young people use this lens to make sense

of their migration experience, they start to become more open about the different ways of being in the world. With this openness, their stances towards citizenship are challenged and reviewed in light of kinship, of belonging to the family of those who 'live on Earth – I feel we're like one', as Mohammed puts it. The physical and spiritual symbiosis with nature as stimulated by language draws children into a world of kinship relations.

The study argues that a restored sense of affiliation with the Earth is facilitated by healing the rift between the different languages in the students' multilingual repertoires. A return to the heritage language is found to deepen our bond to the land, carrying traditional ecological knowledge that instils care for the Earth. Ecological connection seems to grow in proportion to the students' engagement with their heritage language, i.e. Arabic. The students found the seeds of Arabic preserved in their own names, the investigation of which has established an intimate connection to the natural things and places that the Arabic words are derived from. The relationship with the natural world the students come from has grown with the increased engagement with Arabic along the workshops. The love poetry of Mohammed's grandfather, the Noria folksong of Leen's teacher, the palm tree pruning practice of Hiba's grandfather are all examples of how the re-membering of both heritage language and the ecological knowledge of place go hand in hand. The fabric of the consequent ecological connection is especially strong because of the continuity represented by the generations that pass down the language along with an attunement to nature. Approaching heritage language from an ecological perspective has the potential to heal the detachment of young migrants from it; exploring nature through Arabic has disrupted the limited tendency of associating its usage to learning about the past or religion. Language and nature enter into a mutual animation, each bringing life to the other. When heritage language bears a positive association with life, this itself engenders hope among the younger generation of migrants.

7.2. Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Exploring ecological identity construction through poetry has significant implications for the education of migrant students. It advocates ecopoetry as a space where identities are negotiated, multimodal ways of learning are exercised and radical hope could be imagined. The study finds that an awareness of the entangled co-becomings of the self and the world requires the freedom to engage the imagination in unrestricted ways. This results in a different view of literary devices, like metaphor and dialogue, as encounters that help young people understand inter-subjective

agency and thereby evoke response-ability. When such practices for common worlding are adopted, students would be empowered to reflect on who they are in relation to the natural world with a more positive and inclusive mindset. Promoting an ecological identity work has further implications for young people's understanding of global citizenship as a form of kinship with others, human and nonhuman. The study thus recommends that teachers and children's writers adopt common worlding approaches in their practices so as to help young people envision world orders based on equitable relations and hope-full possibilities.

My study presents a departure from the conventional teaching methods in language learning, calling for pedagogically meaningful approaches that put students in touch with their lived social and ecological issues. It shows that the affordances of ecopoetry maximise when combined with walking as a methodology for creative writing and reflective learning. Found to be an embodied and affective communication with the local environment, the walking methodology could be employed to open avenues of inter-relational encounters with other species, people and generations. Capitalising on the commonality of walking as an essential human practice, educators and students would benefit from developing a walking ecopedagogy that could be easily integrated into language classes and the whole school system. An embodied approach to engaging with poetry and language has the great potential of prompting reflective learning about the self and the world.

Following the engagement of young migrants with the multimodality of ecopoetry/walking/filmmaking, I argue for the need to develop critical ecopedagogies that empower young people to recreate their personal geographies according to a broader interspecies ethics of care. I recommend using the plural term *ecopedagogies* to reflect the multiplicity of paths leading to an affective attunement with nature. My study focuses on two pathways of noticing and remembering, which I argue are significant for migrant children to develop well-balanced ecological identities. As the study maintains, it is therefore imperative that educators acknowledge/activate the multi-faceted repertoires of migrant students (including languages, folk literature, cultural practices, traditional ecological knowledge, etc.) as they make meaning of their place in the world. Educational settings would then have the potential of transforming into safe contact zones when the rift between school language/home language, culture/nature, senses/memory, body/mind are all reconciled and healed.

7.3. Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Given the interdisciplinarity of my study, its contributions may extend to many fields, namely ecocritical theory, migrant studies, language learning, environmental education and outdoor education. It contributes to the emerging theory of elemental ecocriticism (Cohen and Duckert, 2015; Oppermann and Iovino, 2015) by bringing in migrant children's perceptions and representations of the elements of nature in poetry/film. An ecopoetics of mobility (Gerhardt, 2016) is developed around a transnational imaginary and the material/textual flow of elemental forces between self and space. This elemental ecopoetics of mobility/diaspora represents an addition to the scholarship on ecocriticism, specifically addressing the under-researched areas of migration and children's ecoliterature. It changes the ways the more-than-human is examined in migrant literature. With the attempt to focus on Arabic and multilingual texts, my research provides significant insights from young people on the role of heritage language and use of home dialects in making connections with the natural world; paying attention to such voices can further the multilingual turn in ecocritical studies.

The study contributes to environmental education and outdoor learning as well. It advances the theory and practice of what Thomashow (1996) terms 'ecological identity work', pointing out the two intertwining pathways of noticing (body-senses) and remembering (memory) that are significant for migrant students in developing an environmental sensibility. Highlighting the link between aesthetic engagement and ethical responsibility, my research stresses the significance of adhering to the aesthetics of nature when developing/implementing environmental learning. It lays out strategies for aesthetic-ethical encounters with more-than-human others, thereby feeding into the development of ecopedagogies that nurture the values of beauty and love. The employment of a walking ecopedagogy with young people adds to the field of outdoor education, especially when adapting the practice/methodology to the digital design of the workshops. Applying the common worlds approach (Taylor & Giugni, 2012; Taylor et al., 2021) to the poetry of and for young people contributes to the understanding of children's and YA literature in general as a common worlding practice. Another important methodological contribution of the study is the digital adaptation of my research design and walking methodology. It develops remote and online ecopedagogies, allowing students to take complete ownership of their walks and decide what to share, discover new paths, and lead environmental initiatives.

7.4. Limitations of the Study

Conducting my field work during the COVID-19 pandemic represented me with a few challenges in terms of access to participants and data collection. Due to the restrictions on travel and lockdown measures of social distancing, my research with students in Istanbul had to be done remotely and face-to-face interactions between the students were very limited. The reliance on online data collection methods limited my observation of the students' interactions with/in their environment and consequently impacted how detailed my fieldnotes and the collected data were. Within the confines of the research circumstances and available data, aspects relating to the contextual specificity of students' experience and process of developing ties with their place(s) might not be adequately reported and investigated.

7.5. Directions for Further Research

Each of my three chapters on breeze, water and earth represents a gateway for further studies on children's interactions with and perceptions/representations of the elements of nature – which could examine other genres of literary texts. Future research endeavours could build upon the findings of this study and delve deeper into other aspects of ecopoetry for migrant children. As raised by the participants of my study, it would be important for research to engage more with threats to their environments and respond to the environmental destruction posed by war.

There is scope for further research that pays attention to the contributions of Arabic and other languages to the ecocritical discourse. Exploring a broader range of multilingual ecocritical texts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intersection between language, culture and ecology in literary discourse. At the start of my research, it was challenging to find contemporary poetry publications in Arabic that specifically addressed the interests and needs of migrant young people in the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. A study that reads the increasing body of Arabic poetry for children from an ecocritical perspective would be valuable in the area of children's and YA literature.

On-site research with children would refine the methodology of walking. It would be interesting to compare the application of the same methodology in different settings and develop it in relation to language learning - focused studies on walking in the context of complementary schools would therefore be beneficial. Also, researching intergenerational learning as a source of

embodied/ecological pedagogies would be valuable in demonstrating its role in saving traditional/indigenous ecological knowledge and fostering a response-able kinship on Earth.

*

This study follows the routes taken by a group of migrant young people while navigating their identities through poetic encounters with the natural world. It showcases an ecopoetic quest that witnesses (and encourages) moments of becoming response-able and becoming hopeful *with* the elements of breeze, water and earth. This learning journey has transformed all that was perceived as ordinary such as natural things and the everyday practice of walking. This study, it is hoped, presents an ecopedagogical model based on embodied writing, mindful movement, close observation, multi-sensory engagement and deep reflection that could be applicable to the field of language education. Since this participatory research is primarily built around the voices of students, it makes sense to conclude by quoting one of their own insights: ‘poetry is a wire that connects me with others’ (Salwa, 2021).

8. References

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9. Appendices

List of Appendices

Appendix A

Department of Educational Studies

Ethical Practice in Research Form

Name: Sara Shahwan	**Degree:** MPhil/PhD
Student Number: 33620438	**Year of Degree:** 2nd year
Title of Research: Children's Negotiation of Ecological Identities through Poetry and the Environment	
Supervisor (s): Vally Lytra and Vicky Macleroy	

Section 1:

	YES	NO	N/A
I have reflected carefully on the research that I propose to undertake.	x		
I have reviewed the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition (2018) and 'Good practice in Educational Research Writing (2000) published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Note that, depending on your research topic, you might need to review other published ethical guidelines (e.g. BPS, BSA, BAAL).	x		
I have discussed the ethical aspects of this research with my supervisor, and my research complies with these guidelines.	x		

Section 2:

Research Checklist:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. young children, children, adults with learning or communication difficulties, patients). Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).	x		
2. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. children at school, parents, patients, people in custody, members of organisations)	x		
3.In the case of action research will the researcher inform the sponsor/host of the work they propose to undertake? (e.g. head of school)			x
4. Will the research be carried out without the knowledge and/or consent of the participants? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)		x	

5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. race, bullying, sexual or drug activity)?	x		
6. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		x	
7. Will the study involve prolonged data collection or repetitive testing?		x	
8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x	

If you have ticked 'no' for all questions in Section 2, then please sign below and arrange for your supervisor (or module coordinator) to sign this form. If you have ticked 'yes' to any of these questions, then please complete and sign the second page of this form.

Signature of student:	Date:
Signature of Dissertation supervisor or module coordinator:	Date:

There is an obligation on the Dissertation supervisor or module coordinator to complete sections 3, 4 and if necessary 5 below, in order where appropriate to bring to the attention of the Departmental Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

Section 3:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Provide a brief outline of your research (what do you want to find out? What will you do to find out (your methods)? Consider including information on who, where, when, how, and why:

▪ The research project will investigate the interaction of children from immigrant and refugee backgrounds with poetry and the environment, employing a participatory ethnographic methodology. My main study will test out the ecocritical approach to poetry with a mixed group of Year 7 and Year 8 Arab students (aged 11-14 years old) at an international school in Istanbul. Through a series of poetry workshops combined with nature walks, I will attempt to explore the ways children perceive and represent their ecological identities through the reading and writing of poetry.
▪ Children are invited to attend a series of online after-school workshops incorporating Arabic and English poetry over the spring and summer terms (28 Feb – May 2021). This would lead to their participation in a multilingual poetry and digital storytelling festival on the theme of ‘Our Planet’ at Goldsmiths (June 2021).
▪ The workshops will largely draw on participatory methods that encourage dialogic engagement with children.
▪ The qualitative research methods are adapted to the constraints on travel and physical meetings imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Moving from face-to-face to distant fieldwork, I will be using a digital ‘go-along’ method enabled by mobile technologies that capture events as they happen in real time. The children’s digital diary entries and WhatsApp messages may assist me in gathering their perceptions of the physical-social environment and mapping their connections to different places.
▪ Different sorts of data will be collected for analysis through digital ethnographic observations, video recordings of Zoom meetings, online interviews, WhatsApp chats, and children’s own work (written pieces/drawings/photos/voice notes/videos).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Set out the ethical issues arising from your research below. Include sensitivity, confidentiality, and informed consent:</td><td>Identify how you intend to address each of these ethical issues:</td></tr>
<tr><td>The study involves vulnerable young children.</td><td>▪ The psychological and physical safety of children will come first in all the poetry sessions and planned walks.
▪ The methods used are appropriate for children and their developmental stage. As I constantly observe the children’s needs, I will adjust the project where needed.
▪ Children are regarded as co-researchers who will be actively involved in developing the project.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Children aged eleven to fourteen are minors who are unable to give informed consent.</td><td>▪ Children will be given detailed information about the research so they could voluntarily choose to participate. A child-friendly information sheet will be used.
▪ They will be made aware of their right to withdraw at any point.
▪ The consent of children will be obtained as well as the parental consent to their participation in the project.</td></tr>
</table>

	▪ Written information and full contact details will be available to both children and parents, should they wish to ask any questions or remove consent.
The research will require the co-operation of a gatekeeper (school and parents).	▪ The school administration will first be provided with a project proposal. Consent for research and access to the target group of students will be agreed. ▪ Teachers will be asked for consent to be involved in the project. The headteacher and class teachers are welcome to contribute to the delivery of any parts of the workshops. They will be asked for permission to record the interactions between them and the students. Observations will be shared with the teachers at regular meetings for reflection and consultation. ▪ Towards the end of the study, teachers will be interviewed about their educational practices, the use of poetry and nature-based activities in their classrooms, and the impact of the international school system on identity formation and Arabic language acquisition. ▪ One-to-one interviews might be conducted with parents to find out more about family histories and connections to their homeland. ▪ Records of conversations with teachers/parents will be anonymised in the research. ▪ The research findings will be shared with the school and all participants.
Sensitive topics related to war, the refugee experience, displacement, ethnicity and race are likely to arise in discussions about place and identity.	▪ The reading and writing of poetry should present a safe space for delving into the private worlds and deep personal experiences of participants. ▪ The school policies on safeguarding will be adhered to when handling sensitive or controversial issues - teachers attending the workshops could be asked for advice and support. ▪ Careful consideration will be given to how sensitive topics are approached in interviews and discussions so as not to cause any harm or distress.

Data collection and confidentiality	▪ Confidentiality will be explained to all participants at the outset of the research/interviews. ▪ Whenever audio/video data is recorded, it will be done in full knowledge of the participants. ▪ Participants will be assured that any collected data will be safely stored on a password-protected computer. Data will be accessed only by the researcher and will not be shared without permission. ▪ All data used will be anonymised; participants will not be identified in any reports or academic publications. ▪ Anonymity, however, does not apply to creative pieces that children will get published using their real names across a range of media such as blogs, magazines, or an anthology book by the end of the project. Children will present and celebrate their work at Goldsmiths' Our Planet Festival.
Comments of Dissertation supervisor or module coordinator:	
Signed (Student)	S Shahwan
Print name	Sara Shahwan
Date	27 February 2021

You must now submit this form to your supervisor (Dissertation) or module coordinator (for other modules). If you do not submit this form, your dissertation (or research report) will not be able to be submitted. Once signed, include the form as an Appendix with your assignment.

Section 4

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This project has been considered using agreed Departmental procedures and is now approved. This approval is valid for a maximum period of five years.

Signed (Dissertation supervisor or module coordinator): Vhytra	
Print name Vally Lytra	
Date 27 February 2021	

Optional section 5: If the supervisor(s) or module coordinator has further queries, this form should be referred to the Head of Programme, who may also request advice from the Chair of the Ethics Committee. The process should be recorded below:

Comments of Head of Programme:	
Signed (Head of Programme)	
Print name	
Date	
Comments of Chair, Ethics Committee:	
Signed (Chair, Ethics Committee)	
Print name	
Date	

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Data Protection Privacy Notice

The General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR] and Goldsmiths Research: guidelines for participants

Please note that this document does not constitute, and should not be construed as, legal advice. These guidelines are designed to help participants understand their rights under GDPR which came into force on 25 May 2018.

Your rights as a participant (data subject) in this study

The updated data protection regulation is a series of conditions designed to protect an individual's personal data. Not all data collected for research is personal data.

Personal data is data such that a living individual can be identified; collection of personal data is sometimes essential in conducting research and GDPR sets out that data subjects should be treated in a lawful and fair manner and that information about the data processing should be explained clearly and transparently. Some data we might ask to collect falls under the heading of **special categories data**. This type of information includes data about an individual's race; ethnic origin; politics; religion; trade union membership; genetics; biometrics (where used for ID purposes); health; sex life; or sexual orientation. This data requires particular care.

Under GDPR you have the following rights over your personal data[13]:

- ***The right to be informed***. You must be informed if your personal data is being used.
- ***The right of access***. You can ask for a copy of your data by making a 'subject access request'.
- ***The right to rectification.*** You can ask for your data held to be corrected.
- ***The right to erasure***. You can ask for your data to be deleted.

[13] https://ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/

- ***The right to restrict processing***. You can limit the way an organisation uses your personal data if you are concerned about the accuracy of the data or how it is being used.
- ***The right to data portability***. You have the right to get your personal data from an organisation in a way that is accessible and machine-readable. You also have the right to ask an organisation to transfer your data to another organisation.
- ***The right to object***. You have the right to object to the use of your personal data in some circumstances. You have an absolute right to object to an organisation using your data for direct marketing.
- ***How your data is processed using automated decision making and profiling***. You have the right not to be subject to a decision that is based solely on automated processing if the decision affects your legal rights or other equally important matters; to understand the reasons behind decisions made about you by automated processing and the possible consequences of the decisions, and to object to profiling in certain situations, including for direct marketing purposes.

Please note that these rights are not absolute and only apply in certain circumstances. You should also be informed how long your data will be retained and who it might be shared with.

How does Goldsmiths treat my contribution to this study?

Your participation in this research is very valuable and any personal data you provide will be treated in confidence using the best technical means available to us. The university's legal basis for processing your data[14] as part of our research findings is a "task carried out in the public interest". This means that our research is designed to improve the health, happiness and well-being of society and to help us better understand the world we live in. It is not going to be used for marketing or commercial purposes.

In addition to our legal basis under Article 6 (as described above), for **special categories data** as defined under Article 9 of GDPR, our condition for processing is that it is "necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes".[15]

If your data contributes to data from a group then your ability to remove data may be limited as the project progresses, when removal of your data may cause damage to the dataset.

You should also know that you may contact any of the following people if you are unhappy about the way your data or your participation in this study are being treated:

- Goldsmiths Data Protection Officer – dp@gold.ac.uk (concerning your rights to control personal data).
- Chair, Goldsmiths Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee - via reisc@gold.ac.uk, REISC Secretary (for any other element of the study).

[14] GDPR Article 6; the six lawful bases for processing data are explained here: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/lawful-basis-for-processing/

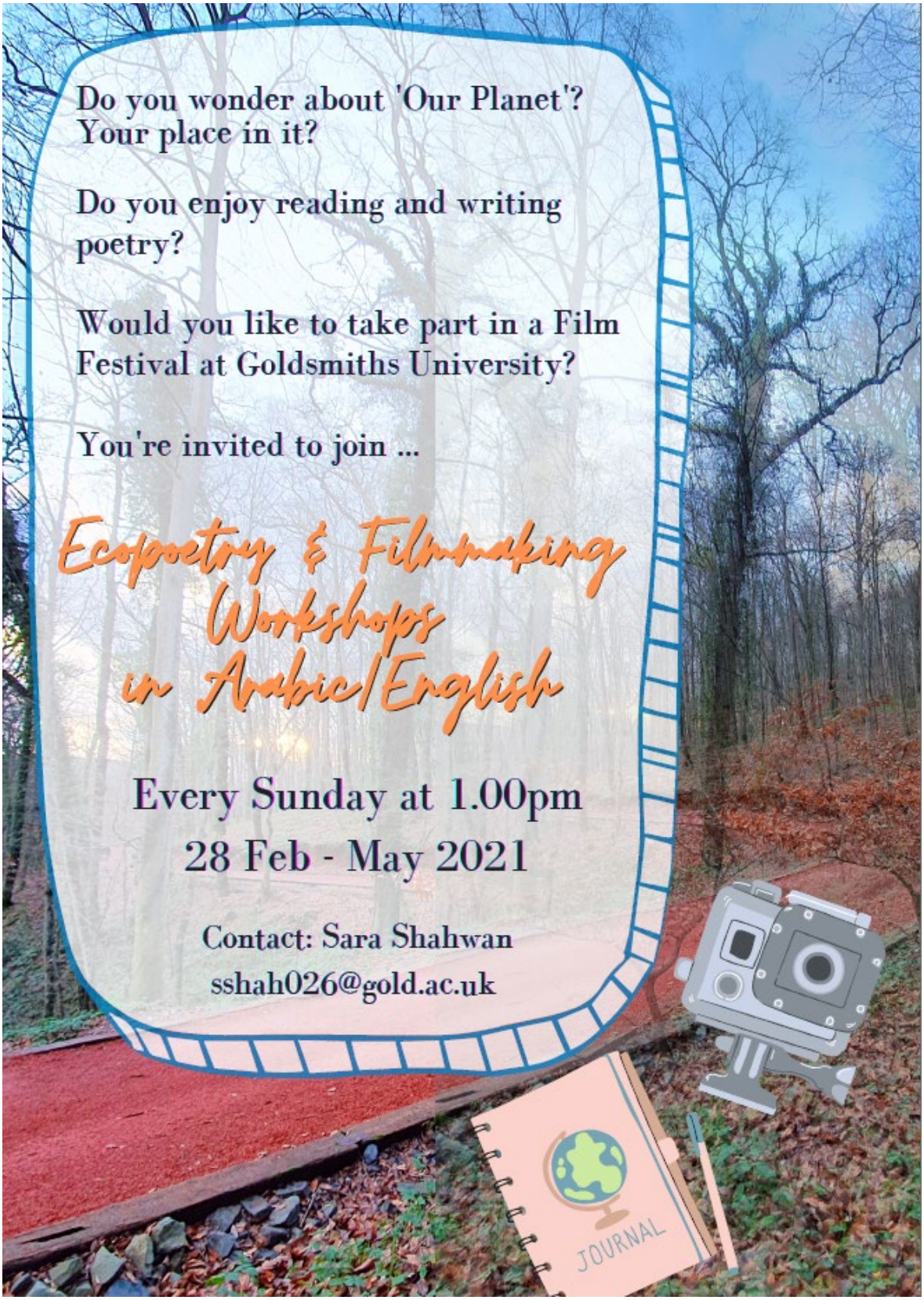
[15] Article 9 of the GDPR requires this type of data to be treated with great care because of the more significant risks to a person's fundamental rights and freedoms that mishandling might cause, eg, by putting them at risk of unlawful discrimination.

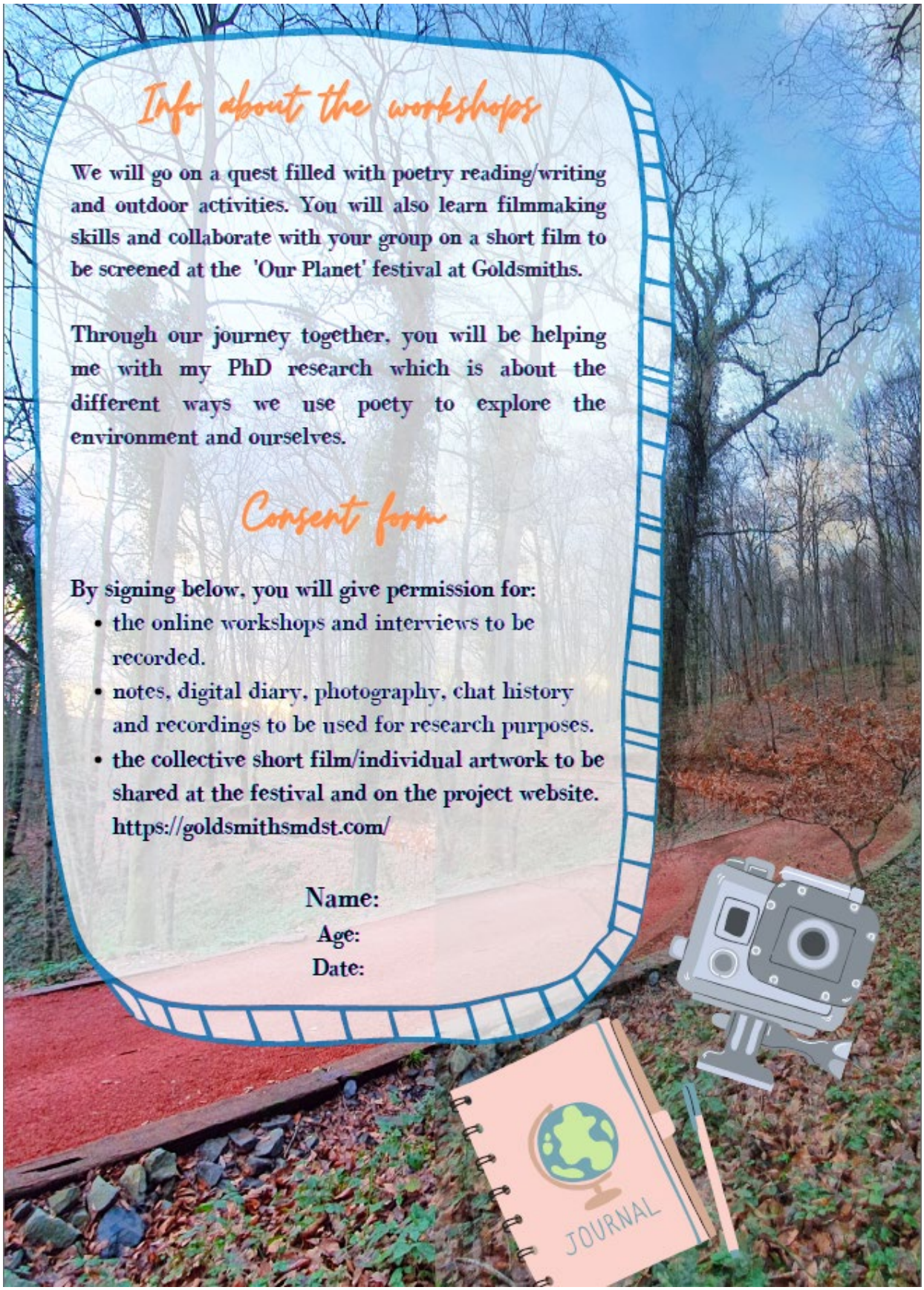
- You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office at https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/

This information has been provided by the Research Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee with advice from the Research Services and Governance and Legal Teams.

Version: 13 August 2018

Appendix B


Do you wonder about 'Our Planet'? Your place in it?
Do you enjoy reading and writing poetry?
Would you like to take part in a Film Festival at Goldsmiths University?
You're invited to join ...
Ecopoetry & Filmmaking Workshops in Arabic/English
Every Sunday at 1.00pm
28 Feb - May 2021
Contact: Sara Shahwan
sshah026@gold.ac.uk
JOURNAL


Info about the workshops
We will go on a quest filled with poetry reading/writing and outdoor activities. You will also learn filmmaking skills and collaborate with your group on a short film to be screened at the 'Our Planet' festival at Goldsmiths.
Through our journey together, you will be helping me with my PhD research which is about the different ways we use poety to explore the environment and ourselves.
Consent form
By signing below, you will give permission for:
• the online workshops and interviews to be recorded.
• notes, digital diary, photography, chat history and recordings to be used for research purposes.
• the collective short film/individual artwork to be shared at the festival and on the project website. https://goldsmithsmdst.com/
Name:
Age:
Date:
JOURNAL

Appendix C

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

Research Project Title

Eco-poetry and Filmmaking Workshops in Arabic/English

What is the purpose of this project?

This series of online workshops invites children to engage more deeply with language and the environment through poetry and filmmaking. Over the spring and summer terms, children will embark on a poetic quest that starts with understanding the self in relation to the surrounding environment and continues with connections established across the world in an international film festival held in June 2021 at Goldsmiths, University of London.

One-hour workshops are envisioned to run weekly, starting from 28 February until May 2021. Sessions have a 3-part structure: 1) poetry reading, 2) creative writing, and 3) a follow-up outdoor task for children to do on their own during the week.

The workshops will inform a PhD study on children's negotiation of ecological identities through poetry. Children are considered co-researchers who will be involved in developing the project according to their needs and interests.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to participate in this study because:

a) You have children aged 11-14 years old.
b) Your children are bilingual/multilingual.
c) Your children strive to maintain a connection to their country of origin and heritage language while living abroad.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you agree to take part, you will need to sign the consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part, and what will I have to do?

Over a period of three months, you will be asked to:

- Allow your child to attend a weekly online workshop that lasts for one hour.
- Allow your child to go for nature walks.
- Allow the researcher to collect documentary data (such as your children's writings, notes, photography, illustrations and short films) and interview your child.
- Allow the researcher to audio/video record your child during the workshops and interviews. The audio/video recordings will be transcribed for analysis. Social media data related to the project such as WhatsApp chats might also be analysed if relevant to the purpose of the study.
- Allow your child to present their work at the festival.
- Allow the researcher to publish the children's poetry and artwork across a range of media such as blogs, magazines, or an anthology book by the end of the project.
- Allow the researcher to disseminate the findings of the thesis to academic and non-academic audiences (e.g. articles, conference presentations, workshops).

Will my taking part in the research be kept confidential?

Any personal data collected about your children during the course of this research will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely on a password protected laptop and will not be shared without permission. Your children will not be identified in any reports or academic publications; anonymity in the research will be ensured by the use of pseudonyms that participants may choose. Anonymity, however, does not apply to creative pieces that children will get published using their real names. Children are also expected to present their work at the festival.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Through the active involvement with poetry and filmmaking, young language learners are presented with meaningful opportunities to:

1. improve their receptive and expressive language skills, with poetry being a great motivator for enhancing vocabulary, sentence formation, fluency and creativity.
2. find their voice in Arabic and English as well as any other languages that are part of their repertoires so they could communicate ideas and feelings confidently.
3. practise literary translation from one language into another, thereby enabling them to cross cultural boundaries – Arabic films will have English subtitles and vice versa.
4. connect with the natural world through sensory experiences that inspire a sense of environmental responsibility.
5. engage their imagination in the creative processes of writing, illustrating and filmmaking.
6. develop digital skills needed for the rapidly evolving technological world we live in.
7. exercise interpersonal skills as they team up with peers in a multi-age group and collaborate with children from all over the world towards the international festival 'Our Planet' taking place on 11 June 2021 at Goldsmiths, University of London.

It is hoped that this work will also have a beneficial impact on the educational practices implemented by other teachers in the future.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will constitute a significant part of my PhD study. They will be published in academic journals and presented at local and international conferences. A copy of the published results will be given to participants.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of a PhD project by Sara Shahwan, supported by a bursary from the Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Who has reviewed the project?

This project has been reviewed by my doctoral supervisors, Dr Vally Lytra and Dr Vicky Macleroy. Ethical clearance is obtained from the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths.

Contacts for further information

Sara Shahwan, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. Phone: +44 7497273271, email: sshah026@gold.ac.uk.

Dr Vally Lytra, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. Email: v.lytra@gold.ac.uk.

Dr Vicky Macleroy, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. Email: v.macleroy@gold.ac.uk.

If you are happy for your child to take part in the project, please sign the attached form and return it to the researcher at sshah026@gold.ac.uk .

Thanks for taking part in this research.

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PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Project title: Eco-poetry and Filmmaking Workshops in Arabic/English

Researcher: Sara Shahwan

Participant's Name: _____

This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your child's involvement in the project and that you agree to the conditions of their participation. You can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the researcher at sshah026@gold.ac.uk *and your data will not be shared without your permission.*

By signing this form, I certify that:

1. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that we are free to withdraw from the project without giving any reason.
3. I consent to the workshops and interviews being audio/video recorded and these recordings being used for the purposes of research.
4. I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible by the researcher only and that confidentiality will be maintained.
5. I understand that data collected during this project might be shared as appropriate and that findings will be used in research outputs, in which case data will remain anonymous.
6. I agree that my child's creative pieces (poetry, artwork and digital story) may be published using their real name.
7. I approve of my child's participation in 'Our Planet Festival 2021' at Goldsmiths.
8. Based upon the above, I agree for my child to take part in this project.

Date: _____
Signature of parent/carer: _____
Contact details: _____

Appendix D

Eco-poetry and Filmmaking Workshops in Arabic/English

This series of workshops invites children to engage more deeply with language and the environment through poetry and filmmaking. Over the spring and summer terms, children will embark on a poetic quest that starts with understanding the self in relation to the surrounding environment and continues with connections established across the world in an international film festival held in June 2021 at Goldsmiths, University of London. The journey does not end there as the benefits reaped by participants go beyond language arts to include other areas of development: personal, social and emotional development, communication, understanding of the world, and active global citizenship.

Aims and significance of the project

Through the active involvement with poetry and filmmaking, young language learners are presented with meaningful opportunities to:

1. improve their receptive and expressive language skills, with poetry being a great motivator for enhancing vocabulary, sentence formation, fluency and creativity.
2. find their voice in Arabic and English as well as any other languages that are part of their repertoires so they could communicate ideas and feelings confidently.
3. practise literary translation from one language into another, thereby enabling them to cross cultural boundaries – Arabic films will have English subtitles and vice versa.
4. connect with the natural world through sensory experiences that inspire a sense of environmental responsibility.
5. engage their imagination in the creative processes of writing, illustrating and filmmaking.
6. develop digital skills needed for the rapidly evolving technological world we live in.
7. exercise interpersonal skills as they team up with peers in a multi-age group and collaborate with children from all over the world towards the international festival.

Description of workshops

This is a series of online after-school workshops incorporating Arabic/English poetry, to be carried out with a group of up to 10 children aged 9-13. One-hour workshops are envisioned to run weekly, starting from late-February until May 2021. Sessions have a 3-part structure: 1) poetry reading, 2) creative writing, and 3) a follow-up outdoor task for children to do on their own during the week.

The workshops will largely draw on participatory methods that encourage dialogic engagement with children. Students are invited to go on an ecopoetic quest full of poetry reading/writing and nature-based activities (e.g., nature walks, birdwatching, gardening, recycling, etc.). Poetry shared in the Zoom workshops provides a springboard for critical discussions and artwork. Students will be asked to keep a record of weekly interactions with the environment using journaling apps or paper diaries. In this context, photos/videos/voice notes/locations would be shared on a WhatsApp group to let all participants 'go-along' with each other in real time when possible. Participants will also be guided through the filmmaking process to participate in the film festival and multilingual poetry workshop on the theme of 'Our Planet' held at Goldsmiths in June 2021.

Outline of workshops

The following plan gives but a glimpse into the workshops. It is worth noting that the workshops are intended to be co-shaped with schoolteachers as well as students themselves.

Week 1 28 Feb 2021	Introduction to the project as a whole: ▪ The Ecopoetic Quest ▪ My Digital Diary ▪ Multilingual Poetry and Digital Storytelling Festival Self-Introductions: ▪ Creating a self-portrait ▪ Writing a piece using the sentences: My mountain is…. My river or ocean is… My tree is …. My city or town or village is… My significant ancestor is… My name is…. My heart is…. Suggested poetry to share: ▪ Arabic *قلبي غابة* لرنين حنا ومجد كيال (2018) *My Heart is a Forest* by Raneen Hanna and Majd Kayyal (2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THi7INQQTww ▪ English 'My face is a map' by Jackie Kay https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/my-face-is-a-map/
Week 2 7 March 2021	Quest 1: Birdwatching 'We wonder how it feels to fly' ❖ Suggested Arabic/English poetry to share: Arabic ▪ Fables in verse by Egypt's poet laureate Ahmad Shawqi: 'اليمامة والصياد' (The Dove and the Shooter)/ 'العصفور والغدير المهجور' (The Sparrow and the Abandoned Creek)/ 'ولد الغراب' (The Crow's Little Chick)/ 'سليمان والهدهد' (Solomon and the Hoopoe)

	English ▪ Robert Macfarlane's 'Lark' [Acrostic poem] from *The Lost Words* (2017) ▪ 'The Seagulls' by Michael Rosen https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/the-seagulls/ ▪ 'If I were an Albatross' by Laura Mucha https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/albatross/ ❖ Writing prompts: Which bird are you? 'If I were a bird…' ❖ Outdoor activity: ▪ Spend an hour watching the birds in the park, garden, or out of the window. ▪ Jot down in the diary what you see/hear: bird names, birdsong, flying in flocks or alone, patterns in the sky, landing/nesting, etc. ▪ Take snapshots of birds. A poem to demonstrate the task of birdwatching: http://www.poemfarm.amylv.com/2012/10/bird-watching-watching-wondering.html
Week 3 14 March 2021	Quest 2: Follow a River 'The fish travels on to who knows where' ❖ Suggested poetry to read: (Children can bring in poems suggested by parents/grandparents.) Arabic ▪ 'النهر الخالد' (The Immortal River) written by Mahmoud Ismail and sung by the legendary Egyptian singer Mohamed Abd el-Wahab in 1954. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipVC2SctEcQ ▪ 'يا بحر الطوفان' (O Flooding Sea) -- An Algerian folk song about migration performed by Egyptian artist Hamza Namira to Balkan music on the banks of the Thames. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3K6XFtIsYU English ▪ 'The river' by Valerie Bloom https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/the-river/ ▪ *The River: An Epic Journey to the Sea* by Patrica Hegarty (2018).

	❖ Writing prompts: 'My Life as a River' exercise ❖ Outdoor activity: ▪ Have a walk along a river or any source of water nearby, noticing the reflection of light on its surface and the motion/sound of waves. ▪ If it is safe to put one hand in the water, you can focus your attention on the physical sensations you experience in your hands. ▪ Record feelings/thoughts, then sketch the river and its movement.
Week 4 21 March 2021	Quest 3: Signs of Spring 'To bloom is to know your roots' ❖ Poetry to read: (Children's own suggestions) <u>Arabic</u> ▪ 'هكذا قالت الشجرة المهملة' (So said the neglected tree) by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. <u>English</u> ▪ 'Poinciana Passion' by Cheryl Albury, in *Under the Moon and Over the Sea: A Collection of Poetry from the Caribbean*, ed. by John Agard and Grace Nichols (2002). ❖ Writing prompts: A dialogue with a tree. ❖ Outdoor activity: ▪ Go on a 'signs of spring' hunt in the local park. ▪ Make a collage with twigs, leaves, flowers, etc./collect pictures. ▪ Record feelings and thoughts in the journal and share impressions with the group.
Week 5 28 March 2021	Reflections/Evaluation + co-planning with children ❖ We will discuss what they liked and disliked so far, after completing a short online questionnaire. Children will then be asked about their expectations for the final quest session and the subsequent filmmaking process.
Week 6 4 April 2021	Quest 4: Home 'I shall feel at home, once again'

	❖ Suggested poetry: Arabic ▪ دمشق: قصة مدينة – آلاء مرتضى (2018) Damascus: Story of a City by Alaa Murtada (2018) ▪ خبز أمي – قصيدة محمود درويش ورسوم سحر عبد الله My Mother's Bread – poem by Mahmoud Darwish illustrated by Sahar Abdallah (2019) English ▪ Khaled Hosseini's Sea Prayer (2018) ▪ 'To Make a Homeland' and 'Home' from the anthology England: Poems from a School, edited by Kate Clanchy (2018) ❖ Writing prompts: 'I feel at Home when …' 'I find shelter in …' ❖ Outdoor activity: ▪ Visit a place that makes you feel at home. Where is it? Who is there? What makes you feel this way? ▪ Create a map showing all the places you call 'home' and add colours, plants, animals, objects…etc. ▪ An extra activity if you would like to step into the wild is to build your own den! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1NmDHFsiP0
Week 7 11 April 2021	Filmmaking 1: Introduction to Digital Poetry ❖ Looking at examples of films using poetry from previous 'Critical Connections' projects at Goldsmiths: ▪ 'Belonging' (a spoken word poetry film by year 9 students at Lammas school in London) https://vimeo.com/219976715 ▪ 'Migration' (a Greek-English digital story combining poetry and prose) https://vimeo.com/168321455 ▪ 'Water and Light/ مي وضي' (an Arabic-English spoken word performance about London by Palestinian poet Farah Chamma) https://vimeo.com/395890237 ❖ Discussing ways of turning written poems into digital poems and ideas for short films.

	In the following sessions, students will be working collaboratively to produce one (or two) short film(s) on the theme of 'Our Planet'. They will be able to use the poems, photos, and ideas from the eco-poetry workshops to create their films. Personal phones/cameras and a free video-editing software can be used.
Week 8 18 April 2021	Filmmaking 2: Storyboarding and Scripting ❖ Children will be introduced to the tool of storyboarding so they could plan their film sequence, combining images with script/poetry lines, sound effects, subtitles and any other relevant details. They can use the free version of StudioBinder, a storyboarding software https://www.studiobinder.com/storyboard-creator/ .
Week 9 25 April 2021	Filmmaking 3: Visual Imagery ❖ Children will be encouraged to move beyond the literal use of imagery, as they analyse and select images to include. We will go back to figurative language and symbolism in poetry while exploring the power of metaphor in filmmaking as well. ❖ A variety of camera shots and angles will be covered so as to help students convey their intended meaning.
Week 10 2 May 2021	Filmmaking 4: Voice Over in Arabic and Subtitles in English ❖ Close attention would be paid to voice – children will have the space to try out different voices and get feedback from their peers before they record their lines of poetry in Arabic. The oral aspect of poetry is taken a step further, with this focus on reciting/performance. ❖ In the second part of the session, they will learn how to add translated lines as subtitles.
Week 11 9 May 2021	Filmmaking 5: Editing ❖ Students will work on combining film footage, pictures, soundtracks, and subtitles. (If the school is not able to provide the students with access to Adobe Premiere Pro, a free editing software like Photo Story can be used.)

Week 12 16 May 2021	One more week of editing before the film submission deadline on Friday 21 May 2021.
Week 13 11 June 2021	Film Festival at Goldsmiths ❖ Students would present their film at the festival. https://goldsmithsmdst.com/project-brief-2021/ ❖ A multilingual poetry workshop is planned as part of the digital storytelling festival 2021. This will be a 2-hour workshop on Friday 11 June from 10.00 am – 12.00 pm led by poets and project workshop leaders at Goldsmiths, University of London for students participating in the film festival.
Week 14 20 June 2021	Follow-up group and individual interviews: ❖ Reviewing the project outputs ❖ Discussing ideas for future workshops

Consent for research

The proposed workshops are part of a PhD project on children's negotiation of ecological identities through poetry. To this end, informed consent will be sought from the school, parents and children to collect data during the project – ensuring the anonymity of all research participants. Data will be collected through digital ethnographic observations, video recordings of Zoom meetings, chat histories, and children's own work (digital diary, notes, photography, illustrations, short films). Online interviews will be conducted with both children and schoolteachers to help understand how poetry and place feature in their classes as well as to discuss ways of improving educational practices in use. Children are considered co-researchers and thus will be involved in developing the project according to their needs and interests.

Contribution to the school

The school would benefit greatly from taking part in the project. Children will be motivated to engage with Arabic/English literature and poetry, developing their language skills in more creative ways. I would provide materials of workshops that the schoolteachers could use in the future. Teachers will also benefit from discussions about research in pedagogy. In terms of publicity, I could contribute to the school website with a few entries showcasing the children's productions and participation in the festival at Goldsmiths. The school as a research site will receive acknowledgement in the PhD thesis and any ensuing publications, which will increase the visibility of the school in the academic community.

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Project title: Eco-poetry and Filmmaking Workshops in Arabic/English

Researcher: Sara Shahwan

Teacher: _____

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the study as described above. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement in the project and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. You can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the researcher at sshah026@gold.ac.uk *and your data will not be shared without your permission.*

By signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.
- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- I consent to the workshops being audio/video recorded and these recordings being used for the purposes of research.
- I consent to the use of social media data related to the project such as WhatsApp chats in the research study.
- I agree to be interviewed and to have the interviews audio/video recorded.
- I understand that I can request a copy of the interview transcript and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure confidentiality.
- I give permission to be quoted anonymously in academic publications.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix E

Our Planet Festival Reflections

1. Which film introduction did you think was best and why?

2. How has seeing these films made you think differently? Give a specific example from a film.

3. What did you like most about your own film? Try and give some details.

4. Which film would you recommend to a friend? Give some details about what they might like about the film.

5. What did you learn about different languages from watching the films?

6. What do you think is the main message from these films about the environment?

7. How can the ideas of young people expressed in these films reach more people and make a difference?

8. What did you enjoy most about being able to see and share films with other young people from different schools and countries?

9. What ideas under the theme of ‘Our Planet’ would you like to research and create multilingual poetry, artwork, and films about in the future?

10. Select a multilingual poem on the Critical Connections website and say what you like about the poem.

Any other comments

Name:

School: