

The Autistic Son of Nature and Ecological Alternative: an Eco - Crip Study of Selected Poems by Adam Wolfond^(*)

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Abstract:

This study examines eco-crip theory in selected poems by the Canadian autistic poet Adam Wolfond (2002-). Eco-Crip theory is an intersectional critical theory that examines the conflicting binarism of the abled and the disabled, and how nature, as a superior power to humans in general regardless of their ability plays a remarkable role in bridging and reconciling this oppositional binarism. It is a theory that traces the marvelous power of inclusion that nature has in comparison to the white Euro abled man who has long sought to deepen the differences between the abled and the disabled people. In this study, the autistic people, who are considered disabled, are embraced by nature. Because they are sons of nature like their abled-bodied brothers, they are also seen as ecological alternatives to them. In Adam Wolfond's poems, *The Maker of Wanting Space* (2020), *The Ripples Are Ongoing Acts* (2022), *In Way of Music Water Answers* (2022), and *Eros of Bathing stimming Dancing Pacing* (2022), Adam Wolfond tries to describe his mother son relationship with one of nature's elements, water. Through this very close relationship, the disabled autistic poet could prove that he is an "ecological alternative" to the abled-bodied, or neurotypical.

Key words: autistic, eco, water, disabled, able-bodied.

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التوحيدي ابن الطبيعة و المكافئ البيئي: دراسته بينيه اعاقيه في مختارات شعريه لادم ولفوند

ملخص باللغة العربيه

تتناول هذه الدراسة النظرية البيئية الاعاقية وهي نظرية تهدف الي حل الصراع الدائم مابين القادرين جسديا و عصابيا وغير القادرين من خلال الطبيعة حيث يمكن ان تلعب الطبيعة دورا ملحوظا في سد الفجوات التي وضعها النظام الاجباري ل القادرين و التي ادت الي تهيمش كل من هو غير قادر جسديا او عصابيا. الطبيعة تمثل القوة العظمي في هذا الكون و اذا كانت الطبيعة تمتلك هذه القدره فهي قادره حتما علي ضم كل من القادرين و غير القادرين تحت لوائها و بالتالي تستطيع ان تجعل من غير القادرين مكافئا بيئيا مساو تماما للقادرين, وهذا ماوضحه الشاعر التوحيدي ادم ولفوند الذي اعتبر الماء و هو جزء من الطبيعة الام الاقوى التي تستطيع ازاله الفروق بينه و بين القادرين جسديا و عصابيا.

The quest for equality is a fierce, and unrelenting struggle that every disabled person must go through to prove that s/he deserves to be treated as an equal to the able-bodied. The able-bodied have long regarded the disabled as objects, and this is probably why they have set up a devastating and terribly overwhelming system that differentiates between them and the disabled. A way out for this shameful, and intolerable categorical system could be found in nature, which has an exquisite and extraordinary hegemonic power of inclusion of both living and non living objects. Eco-Crip theory is a theory that explores how nature unleashes its inclusive, and hegemonic power especially, when it includes and embraces those who are described as disabled.

Eco- Crip theory is a critical theory that attempts to make an intersection between nature and those we call disabled or cripples. It focuses on “disrupting the normative ways of being as able-bodied/mindedness by bringing the more- than- human to the foreground” (Schmidt, 2021, p.18). In other words, eco- crip theory seeks to deconstruct the “compulsory” (Schmidt, 2021,p.18) system of able-bodied/mindedness that gives superiority only to those described as able-bodied, and makes nature an advocate and supporter of this process.

The key word in this intersectional theory is “eco justice” (Schmidt, 2021, p.17). It is to be allowed for all people, abled or not. This grand term means allowing disabled people, who are “affected by nature”, but forced not to be a part of it, to be “included” in nature (Wilson, 2022, p.1755). That is, to allow them to be regarded as natural human beings like the able- bodied. In fact, this could only happen if the able- bodied allowed nature to remain as a place of “human inclusion”, regardless of their ability (Wilson, 2022, p.1755). In fact, allowing eco justice for all people and leaving nature as it is poses a difficulty because humans have long sought to create and increase inequalities between people. This is why according to Valerie Johnson: “inequalities; are not natural” (2017, p.86). It is a man made system.

Perhaps the creator of this system is not just one man, as inequalities have existed in different societies for a very long time, but this does not mean that there is someone who has specifically tried to promote it in the modern age. In fact, the colonizers, or the “White, Eurocentric, ableist, developed-world, males” (Davis, 2013, p. 16) who describe themselves as the dominant “gold standard” of humanity (Davis, 2013, p.16) helped to establish and deepen inequalities throughout the world. These people have ventured to create multiple hierarchies of differences, or Petra Kuppers puts it, this world is not "naturally" the way it is. This world has been shaped by some “bodymindspirits for particular bodymindspirits and not for others; we live in these ruins ” (2023, p.2). For them, “disabled bodies[are] inseparable from black and brown bodies, immigrant bodies, women`s bodies” (Clare, 2017, p.258). All are seen as different species who are not elevated to the rank of the white able- bodied.

In relation to the disabled, the White abled man has created a discriminatory, false and “non-natural” “able-bodied/disabled binary” (McRuer, 2006, p.37). It is an absolutely “enforced” (Campbell, 2015, p.50) and “compulsory” (McRuer, 2006, p. 2) “socially constructed” system (Nocella, 2017, p.161) that allows the White abled men to “secure normalcy” (Rodas, 2018, p.58) by “testing themselves against the [disabled] “other” ” (Rodas, 2018, p. 58), or “those bodies that exist outside or at the margins of this social construction of pure health” (Voyles, 2017, p.467). Such disabled others are “not conceptualized as living, breathing, loving, hurting humans” (Tink, 2022, p.10) like the White abled man. They are seen as: “invalid, unworthy of inclusion” (Voyles, 2017, p.467) in human societies, and “unnatural” (Clare, 2017, p.243) beings who present “an aberration” of nature (Schmidt, 2021, p.15). As such, they should not belong, or become part of Mother Nature.

In fact, not only did the White able-bodied man inferiorize the disabled and consider them not part of nature, he/she also believed that nature itself is an object, not a subject. Therefore, it should only be directed, and dominated by “the superior species” (Schmidt, 2021, p.23), the White able-bodied men. This is probably why some of the “medical textbooks” written by white abled doctors see the abled human body as a separate entity from nature. In these books, the abled human body is only “composed of discrete parts [that are] bounded by skin” (Nash, 2006, p.27), and it is “not related to the more-than- human” world (Schmidt, 2021, p.23), or environment.

The truth is that the “environment is more than an object, it is an agent that acts upon the bodies inhabiting it” (Nash, 2006, p.23). Incredibly, as Linda Nash states it is not the equal, but the superior rival, of the White able-bodied man. Unlike “arrogant man” who prefers to keep this repulsive singularity, she is the origin of “inclusion, and respect for difference” (Nocella, 2017, p.141). Its “biodiversity”, defined as : “the coexistence, in the same ecosystem, of different animal and plant species in equilibrium by virtue of their reciprocal relationships” (Sonnino et al., 2023, p.1), makes it enjoy a marvelous

and harmonious power of inclusion of the differences, compared to the unipolar White able-bodied man.

Ancient societies recognized this fact. They realized the enormous power of nature in comparison to man. That is why they promoted the existence of what can be called the “ecological” body (Nash, 2006, p.27). The fifth century Greek Physician Hippocrates explained what this body looked like? He believed that this body was “characterized by a constant exchange between inside and outside” (Nash, 2006, p.27). It simply enjoys “the interaction of person and environment” (Loveland, 2001, 6), or what can be called the state of “harmony, between a person’s body and the larger world” (Nash, 2006, p.27), or nature.

It is fair to say that the Hippocratic ecological body supports the idea that “The human person or any other organism is part of the *environmental system*” (Loveland, 2001, p.6). There are no conditions set by it that impose strict characteristics especially for humans interacting with the nature. Every human being, including “the disabled”, is part of the “messy, diverse, and profoundly beautiful ecosystems” (Ortiz, 2023a, p.1). This vision of human beings certainly “deconstructs the figure of the normate” (Cella, 2017, p.194) that the White able-bodied man has long pursued and propagated. It also simply makes us “expand our understanding of human bodies in nonhuman nature” (Kafer, 2017, p.222), and realize that “disability is natural, [and that] *“People with disabilities are like people without disabilities”*” (Snow, 2001, p.2). They are all sons of nature.

If the able-bodied realize this fact, they will treat the disabled as an “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p.5) and another “personality type” (Higashida, 2007, p.17), equal to the able-bodied. This is what the disabled writer Petra Kuppers believes in and demands: “I am part of both a human and a nonhuman ecology” (2033, p.12). Kuppers wants to say that though she is a disabled person, she is still a part of nature, and an equal alternative to the able-bodied who must accept this fact.

To be convinced that the disabled, who are called “vulnerable beings” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p.570) by some of the abled, are part of nature will also change how the disabled see themselves, namely, that

they are part of nature and therefore responsible for it. This is a feeling that most disabled lack. The disabled writer Naomi Ortiz painfully describes how this terrible feeling enveloped her life for some time before she was able to quickly overcome it:

This all feels so passive. As a disabled person who needs to use resources, is it even possible for me to do enough to be beneficial? How do I give as well as receive? As I sit under this vivid blue wide- open sky, I know the desert has never been "mine." I could never fully comprehend the intricate layers and beauty in even one patch. No, but I did- do feel like the desert claims me. I know that I am responsible to this place. (2023b, p.80)

Ortiz is fully convinced that her disability does not prohibit her from becoming a part of nature, and that being a part of nature makes her "responsible to" it. Presumably, this responsibility enables her and others like her to "inhabit the world" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p.570) and participate in "the project of making and using" it (Rosemarie, 2017, p.52).

In fact some critics believe that this active participation can show us how disabled people are "innovative embodied beings" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p. 570) who are fully capable of showing "the magic" of nature. They can "uplift ecosystems" and make them "regenerate into complex network" (Barrett, 2022, p. 14) that are not usual. Probably, this is because most of the disabled are originally "nature lovers" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p.553) more than the able- bodied. According to some critics: they have "great proximity to nature" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p. 556) compared to the able- bodied.

Like any disabled person, autistic people are obsessed with nature. Of course there is a scientific reason for this obsession. It is said that autistics prefer the "nonhuman interaction" (Figuerola, 2017, p.580) and the reason is that they according to autistic writer Naoki Higashida, they: "think too much about what sort of impression they make on the other person, or how they should be responding to this or that" (2007,

p.77). This obsession with nature more than with people makes some of them believe that nature is their friend. Naoki Higashida says proudly: “I’ll always cherish the part of me that thinks of nature as a friend” (2007, p.77).

There are other autistics who develop "extreme responses to the overstimulating environment" (Figueroa, 2017, p.574) around them and “easily locate an affinity with this nonhuman world” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017, p.557), which is unusual. Naoki Higashida believes that nature is like his mother, and that his body is like a speck that belongs entirely to Mother Nature: “Just by looking at nature, I feel as if my body’s now a speck, a speck from long before I was born, a speck that is melting into nature itself” (2007, p.77).

Like the autistic Naomoi Higashida, who is swallowed up by Mother Nature, and even like any neurotypical abled person, Adam Wolfond feels that he belongs completely to the superior Mother Nature. Even though he is a non verbal autistic, Wolfond “is part of the environmental system” (Loveland, 2001, p.6), including its elements. This inescapable connection to the environment further leads Wolfond to see himself as a son of water. It is a very close relationship that makes Wolfond an absolutely equal “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p.5) to any neurotypical able-bodied man.

In four of his most famous poems, “*The Maker of Wanting Space*” (2020), “*The Ripples Are Ongoing Acts*”(2022), “*In Way of Music Water Answers*” (2022) and “*Eros of Bathing stimming Dancing Pacing*” (2022), Adam Wolfond shows his “extreme response” (Figueroa, 2017, p.574) to water. For him “Water is never only water” (Manning, 2023, p.16). It is “the force” (Manning, 2023, p.15) which colours his “mode of existence and life-way” (Manning, 2023, p17) and “constitutes his being in the world” (Martin, n.d, p.1). He succeeds in “uplifting” it, and making it get into “complex networks” (Barrett, 2022, p. 14) with him. He portrays water, which is an element of nature, as a mother to him and to many others like him whether abled or disabled. According to Adam Wolfond Mother Water is a weapon which he creates in order to “face the other” (2023, p. 67), or those abled entities who want to marginalize him. It is the weapon which will empower and enable him to enjoy his

“wanting [which is enjoying] diversity” (2023, p.61), or fulfilling true harmony and reconciliation between all people, abled, and disabled.

The desire for diversity is a goal that Adam Wolfond was able to achieve not only through his unique portrayal of Mother Water but also through his exquisite lexicon. Wolfond’s poetic language, which is completely different from the language of the neurotypical poets, contributes to the same and unchanging goal. His use of “autistic”, “non-neurotypical English” (Wolfond, 2023, p.90) and sentences “far from the neurotypical reader’s experience” (Klar & Wolfond, 2020, 156), which have their own “pattern” and lack the “proper grammar and punctuation” of the neurotypicals (Klar & Wolfond, 2020, p.202), “shakes the system of language” created by the neurotypicals (Klar & Wolfond, 2020, p.139). Such destabilization of the neurotypicals’ linguistic system, which comes with using words in a way that resembles “the way water flows” (Wolfond, 2023, p.94) without stopping, causes the neurotypicals to “move toward neurodiverse ways of experience” (Klar & Wolfond, 2020, p.156).

In his poem “*The Maker of Wanting Space*,” Wolfond describes water as a Mother to him. Here, it is compared to the kind and compassionate mother who gives without waiting to be given. In comparison to his neurotypical able-bodied brothers, it/she listens to his problems and helps him to have the answers of the agonizing questions that his brothers raise in order to inferiorize him and make him feel that he is different. Water becoming a Mother is simply his way of wanting to fight against marginalization.

This poem has six stanzas. In the first stanza, Adam Wolfond speaks of nature which he calls “amazing space”. Like a faithful friend who has always listened to his friend’s most difficult questions, Wolfond personifies this magnificent space as a friend who listens attentively to his close companion’s (Wolfond’s) question. The poet asks his friend to try to see how his mind works, or how he thinks: “think about the way I think”. It is not a puzzling question for either Wolfond or Nature, because Wolfond knows that he is “part of the environmental system” (Loveland, 2001, p.6), and this makes him think in the same way of his friend Nature.

He explains this in the second stanza where he quietly and clearly gives the answer. In order to provide the answer, Wolfond must remind Nature of a basic fact, which is that he is not like the able-bodied man who tries to prove that he is a subject while Nature is an object. Although he is a handicapped person and can still "play" or compete with Nature like the neurotypicals because he has mind and body, he will not compete with nature. He has a logical reason for refusing such useless competition. The reason is simply that he enjoys a way of thinking that is similar to water, which is one of the elements of nature : "the way I think is the way of water." That is why Wolfond only wants to have a "game" or play, not to compete with the being called water which resembles him.

In fact, he does not only resemble water, he is like a son of her. Like a son who inherits his mother's genes, Wolfond begins in the third stanza to show how Mother Water fully shows him the traits of kind and compassionate mothers. She is the refuge he goes to when he is "open and away" from the neurotypicals. Like any wise mother who kindly embraces her discontent child and listens to his questions when he has a problem, the water listens to Wolfond's questions when he swims in it, and it helps him to have the answers to the questions of the neurotypicals for which he does not know the answers. That is why, when he swims in Mother Water, he is able to have "easy feeling of dancing for the answering," for turning life into existence.

To tell the truth, Mother Water embraces Wolfond more than his neurotypical brothers, who see him as an unequal handicapped person. The neurotypicals always make Wolfond feel stressed. They always make him experience "rallying thinking" by asking him questions that leave him no room to answer. In fact, autistics suffer from not being able to give quick answers to any question. They have "delayed response to speech [and they] need some time to process the question and prepare their response" (Bogdashina, 2015, p.1).

Despite the fact that he is not considered equal to the neurotypicals, Wolfond believes that he is completely equal to them. He thinks like Mother Water, and that is fair enough, because water is a mother of all people, abled or not. Such fact which the neurotypicals refuse to believe,

not only makes Wolfond similar to the neurotypicals and an “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p.5) to them, but it also makes him enjoy unique way of thinking that he considers “rare with the way people think.”

Probably his sense of pride in his rare autistic thinking is not appreciated by the neurotypicals, which explains why they try to make the universe a harder place that does not suit him. They persistently force him to be participate in their neurotypical way of life, which he refuses and resists with “tics”. In fact, the autistic person usually has tics, which could be described as: “a brief-lasting [and] involuntary movements or vocalization occurring suddenly and repetitively” (Loftus, 2025, p.1). They are his “way of touching the world” or his defense mechanism when he feels disturbed, as he states in the fourth stanza. The “tics” are used when the autistic person suffers from “negative emotions such as stress, tiredness, or anxiety” (*Tics in Teenagers*, 2023, p. 1).

It seems that “tics” are only one prototypical weapon in Wolfond’s war against the marginalization of the neurotypicals. He is determined to use another powerful and deadly weapon that already exists, but that the arrogant neurotypicals cannot see. Mother Water is that weapon. In the fifth stanza, Wolfond believes that water is the mother of both the abled and the disabled. That is, they are both equal sons of water and “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p. 5) to each other. Mother Water is then his “wanting way” that he “thinks about all the time.” It is the one who will fight the neurotypicals’ hierarchy by answering their questions about his handicap. This is Wolfond’s desire, which he repeats in the sixth and final stanza: “I think I want the way inside questions opening to the wanting way toward the water.” Wolfond adds in the last stanza that he thinks in Mother Water as much as he thinks as he is (as he remains the way he is): a non-verbal person who prefers not to speak and to eat words rather than articulate them: “thinking about it all the time like eating words.”

In his second poem “*The Ripples Are Ongoing Acts*”, Wolfond asks the neurotypicals to stop seeing him as different and as “an aberration” of nature (Schmidt, 2021, p.15) or “unnatural” (Clare, 2017, p. 243) because he is an autistic. Being on the weak side of the category

that the white, abled- bodied man has long since established does not exclude Wolfond from the origin of “inclusion” (Nocella, 2017, p. 141) and from the supreme power called nature and its elements. Therefore, no one can exclude Wolfond from the kingdom of water, which he considers his “mode of existence, life-way” (Manning, 2023, p.17), and his mother. In fact, no able-bodied man can, because water, and especially its waves and ripples, is not an object. It is not even equal to him. Rather, it is a superior, embracing mother compared to man.

In the first and second stanzas of this poem, it is clear that the poet is swimming in a lake at night, and that suddenly a strange idea crossed his mind. He thinks, what if I tried to pull the water towards me. Then, he wonders: “Am I big enough for the pull?” This is followed by his consideration of the doomed contest. It is true that man enjoys physical strength, but it is in no way comparable to the power of water, and nature in general, to “act upon the bodies inhabiting it” (Nash, 2006, p.23). It is not an object, and that is why when Wolfond tried to pull the water toward him, all he got was a series of waves or ripples. The water did not move.

This failure to pull water to himself led Wolfond, in the third stanza, to rethink the relationship between man and water as an element of nature. It is not this false relationship that the white abled man has propagated between the subject called the white abled man and the object called water. On the contrary, it is a relationship between the subject Mother Water and the object son of water whether abled or disabled. This fact, which is reinstated in Wolfond’s mind is what led him to “write about the pullings of waters.” These instinctive movements were, are and will usually be made by every single human being when she\he naturally swims in water. Through such movements, each person tries to prove that he is the subject or the most superior in his relationship with water .

Maybe when people realize and then confess that they are objects compared to the huge and supreme power of water or environment, then everything will be on its right path. If people realize: “How small we are to the water,” there would probably be no furious contest with water or

nature. Instead, as Wolfond believes in the fifth stanza, there would surely be “ways of compassion to each.”

It is true that nature and its elements force man everyday to recognize its power, and its being huge and dominating in comparison to him, but this fact not only helps man to negotiate with nature, but it also enables him to see that there is definitely one man on earth. He is simply human, without any labels. For Adam Wolfond, a person is simply human without being labeled as abled or disabled autistic. Such stigmatizing labels, and many other like them, mostly created by humans, are worthless because nature, which enjoys wonderful extreme power and certainly wonderful diversity compared to human does not establish a hierarchy of differences. It is rather an embracing power full of “biodiversity” (Sonnino et al, 2023, p.1). Probably, this inclusive power of nature, and its elements is what makes them able to intervene. They are able to heal the wounds of the inequalities that neurotypical abled-bodied people have created to objectify disabled autistics.

The ripples of Mother Water could heal the wounds of the autistic. They can reformulate/reframe the relationship between the neurotypicals and the autistic. Ripples can: “greatly sew the stitches of beings.” In this line, Adam Wolfond uses a brilliant personification that sums up the idea of water as the cure that could end the terrible suffering and sense of marginalization of autistic people. He compares the waves to the many healing mothers who skillfully sew the stitches of their wounded autistic sons. They are healing the wounds and sewing the stitches that neurotypicals have inflicted on Wolfond and the others by removing the discrimination against them. The ripples see Wolfond as an equal, “an ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p.5) to the neurotypical abled. Therefore, they naturally come out to him when he draws water, just as the neurotypical abled do.

After this chance, given to the enormously belittled and deprecated autistic Wolfond by the ripples of the water, he wonders in the fifth verse: “Can we be good?” Wolfond wonders whether neurotypicals and autistics can be good to each other, to nature, and to water. The answer that he projects is that we should be because if we do not, nature, symbolized by water, could easily punish man. It could easily show him

in a second that it is the most superior power on earth. Nature will not tire of proving its supremacy by drowning man. This is what makes Wolfond wonders in the sixth stanza: "How much water does it take to drown us, pull us?" In fact, the answer is nothing. Water could easily and quickly conquer and rob man of his life.

The salvation lies simply in the coalition between the humans/the people themselves, abled or disabled and the water. This coalition takes place when the able-bodied realize that "disability is natural [and that] *people with disabilities are like people without disabilities*" (Snow, 2001, p. 2). Thus, Wolfond speaks directly to all people. He encourages them "to pull and pull into each other's ripples" regardless of their position on the neurological scale. Wolfond tells them that he is waiting for the other neurotypicals who are swimming in the lake like him, to join him and share in the pulling of water. The purpose of the tug this time is not to compete with the water, but to unite the autistic Wolfond and the other neurotypicals with water. Perhaps through this unity, able-bodied people could get rid of their racist, and discriminatory ideologies.

In another poem "*In Way of Music Water Answers*," Wolfond again confirms the fact that he is a son of Mother Water. Like the mother's genes that are passed on to her son, Adam Wolfond inherits the genes of water. Everything that characterizes water is also reflected in Wolfond. It is not important whether he is abled or not. He will remain "part of the environmental system" (Loveland, 2001, p.6) regardless of his position in the hierarchy of the white able-bodied man. Thus, he will literally remain a true son of water and an equal "ecological alternative" (Loveland, 2001, p. 5) to the neurotypicals.

In the first stanza, Wolfond tries to count the characteristics of water that make him a son of it: "Like water I am eager\ Like water I am thinking\ Like water I always move." Through the personification in this stanza, water is compared to a person who is described as eager, thinking, and moving. Through the series of similes contained in these lines, Adam Wolfond also compares himself to water. Like the free water which is eager to do whatever it wants, just like the free autistic Wolfond who is also eager to do whatever he wants. The autistic Wolfond also believes that he has a mind and thinks like water, which thinks. Impressively,

everything in water proves that it thinks. It is a micro- systemized environment. There is an entire symphonic and symmetrical life cycle under water, perfectly and reasonably organized. Apparently, Wolfond is not only capable of becoming eager and thinking, but he is also capable of moving like water which keeps running and moving every day without stopping.

Indeed, the repetition of the word “like” at the beginning of each line in this stanza is significant. It directly and extremely roots and deepens the meaning of close mother- son relationship between Wolfond and water. He wants to say that because he is a son of nature, he carries her genes and resembles her. He is eager, he thinks and moves. He also wants through this repetition, to “deconstruct the figure of the normate” (Cella, 2017, p. 194) propagated by the able-bodied. Wolfond simply wants to say that if I am a son of water, then I am reasonably “natural” (Snow, 2001, p. 2), and I could a brother of the neurotypicals who always try to marginalize the autistics.

Obviously, being a son of water and thus an “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p.5) to the neurotypicals, is a noble goal that Wolfond not only aspires to but is eager to achieve. This is why he attempts to pursue it throughout the second stanza. It seems that Wolfond considers “thinking” to be the most distinguishing characteristic that could place him in his true place in the universe. Through it man’s future is determined. It is what makes him believe, like his Mother Water, that he possesses time and that “time is open” to him. It is time alone that will “follow eager going pathways.” It could open multiple and persistent ways for him to keep his mother- son relationship with water and thus regain his equal position with the neurotypicals. It could simply end Wolfond’s dilemma. While time can do this, it could also “open going nowhere” in his relationship with both Mother Water and the neurotypicals. He may remain shunned and excluded.

Although Wolfond does not know what will happen in the future, he decides to take action in the third stanza. He decides to get in the boat and go where the water takes him: “I boat on the way water the way I want to talk.” He believes that where the water takes him is his way. It is only water that will allow him and others like him to get out of their

terrible prison lives. It will finally make him talk about what bothers him. He will simply talk about his being “natural” (Snow, 2001, p.2). He will talk about “deconstructing the figure of the normate” (Cella, 2017, p.194) which is deepened by the able-bodied. He will talk about his being equal to others as long as he belongs to the same nature and the same water.

In the last poem in this study, “*Eros of Bathing stimming Dancing Pacing*,” Wolfond has another mythological mother-son relationship with water. It is a relationship that could end the dehumanization of autistics by neurotypicals. In this poem, only water is capable of replacing the marginalized model of man, the “autistic eros¹” created by neurotypicals, with the “eros of Mother Water” created by Wolfond. According to the poet, water, which resembles the mother Aphrodite in Greek mythologies is capable of embracing all human beings regardless of their neurological or physical differences. They are all the sons of water or the “Erotes of Mother Water”. This generous mother does not only give her water to everyone, but also seems to be very protective, helping Wolfond and his peers from the impossible and corrupt neurotypical dreams of normalization that force the autistics to “pace” in thinking, reacting, and most importantly/especially in dancing. Through this poem, the poet refuses to become the autistic Eros who should submit to the neurotypicals’ pacing commands. Instead, he believes that he is the “natural” (Snow, 2001, p.2) “Eros of Mother Water” and the absolute “ecological alternative” (Loveland, 2001, p. 5) to the neurotypicals.

He begins the first verse by clearly stating one of his most persistent needs: “Most of all, I want to rake in the people.” Wolfond wants to dig deep into the minds of neurotypicals. For him, they are not people who are easy to understand. It is not easy for him to recognize their sayings or actions. They are just very strange people who demand “pacing real thoughts”. The neurotypicals want him to learn to have a rapid tone of thought and reactions. This is something that the autistic Wolfond cannot do either in thinking or in speaking. According to Mark Brosnan, and Chris Ashwin, “thinking in autistic individuals can be characterized as

usually slow” (2022, p.1245), and they have “delayed responses” (Bogdashina, 2015, p.1) when they speak.

Although “pacing” is an act that Wolfond cannot perform, it seems that the neurotypicals reject this inability. In the second stanza, the poet recalls some of the commands the neurotypicals give him when he is normally sitting and writing poetry. They repeatedly tell him to pace either thinking or talking, and then type what he is thinking into the computer, which later becomes poetic text: “Pace pace pace \ and type type type the thinking.”

In fact, Wolfond does not know why the neurotypicals insist on “pacing” him in particular. He wonders if it is because they see him as autistic and unequal. In the third stanza, he believes that even if he is slow and cannot “pace”, he will eventually write a poem just like any neurotypical poet. The process of thinking and typing will logically and eventually lead him to a finished poem. It does not matter if he is slow or not, because logically, both thinking and typing, which are represented as competitors engaged in a race, will “rally” and “become” a poem.

Wolfond also believes that there is no need to “pace” and change who he is, because if he listened to the advice of the neurotypicals, everything would change: “Pace names the ways of thinking\ and typing feels the ways of pacing.” In this double personification, Wolfond explains that if he follows and submits to the orders of the neurotypicals, he will lose his true and distinctive autistic identity. He compares “pace” to the neurotypical person who has the upper hand over him (Wolfond), and this probably allows him only one way of thinking, which belongs to the neurotypical. Also, in the second personification, Wolfond compares “pace” to an autistic person like himself, who feels what “pace” is planning as a person, but cannot do anything but obey his\her orders.

Knowing that conforming to the abusive normalization of neurotypicals is critically harmful to him, the poet refuses to become part of this in human process. Instead, he makes it clear that he will live his life as it is, enjoying its slow tempo. He will as he says in the fifth and sixth stanzas, continue to play his string games, to have perfect love and

real relations with those who accept him as he is, and to dance the way he likes "out of bounds" made and determined by the neurotypicals. He will also always remain faithful to his poetic language, which is- as he feels it- intriguingly mysterious and not fully understood by neurotypicals: "and I get a thrill guessing the way people will respond to my open languaging."

Wolfond believes that the mysterious language he uses in his poetry simply reflects his autistic symptoms which others see as strange. But he does not feel that strangeness as a negative aspect of his poetic imagination: "language is the pavement answering the way." His language, like the pavement, makes the road passable; and it is not just "the answer", but it is the fruit of his connection to Mother Water with whom he is inseparably united "and I am the water bathing and living lustfully." His aquatic life-giver has generously transmitted to him her eternal characteristics, and he naturally inherits and wholeheartedly embraces her gifts as a way of life, enjoying his instinctive and autistic characteristics.

Belonging to Mother Water leads the poet to formulate the logical truism that "pace dancing"- which is required of the autistic Eros Wolfond as the "Main idea" deciding his being accepted by the neurotypicals- is not an obligation. He has the choice to refuse to dance like any other neurotypical person. No one is allowed to marginalize or ostracize him because Water, which is the Mother of neurotypicals, is also his Mother. He has the right to go straight to it and swim and "feel fantastic like rallying ocean waves\ carrying him like a boogie board of puttering on top of the warm water." The twin similes in this stanza, namely, the rallying ocean waves and the boogie board moving on the water encapsulate his sense of ecstatic freedom, vivacity and leisurely pleasure. No one can restrict the waves, the board, or his movement as he surfs the friendly, familiar, "warm" water. The logical conclusion he reaches is that neurotypicals are not allowed to tell autistic people to step when dancing. Mother Water would not permit such a transgression.

Mother Water can transform the "autistic Eros" to just another equal "Mother Water Eros" and turn him into the "Eros of Mother Water", a welcomed being who lives freely without the neurotypical

orders of pacing. In the tenth stanza, Wolfond believes that water will empower to be that Eros, teaching him how to enjoy a free and pure autistic mind, "lavishing in the ideas" about a confident future. In the eleventh and twelfth stanza Wolfond gives examples of these ideas: "Love the power I have been bathing autistically and living stimming dancing/ the pacings/ opening that field of thinking toward/artful liberation/from people who think autism is a problem/ and janitor of diversity." The Eros of Mother Nature will retain and celebrate his autistic features and movements, which are not considered normal by neurotypicals; "bathing in Mother Water and dancing" only according to his autistic slow tempo. Wolfond, the Eros of Mother Water, and others like him who refuse to be marginalized by the neurotypicals, will make it his vocation to "open" what seemed a controversial field of thought to "artful liberation". His call will be to help people rethink autism and "diversity" "clean up" what he sees as "the bigger problem", namely, the adamant refusal of all those who cannot see the autistics as sons of nature or water and ecological alternative to the neurotypicals, and the stubborn "lusting" of the "real ludicrous idea/ that we need clean perfect people." As Wolfond asserts in his *"The Ripples Are Ongoing Acts,"* he wants everyone to "pull/and pull into each/other`s ripples and/pull out the smallness/ of the human in us." Over and again, as Kathie Snow suggests, the poet`s verdict in every poem is that "disability is natural, [and that]" *"People with disabilities are like people without disabilities"* (Snow, 2001, p.2).

To conclude, this study examines Eco- Crip theory and its application in the works of poet Adam Wolfond, a "non-speaking man of autism who types to communicate" (Klar & Wolfond, 2019). It is a critical theory that holds close, firm, and unyielding bond between nature and every human being, whether abled or disabled. Eco-Crip theory is a reaction to a long history of shameful and marginalizing classification, misconceptions and generalization of the disabled. It disrupts the White abled man`s belief system of abled/disabled with its reductive stereotypes and stigma marking people with disabilities as "less than", all of which makes the world a place only fit to be

inhabited by a particular abled body-mind-spirit model, only made for those who have typical abilities, and hence, are superior. In other words, it subverts the White abled man's myth that only accepts superior normative humans as the only species who deserve to belong and be part of nature. If the disabled stand outside the accepted norms, or at the margins of what can be described as pure health, according to the White man's constructed model, this does not mean that they are not fully human or part of a superior rival of the White able-bodied man's conception of nature. According to Eco-Crip theory, disabled people or persons of disability belong to a universal system that is characterized by its inclusion and empowerment of different species. It is a system that does not impose any conditions, as those dictated by the abled White man; it accepts all creatures, ignores limitations, does not assign value to people's bodies and minds based on the constructed ideas of normalcy. In this unconditional acceptance and embrace, the disabled find freedom in their communication with nature and in the consideration that they are valued ecological alternatives to the abled. That sense of freedom and consideration of potential by magical nature and its elements caused the autistic poet Adam Wolfond to uplift nature to the superior status of a guardian Mother. In his exquisite portrayal of his unique mother-son relationship with water, Wolfond have repeatedly succeeded in demonstrating that the disabled autistic is an equal ecological alternative to the abled neurotypical by virtue of his being a true son of water.

Notes

i-Eros: is the Greek God of love who is also known as Cupid in Roman mythology. He always appears in company with Aphrodite who was considered in some myths as his mother

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