
ECOLOGICAL LAMENTATION AND ADVOCACY IN EKA BUDIANTA'S SELECTED POEMS

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ABSTRACT

Writing about environmental issues before and after climate change and other human-made ecological damages, Eka Budianta has continually taken up environmental topics in his oeuvre. The study presented in the present article aims to scrutinize 6 (six) selected poems by Eka Budianta to see how the poet has dealt with ecological debate throughout the years. The study draws insights from criticisms within Environmental Humanities framework and uses a qualitative-interpretative method. The six poems comprise four poems written in 1984, i.e., “*River Notes*”, “*The Yearning of the Wind*”, “*Song for Tiom*”, and “*Song of a Townsman*”; a poem written in 2012 titled “*Setelah Sudaraku Tenggelam*”; and the most recent one, written in 2020, “*Sungai Sejati*”. The lines and stanzas of each poem are read and interpreted according to their respective themes, poetic devices, and contents to see if they demonstrate the principles of Ecopoetry. The study results in the following findings. First the lamentation for the loss of nature is present in “*River Notes*”, “*The Yearning of the Wind*”, and “*Song of a Townsman*”. Second, “*Song for Tiom*” and “*Setelah Saudaraku Tenggelam*” are elegies for, respectively, ecological destruction in Papua and the Situ Gintung Lake tragedy. Third, optimistic tone is palpable in Eka Budianta’s newest poem “*Sungai Sejati*”. Fourth, the inclusion of non-human agency like landscape, plants, and animals helps reinforce the green messages the poet seeks to express. This study concurs that literature can partake in exposing global climate change as well as advocating sustainable living in a way often ignored in ecological praxis that only celebrates concrete results.

Keywords: *Ecopoetry, non-human agency, green messages, landscape, plants*

INTRODUCTION

Climate change and human-caused ecological degradation have proven that planet Earth is sick. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that the level of human-made CO₂ emissions, as of 2010, must be reduced to 45% by 2030 in order to reach zero by 2045 (Office, 2020). Social distancing due to the Covid-19 pandemic has made the earth cooler for a while. The ozone layer is said to have started to thicken slightly. However, this condition is difficult to maintain because people quickly return to the old habits that ignore environment. This prolonged pandemic attests that everything in the universe is interconnected and

dependent on one another. This is to say that the three essential and intertwining human relationships with the Creator, fellow creatures, and the earth itself are inherent in people of all nations, with and without religions. French modernist philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour calls for restoring the status of the earth as a subject instead of an object that people can control at will (Latour, 2015). Our sweltering planet is indeed a friend not a foe.

Unfortunately, human behavior towards nature has resulted in irreparable ecological damages (Dewi, 2017). In the long run, excessive treatment of the earth that supports people’s life has brought about

damaging impacts on human beings. Just as natural environment degenerates, so does humans' dignity. In Indonesia, exploitation of nature includes illegal logging, unauthorized coal mining, large-scale hunting of protected animals, as well as forest and land clearing for industrial sites. The lack of legal protections for customary lands in Central Kalimantan triggered conflicts between the indigenous Dayak communities and the incoming multinational investors. The forced land grabbing that targeted the indigenous people of Kampung Durian Selamak, Langkat regency in North Sumatra for the state-owned plantation company is another example. Next, women in the Pasar Seluma village in Bengkulu, South Sumatra, said no to the sand-mining activities that disturbed their daily routines. Meanwhile, in Central Java, some residents of Wadas village in Purworejo refused to give up their land to make way for the massive Bener Reservoir, and the civil unrest and clash with police forces ensued. Here we see the concomitant political and environmental upheaval upon the mismanagement of the earth as "our common home", to use Pope Francis' words in his climate change encyclical *Laudato si'* (Francis, 2015), and the call for fraternity and social friendship in this "dark clouds over a closed world" stated in *Fratelli Tutti* (Francisco, 2020).

Climate change is a complex issue. It requires multiple approaches in order to find effective and ecological ways to interact with the earth and all of its inhabitants. Such an approach does not have to come solely from natural sciences. Disciplines in the humanities play an important role by means of studies and activities in literature and art (Fischer, 2021). In recent years, ecocriticism, for example, has gone beyond literary criticism in assessing its broader cultural relevance, that is, the extent to which ecology is related to societal problems as reflected in such artifacts as poetry and arts. Hubbell and Ryan have this to say: "In an era of climate change, deforestation, melting ice caps, poisoned environments, and species loss, many people are turning to the power of the arts and humanities for sustainable solutions to global ecological problems" (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021: i). Various settlements of unfair land cases have drawn criticism through literary and artistic works, among others. The study of literary works that describe the importance of natural environment and balanced ecological relationships is nothing new. However, the wealth of literary studies on environmental damage

in Indonesia mostly pay attention to prose works (Hardiningtyas, 2016; Subagiyo & Yuniawan, 2022; Sulistiyo, 2020; Sultan & Anshari, 2021); and only a few focus on poetry (Liliani, 2022; Ryan, 2020a). Among the scarcity of research in Indonesian ecopoetry is a study on deforestation, loss of ecosystem, and ecojustice toward the indigenous people in Khairani Barokka's *Indigenous Species* (Ryan, 2020a).

This article aims to discuss selected poems by Eka Budianta being assumed as ecological narratives worthy of investigation to find out how the poet has contemplated on ecological debate throughout the span of his career. Born on 1 February 1956 in Ngimbang, Lamongan, East Java, Eka Budianta is an environmental activist who has continued to write poems since the 1970s. Having participated in the 1978 ASEAN poetry forum with roughly 50 leading poets from ASEAN member countries, the youthful new emerging writer Eka Budianta started to devote himself to the world of words. His works have been published in English, Dutch, French, Finnish, Arabic, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Javanese, and Balinese. Mindful of the politics of translation that allows only a handful of works by non-Western poets to be available in European languages (Martha, 2017; Tachtiris, 2012), Eka Budianta has long been recognized as a world poet. His selected poems appear in the bilingual anthology *Walking Westward in the Morning: Seven Contemporary Indonesian Poets* published in 1990. Eka Budianta was then the "youngest" and "extremely productive" among the poets included in the anthology: Sapardi Djoko Damono, Toeti Heraty, Linus Suryadi AG, Taufiq Ismail, Subagio Sastrowardoyo, and Arifin C. Noer (McGlynn, 1990: xv). In 2012, the Government of Indonesia gave the Language Month Award to Eka Budianta for his collection of poems *Langit Pilihan* (Ertanto, 2012: 1). Despite his numerous poems, this study will limit itself to discuss 6 (six) poems by Eka Budianta that deal with environmental themes. It aims to fill up the lacuna of research on this important writer with the exception of, for instance, recent doctoral research on Eka Budianta's short stories that applies Glotfelty's ecocritical theory (Fajar, 2019). According to Fajar (2019), Eka Budianta sends the environmentalist messages effectively through the ecologically-inclined characters and well-crafted settings such as forbidden forest, extinct animals' habitat, a city cleaning department, etc. Meanwhile, another study (Fadhillanisa & Hertiasa, 2014) looks

at how Eka Budianta's one single poem titled "*Aku Ingin Seorang Teman*" is transformed into visual arts. While this interdisciplinary study that incorporates literature and arts is important, least attention is paid to ecological issues.

This current study therefore intends to read Eka Budianta in the light of Ecopoetry, i.e., a genre of poetry that expresses prominent ecological values, critiques environmental degradation, and upholds an ethics of the natural world (Ryan, 2017). Emerging in the 1990s, Ecopoetry questioned the relevance of poetry about nature when nature itself has been gradually depleting due to the global warming and climate change. Ecopoetry can therefore be interpreted as all poetry about ecology, environmental injustice, climate change, flora and fauna, as well as all narratives that have a green message (Clark, 2011). Unlike pastoral poems written by British Romanticist poets, Ecopoetry is often linked to contemporary messages advocating green living and social activism (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021). Ecopoetry becomes a catch-all term for any types of activities which are related to sustainability, conservation, and human-nature relations.

The method used in this study is qualitative-interpretative, employing as it does, a close reading of each text alongside the principles in Environmental Humanities (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021) and relevant documents that speak for social and ecojustice (Francis, 2015; Francisco, 2020). The texts that are selected for close reading and analysis are the four poems available in English ("*River Notes*", "*Song of a Townsman*", "*The Yearning of the Wind*", and "*Song for Tiom*") taken from *Walking Westward in the Morning* (McGlynn, 1990); "*Setelah Saudaraku Tenggelam*" from the aforementioned award-winning book *Langit Pilihan* (Budianta, 2020); and "*Sungai Sejati*" taken from the recently published *Sungai Sejati: Surabaya Zaman Omikron* (Budianta, 2022). Throughout the discussion, the English translation of the last two poems by the present author is used. The steps are as follows: reading, interpreting, and speculating (Timpane, 2001). Each line and/or stanza of the poems is read to comprehend its use of diction, imagery, and structure and their literal meanings. Having examined the language and content of the poem, the next step is interpreting each poem to get the implied meaning. J. C. Ryan (2020b) argues that Phytocriticism is useful in analyzing Ecopoetry to see how ecological aspects

of the text operate. Using features and assumptions in Ecopoetry, the final step is to speculate on the ways by which Eka Budianta's poetical imagination can be seen as a response to ecological damages in Indonesia that the poet has sought to contemplate.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The two-part discussion in this article presents an analysis of Eka Budianta's selected poems through Ecopoetry lenses. The poems fall into two thematic categories. The first category consists of poems that grieve over environmental degradation. The second category involves poems that bemoan the spoiled environment coupled with a call for action.

Ecological Laments

"*River Notes*" is the first of 12 poems of Eka Budianta in the bilingual anthology mentioned above. It is a story of a polluted river. Originally written as "*Catatan Sungai*" in 1984, the poem opens with a slightly nostalgic atmosphere: "Suddenly the river falls silent as it passes through the city" (1), lamenting the loss of its "splashing as in the mountains" (2) and "rolling as in its estuary" (3). The next line "The river is pale, hiding its grief" (4) enhances this feeling of being forgotten and badly treated. The rest of the stanza narrates the cold presence of the river in the cityscape. It ignores the passing boats, the bridge, and the canals. The line "ignoring the drowning moon" (7) intensifies the river's day-to-day boredom and solitary. The second stanza that begins with "The river suddenly seems to hate the city /Perhaps it is cross, angry, or disappointed" (10-11) further emphasizes the lifelessness of the river that "behaves like a sick rooster" (12) who does not eat, crow, fight, and love, but [staring] "at the city that pisses on it" (15). Here, the poem draws attention to the river that resists the city which are non-human subjects who behave like human beings. Implied herein is environmental harm perpetrated by people. The poem is thus an example of a story told from the perspective of the environment that is recognized in a discipline called Environmental Humanities (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021).

The next poem "*The Yearning of the Wind*", also written in 1984 as "*Kerinduan Angin*", is a metaphor – the speaker is the wind. It tells of the speaker's desire to go home after having travelled worldwide. Despite the excitement of quest in the South Pole

with penguins whose “wings and legs” caked in snow (10), the wind longs for such home-grown plant life as teak trees, fragrance-of-the-night, and frangipani. The phrase “the frangipani in the village’s bosom” (13) evokes an imagery of the warmth of the tropical homeland. The speaker comes across as a little upset. He experiences such an environmental and moral alienation, saying “I am the wind, tired of travelling alone” (14). The following lines emphasize his overwhelmingly negative sense of modernity: “Cities, planes, the fumes of industry /Sicken and weaken me” (5-16). As the speaker is unable to find a way out, his possible solution is asking for divine intercessions to help him to return to the bliss of nature: “God, send me back to the teak forest /Let me sleep in the banana leaves, /Lay me down in the hills that gave birth to me” (18-20). Without directly engaging with, for instance, celebration of the beauties of nature, the conflicting correlation between industrial worlds and idyllic sceneries preferred by the speaker makes this poem a worthy object of ecocritical considerations. First, vegetal words proliferate throughout “The Yearning of the Wind”. The poem calls for everyday act of paying attention to nature with which conservation actions will likely occur. Second, the narrative of ecological displacement is equally strong in this metaphoric poem. The yearning speaker experiences the betrayal of, to borrow Ecocritical Humanities’ vocabulary, “sense of place”, i.e., the distinctive feeling of a particular place by means of his sense, body, mind, and memory that is important for his identity (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021: 77). This poem therefore provides a good example of eco-conscious literature through the narrative of a man who regrets the loss of nature due to the arrival of machinery in modern-day society.

In addition to the hustle and bustle of city life that Eka Budianta often criticizes in his writing, violence in the city is evident in the third poem discussed, “*Song of a Townsman*”. Written in 1984 as “*Nyanyian Seorang Urban*”, the poem offers a comment upon how life in big cities is dreadful; People can get killed easily in a road accident. The poet writes:

Who teaches us to sever
The head of the sparrow with a sling?
Who teaches us to smash
The head of a brother with the wheels of a
car? (1-4)

Here, a creature loving culture is introduced in

the beginning of the poem by equating people’s life with that of a bird, how the former is as valuable as the latter, contrary to the anthropocentric texts that ignore non-human subjects. If mildly, the poem may exemplify the use of Zoocriticism (Ryan, 2017) that invites reader to see texts through an animal-focused lens. By recognizing the importance of non-human subjects, the poem illustrates principles of ecojustice and interconnectedness of all living things. It is clear here that there are obvious parallels between this poem (and almost all of Budianta’s environmental poems) and ecological arguments in such texts as *Laudato si’* and other Environmental Humanities’ discourse. To quote at length the interconnectedness of the whole creation in the encyclical letter,

The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other (Francis, 2015: 36).

The speaker of the poem continues to narrate how the victim’s blood reminds him of that of war heroes shed in a fierce battle, and how a scream of a woman (maybe a bystander) jogs his memory of his friend’s mother who cried out “on the morning [his] friend’s brother died” (10). “Now I witness the ease with which one loses his soul,” (11) the speaker continues, “Now I witness the swiftness with which a hit-and-run car vanishes in the city’s bustle.” (14). The repetition of “Now I witness” here sustains the speaker’s consternation. The car accident gives the speaker the knowledge of the short and cheap life in the city while simultaneously unmasking how modernity may not be the best lifestyle of inhabiting the earth. The contrast is clear: Village life offers a safe space while danger is lurking in the city. By further alluding to violence acts done by the “hit-and-run car” that swiftly disappears amidst “the city’s bustle”, the speaker expresses his repugnance at the excessive crime of the city life. The poem ends with a similar question set forth in the opening “Who allows us to smash our own brother’s head with the muzzle of a car,” which, again, remains unanswered. Here, the reader’s surprise at this paradox of progress (symbolized by the car) helps reinforce the message that technology does not necessarily improve human bonds.

At this stage, it is clear that "River Notes", "The Yearning of the Wind", and "Song of a Townsman" have one thing in common: discontentment about the abused environment, hence the speaker's lamentation. The speaker appears disenchanted and quite frustrated in coping with this state of affairs. It is implied in each poem that, thus far, the speaker can hardly perform tangible activities in caring for the earth. While displacement is clear in all poems discussed above, the analysis of the next three poems to which the discussion now turns depicts the speaker's will power to stop ecological destruction.

Ecological Advocacy

The problem raised by "Song for Tiom" is essentially: Is modernism the best pursuit? Written in 1984 as "Nyanyian untuk Tiom", the poem is a monologue spoken by an Indonesian living abroad who observes the depletion of culture and nature for the sake of infrastructure development in Tiom. The town of Tiom is the administrative center of Lanny Jaya Regency located off-center in the Papua Province of Indonesia (then called Irian Jaya when Eka Budianta wrote this poem). It opens with the speaker's concern that in Tiom, "the moon and tractor unite in the fields" (1) which has made the speaker worried and wondering. So, he asks his friend what the change in Tiom is all about: "And you, what are you doing now my friend?" (4) Still in the same stanza, he answers his own question:

In Tiom, with computers & tractors
I imagine you processing Indonesia
While I stand on this escalator here
Staring at the future and the past
Which have suddenly gathered to become
today (5-9)

In the second stanza, the speaker becomes more desperate. In London, he is standing in the station "doing nothing" (10) for his friend who is astir while "Tiom is seething" (11). He then rhetorically asks in line 13 "Who is it who owns Irian?" to be answered, again, by himself: "If it is the trees, then why the many salesmen, numerous televisions" (14). In addition to computers and televisions, further signs of new lifestyle (and culture shock) are conveyed in such images as "People exchange their sheaths for computers /To be modern, they say, to be cultured"

(15-16). The speaker laments that trees are being bulldozed to make way for new road and buildings. Worse still, people begin to welcome modernistic ways of life and leave traditional culture behind.

By the third stanza, imagery of plants and animal worlds is the technique used to provide contrast with the previous stanzas where technology-related-words like "tractor", "computer", "escalator", "process", etc. predominate. Campaigning for the power of poetry, the speaker invites the "academics to plant fruit trees, /To raise chickens and ponds of fish. /Or, only, to force the hunters to stop shooting birds and skewering turtles" (20-21). More nature-related words appear in this last stanza. The monologue ends with a pledge: "When this poem reaches you, my friend /Tell the tribal head, I am not idle" (22-23). Here, the speaker assigns a campaigner role to himself to protect Tiom.

Ecocritical reading of "Song for Tiom" unveils human detachment from nature. To speculate, oscillation between the pastoral ideals and industrial growths is no stranger to Eka Budianta. Classic environmental writings like Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* must have been continually influential by the time the poem was written in 1980s. Like Marx and Carson, it is apparent that the poet points out the fact that human relationships were poorly substituted by the presence of technology in Tiom. Read in today's context when natural exploitations have continued to happen in this part of Indonesia, the poem, again, echoes what Pope Francis implores in *Laudato si'* not to embrace technology at the expense of social bonds but to use it wisely for the common good. "Song for Tiom" thus helps expose humans' willful ignorance of abusing natural environments in the name of progress.

The next poem to discuss, "Setelah Saudaraku Tenggelam", published in 2012, is a reminiscence of the collapse of Situ Gintung Dam in Cireundeu, Tangerang, West Java on March 27, 2009 that claimed hundreds of lives and missing people. Built during Dutch colonial rule to contain water from the Pesanggrahan River, the dam was located in what's supposed to be a conservation area. Information about the setting is provided in the first stanza: "Situ Gintung disappeared in an instant, along with 200 residents buried underneath. /The lake disappeared on March 27, 2009, in the midst of a frenzied campaign" (1-2). With the following line, "But Jakarta and I quickly forgot, as if nothing had happened." (4), the poem's

central theme is clearly introduced, namely the speaker's sense that humankind cannot comprehend the fragility of the world they live in. The second stanza describes the ensuing disaster that was soon to happen after a thousand days had passed and the lake was filled again with rain after rain only to drown the city. The stanza ends with ecocritical notes: "The sea level will rise, drowning coast after coast. /In the great flood of warming the world. Globally, so it is said." (7-8). Next, having explained that the site by the lake was a venue for the speaker's children and grandchildren to go for playing, schooling, and turning fruits into Latin lessons, he admitted that he was consoled by the prospect of turning the place into an orchard.

This poem, like other pro-nature poems by Eka Budianta, is replete with vegetal vocabulary in the likes of apple, banana, mango, durian – all fruits that can grow in the tropics. Speaking of praxis, it would seem that the poet's credibility in writing about plant life manifests itself herein. To date, Eka Budianta is a regular editor-contributor to a monthly floral culture and horticultural magazine. Reading the poem through a plant-focused lens will reveal that the poem recognizes people as on par with plants, in this case, fruits of all kinds whose Latin names are delightfully memorized by the speaker and his grandchildren. This finding is comparable to several important works on arboreal aspects in comparative ecocritical reading of Indonesian and Southeast Asian poetry (e.g. Liliani, 2022; Ryan, 2020; Yulianto, 2020). It would seem that the presence of non-human and human subjects in environmental narratives helps evoke the green message that authors seek to promote. Here, Eka Budianta does just that in this rather dark four-stanza-poem. The closure of the poem goes as follows.

My sorrow is buried in the joyous cries of my
grandchildren,
Ask for Garciana mangostana!
Mangosteen guava rambutan as he pleases,
There is no Situ Gintung, nothing.
I have re-established a paradise of duku,
salak, durian and all fruits
Over the lake and hundreds of my lost
relatives. (15-20)

At first glance, the final stanza is somewhat disconcerting. One might think that the speaker is insensitive as to forget the disaster and the deceased and that he builds his own paradise of fruits instead.

However, by re-examining the opening line, "But Jakarta and I quickly forgot, as if nothing had happened" (4) and the last line, the reverse is true. It can be interpreted that the speaker is after all fully aware of the trivialization of the disaster that he too helps to partake. The power of "over the lake and hundreds of my lost relatives" comes from a vivid contrast. One is the location of the pleasure-giving-fruit-laden-trees; the other is the grim message of the disappearance of the dam. A verbal irony is the technique used herein. The speaker is a synecdoche of all people who (ab)use environment for their own gain. Although Bahari says that Eka Budianta is among the dissident poets of the 1970s who depicts Jakarta being the microcosm of Indonesia as a place that is "worse than hell" (2011: 84), "*Setelah Saudaraku Tenggelam*" suggests evidence to the contrary. There is still a hope to turn the place into a heavenly one even if it is at the cost of the dead in Situ Gantung disaster. It is important to note here that Eka Budianta did not read *Laudato si'* when writing the poem twenty years ago, but the message here is resonant with what the encyclical letter says later that poor ordinary people are the most victimized in any environmental disaster. Speaking further of Covid-19, the Pope stated that the most vulnerable suffered directly from the disease that was exacerbated by mistreatment of the earth (Deane-Drummond, 2020).

Finally, the post-coronavirus world invites poets including Eka Budianta to provide poetry as a source of solace. The last poem discussed, "*Sungai Sejati*," is his newest poem published in 2022. Unlike the previous two poems discussed in this section, this river poem strikes a more optimistic note. Written in modern sonnet form, the first three lines introduce the importance of the river: "A true river can hardly be alone /It should be serviceable for the stag and the shellpad /Priceless for people and town" (1-3). Water from the river is indispensable not only for humans but also for other living creatures like stag (deer) and shellpad (turtle). Indeed, deer is an echo of a biblical image of thirsting soul as sung by the Psalmist: "As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for You". Meanwhile, the natural habitat for turtle is water. Additionally, by juxtaposing the mammal who craves for water and the long-living reptile who cannot do without water, the poet reminds us about the indispensability of the river that "flows in your heart and in my heart" (4). One

can compare this poem with “*River Notes*” examined in the first part of the discussion section whereby the river passes the bridges with no smiles. “*Sungai Sejati*” is conversational, depicting as it does a more friendly and understanding river. Declaring that the river allows the bridge to overpass between two lonely cliffs, the speaker goes on saying “like I greet you at the end of the night” (5-7). The use of the second point-of-view helps support the personification of the true river who is durable and indestructible:

A true river befriends the moon,
Living with the sun,
Choked by the flood,
surviving in the rain and drying drought. (8-11)

The above lines further show that the text is rich in non-human subjects. It displays the relationships between people and nature, hence worthy of ecocritical analysis. Next, at the metaphorical level, similar to the wind in “*The Yearning of the Wind*” discussed earlier, the river can be likened to the poet himself. Closing the sonnet, the poet writes:

A true river gains a thousand dreams
A thousand prayers and a thousand new tasks
Waiting on throughout its passage of life.
(12-14)

The lines above raise a speculation that Eka Budianta talks about his own lifelong commitments in environmental issues. He was engaged in, for example, procuring and distributing masks and mineral water when shocking forest fire hit Kalimantan in 1997/1998 (Mangunjaya, 2008: 7). It was the biggest forest fire in the history of environmental disaster in Indonesia. Eka Budianta was then the Director of Dana Mitra Lingkungan who had actively involved in natural disaster mitigation. Founded by the first state minister of environment and economist Emil Salim, this organization has been more than 30 years serving Indonesia with the support of the business world and people of high integrity to create a better living environment.

As a note in passing, on 18 March 2022, Eka Budianta shared about the process of creating his poems and his views on the transformative power of poetry at the launch of his *Sungai Sejati: Surabaya at the Age of Omicron*. In that event held by Bengkel Muda Surabaya who celebrated its 50th anniversary, poetry

enthusiasts read Eka Budianta’s poems, showing as they did their admiration and indebtedness to the Maestro who has continued to believe in the wonder of poetry.

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that Eka Budianta’s selected poems address environmental degradation and emphasize personal discontent of a city life held in the grip of a modern, capitalistic, and profit-oriented culture. The six poems discussed draw attention to the grim truth about the way human beings (mis) treat environment for the sake of growth and the impacts thereof. One can read into these poems: (1) Eka Budianta’s all-time appreciation for the wonders of nature; (2) his critique of imbalanced people-nature relationships; and (3) the presence of non-human subjects that incorporate environmentalist views. All poems under discussion have shown a prevailing focus on environmental conservation and the call for establishing balanced ecological relationships. Given that these poems were written when climate change had not been a critical issue as it is today, Eka Budianta’s four early poems and two recent poems are therefore ecologically celebratory and ahead of its time. It is not an overstatement to say that Eka Budianta’s consistency in dealing with ecological problems spans across millennia. The four poems written before the year 2000 contain bittersweet stories about environmental crisis and the speaker’s resentment about the ways people and progress pollute the earth. The other two published in 2000s are protest poetry as climate change becomes gradually uncontrollable. To be specific, the most recent poem written in 2022 is of blatant environmental advocacy, but the poet seems to be less hard-hitting, opting instead to use soft-power in arts named poetry. Thus, an ecocritical reading of Eka Budianta’s works may help reveal that human beings have made natural environment unequal co-existence as postulated by Latour, cited in the beginning of the article. In conclusion, this article agrees with the idea that literature can participate in providing an explanation of global warming and sustainability issues that ecological practices have sometimes overlooked.

STATEMENTS OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares that there is no relevant financial or non-financial competing interest upon the submission of manuscript in this journal.

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