

Ecoethical Significance of Wilderness in Pablo Neruda's Selected Poems

Goltaj David Khosravi
gdkhosravi2@gmail.com
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Ravichandran Vengadasamy
ravicv@ukm.edu.my
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Raihanah M. M.
raihanah.mydin@gmail.com
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the ecoethical vision and ecological awareness in the selected poems of Pablo Neruda, a Nobel Prize winning poet of Latin American descent who was well known as a political poet. The structural and thematic analysis of the study will focus on the concept of 'Ethics' as one of the components of ecopoetry, which is the new brand of nature poetry and one of the components of ecocriticism which investigates the human-nature relationship. The objective of this paper is to highlight the significance of ecoethical consideration of Pablo Neruda towards wilderness. The study utilizes the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism and ecopoetry to illuminate Neruda's call for reverence of the wilderness, flora and fauna, in the land, the sea and the sky through an ethical consideration of interdependence and interconnectedness of human and nonhuman. This paper problematizes Neruda's attitude towards nature to obtain new insights into his ethical stand towards the natural world. The discussion focuses on the poems which reflect the sense of ethics and represent the significant role of humility in shaping our sense of accountability towards the wilderness, while revealing Neruda's ideology and relationship with the non-human world.

Keywords: Pablo Neruda; ecocriticism; ecopoetry; wilderness; ecoethical awareness

INTRODUCTION

Ecocriticism investigates human conception of wilderness, and how and why it has changed throughout history and whether or not present environmental subjects are precisely expressed in popular culture and modern literature. In this regard, Oppermann (1999, p. 5) believes that "ecocriticism ought to focus on the textual strategies of literary texts in constructing an ecologically informed discourse about the ways in which humans interact with other life forms". Estok (2001, p. 220) states that "ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding, firstly by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and, secondly, by its commitment to making connections." Furthermore, ecocriticism attempts to work within a series of responsible principles, originating from criticism, deep ecology and ethics. It provides a particular way into literature that celebrates both the aesthetic and ethical value of the natural world; it also suggests political interaction with nature as a tool toward sustainable life. By the same token, Grandón (2016, p. 3) states that "This approach[ecocriticism] explores the view of nature in works that express a concern to denounce or ethically see the relationship of man with his natural environment, his place, his *oiko*". Ecocritical approach, then, is one that attempts to transcend the duality of art and life, human and the natural, and

to work along the principle of interconnections between them. Therefore, establishing an ethical and aesthetic ground towards a renewed understanding of both literature and deep ecology is the underlying purpose of this paper. In this respect, ecocriticism offers a unique fusion of literary, scientific, ecological and philosophical perspectives. Informed by the fundamentals of ecocriticism, namely the function of ethical discourse, this paper examines the Chilean Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda's ethical accountability towards wilderness as seen in his selected poetry.

In essence, through his observations, Neruda seems to perceive the natural world through an ethical lens. Taking this issue into consideration, this paper problematizes Neruda's attitude towards nature to obtain a new insight into the ways in which the poet develops an ethical consideration toward the natural world. Many studies have been conducted on Neruda's nature poetry, for example, (Latta, 2007; Wilson, 2014; Karmakar, 2015; Grandón, 2016; and Khosravi, Vengadasamy & Raihanah, 2016). However, the subject of ecological ethics in the light of the interdisciplinary character of Neruda's ecoethical consideration of wilderness, flora and fauna in the land, the sea and the sky has not been clearly elucidated. Therefore, this paper utilizes the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism, deep ecology and ecopoetry to illuminate Neruda's call for reverence of the wilderness, flora and fauna through an ethical consideration of interdependency and interconnectedness of the human and the nonhuman. In this regard, Dunayer (2004) states that the late 20th century was witness to a growing concern both in our understanding of animals' feelings and thought, and in our interest in protecting the animals "from the suffering we humans cause via, wearing their skin and fur, hunting them for sport, and imprisoning them in zoos and circuses" (cited in Jacobs 2007, p. 2). In accordance with the mentioned approach the corpus of the study comprise the selected works of Neruda as found in *Canto General* (1950), *Elemental Odes* (1954), *Extravagaria* (1958) and *World's End* (1969) but drawn from the translated versions by Felstiner (1980), Reid (2001) and Stavans (2012). These poems establish connections between man and the natural world to awaken man's ecological awareness and ethical considerations.

PABLO NERUDA IN PERSPECTIVE

Ricardo Eliecer Naftali Reyes Basoalto was the birth name of Pablo Neruda. He was born in Parrel, a geographical center of Chile, in 1904. His family moved to the beautiful landscape of Temuco where Neruda spent his childhood amidst the tremendously lush and beautiful region of Southern Chile. The imagery of his surroundings would have a profound impact on his poetic career. The virgin jungle held splendid treasures for him in the form of immense ferns, strange wild birds' eggs and dazzling beetles. It was here that Neruda's vision was opened to contemplate a powerful and untamed natural world. According to Moran (2009, p. 14) "anyone searching for a common thread admits the vast and astonishingly variegated tangle of Neruda's verse should seek it in the remote southern Chile of his childhood".

Throughout Pablo Neruda's literary life, many critics and scholars linked him to various labels such as 'surrealist', 'social poet', 'love poet', 'erotic poet', and 'political poet' of the 20th century. They have also approached his poetry from different critical viewpoints: socio-political, symbolic, Marxist, biographical, and thematic textual perspectives. For example, Dawes (2006, p. 66) states that Neruda was at first affected by surrealism, but "in the 1930's he showed a growing distaste for surrealism because of its perceived irrationalities and its criticism of the USSR". Dawes considered Neruda a Marxist poet because of his great affinity with the dialectical approach in *Spain in Our Hearts* (1937), a collection of 23 poems by Neruda that convey the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. A similar idea is expressed by Conway (2008, p. 282) "it will be much more difficult for critics to dismiss the political

poetry of Neruda as second class art, and to ignore the fact that Neruda was, for most of his life, a committed and passionate Marxist”.

Johnson (2015) re-examined Neruda's *Canto General* from a political viewpoint and concluded that his ample images in this work are the result of a dominant ideological culture to which the poet subscribed. According to Brooks (2012) Neruda's poems are the best traditions of Modernism. In addition, another scholar, Karmakar investigated Neruda's poems in a detailed analysis to depict the poet's panorama, ideology and poetic vision of the world of literature. Neruda's poetry startled critics and scholars. In this regard, Feinstein states that Neruda's poetry “started to change from being hermetic, neo-romantic and pessimistic, into more direct, simple and accessible verse” (cited in Johnson, 2015, p. 232). Similarly, Karmakar (2015, pp. 1-2) remarks that “the critics have called Neruda a self-indulgent writer, but he was a poet who had deep feelings for his country, readers, and surroundings and he always expressed them passionately”. Neruda's devotion to Chile and its wilderness is echoed in Duran and Safir's (1981) work that describes Neruda as an eminent poet who travelled incessantly and wrote ceaselessly while exuding energy. They thought that this energy came from the land, forests, stone, rain and places in the south of Chile. They also believed that Neruda's poetry represented life through a delicate and refined process of discovery and awareness.

Although Neruda is highly regarded as a Chilean political poet, this paper attempts to present him by considering the environmental themes in his life and poetry, and also through scholars' perspectives toward the employment of nature in his works. DeVries (2016, p. 139) states that Pablo Neruda has also been known as the Latin American “Poet of Nature,” a designation not difficult to imagine given the titles of his anthologies such as *the Grapes and Wine* (1954), *Stones of Chile* (1960), *Art of Birds* (1966), *The Sea and the Bell* (1973), *Winter Garden* (1974) and *The Invisible River* (1980). In nature, Neruda finds a force of life which overwhelms the impermanence of human beings. He portrays the glory of nature with its enduring and constant forces. Maloney (1986, p. 1) in his introduction to *The Stones of Chile* remarked, “Here, Neruda looks at nature from all sides integrating into his narrative history, myth, geography and botany with details of the Chilean coast. We find a mature Neruda, at the height of his power, addressing the broad range of concerns that have occupied his poetic voice”. In nature, he discovers the telluric forces and gives his readers ecological awareness in their relationship with the wilderness. In this regard, in the introduction to *Stones of the Sky*, Nolan (1970, p. 4) states that Neruda demonstrates that a spiritual alchemy is also at work in the geological process, even though man's prideful individuality never quite understands “the lesson of stone”. Likewise, De Vries, (2016, p. 142) argues that “when Neruda uses imagery such as ‘solitary friars’ and ‘hurricanes of falconry’ to describe condors, the brilliance of the poetry achieves a similar effect; or when in description of the Chilean wren, the poet speaks directly to the bird, and a similar closing of emotional distances is achieved”. Hence, through Neruda's vision, the readers see the earth and wilderness in a new way. Neruda's commitment to his homeland is demonstrated in his poems particularly in his odes as Stavans (2012, pp. 20) remarked that “in his stanzas, Neruda portrays himself as a troubadour in a stage of constant communion with nature, a mystic in love with all things in his environment”. Furthermore, many of his poems also reflect his strong devotion to Chilean places that can be considered as discursive evidence to identify Neruda as a poet of ‘where’ or a ‘place maker’ (Khosravi, Vengadasamy & Raihanah, 2016). A similar idea is stated by Carrasco Pirard that “Neruda is never a poet in some abstract senses, he is a poet of a particular [determinado] ‘where’ (cited in Handley, 2007, p.159). Neruda's poems always attempt to reflect his commitment and devotion to his native land and its flora and fauna.

Through ecocritical ethics, Neruda reveals the value of the natural world and depicts the interconnectedness and interrelationship between human and nonhuman phenomena. The predominant viewpoints of Neruda's poetry are ecological ethics and awareness that are the rhetorical practices of ecocriticism. Moreover, his poetry emphasizes the conceptions of responsibility and ethics towards the natural world which also give voice to different nonhuman communities that he was connected to. Another important feature of Neruda's poetry is the multiple voices it appears to embody allowing each reader to find his/her own Neruda. Speaking about this in his Nobel Prize address, Neruda welcomes new interpretations of his poetry:

Each one of my poetry should be thought of as like a tool meant for a certain task: each of my songs aspires to serve as a signpost at the intersection of two roads but like tablets of stone or pieces of wood on which someone else, others, those who will read my work in the future, will be able to inscribe new signs. (cited in DeVries, 2016, p. 147)

Some of Neruda's poems explore the hyper-rationality towards modernity which destroys human-nature relationship and separates human beings from nature which happens to be the crisis of the modern society. In the same vein, DeVries (2016, p. 149) states:

Neruda's late poetry expresses his discomfort with the harsh realities of a modernized world where nuclear devices could reduce beetles, fish, and everything else to pile of ash. But in his poetry where he laments this state of affairs, the attention includes the lot of non-human beings as part and parcel of the apocalyptic madness that was the brinkmanship of the Cold War.

Thus, in the development of ecocritical and ecoethical theme of the relationship between man and physical world and ethical considerations of the poet, we focus on the poems which reflect the sense of ethics and represent the significant role of humility in shaping our sense of accountability towards nature or Mother Earth. In doing this, the theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism and ecopoetry are utilized to reveal Neruda's call for reverence of the natural world, flora and fauna.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a literary framework, ecocriticism is mainly concerned with how literature transmits certain values contributing to ecological thinking. The environmental crisis is a question that cannot be overlooked in literary studies. Thus, consciousness raising in ecological thinking, and the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the global ecological crisis, force literary scholars to recognize the important role literature and criticism play in understanding man's position in the ecosphere. Literature can be perceived as an aesthetically and culturally constructed part of the environment, since it directly addresses the questions of human constructions, such as meaning, value, language, and imagination, which can then be linked to the problem of ecological consciousness that humans need to attain.

Consequently, according to Oppermann (1999) ecocriticism appears with the promise of a unique combination of literature and scientific discourses of wilderness. This eco-theory is in a sense a response to the worldwide ecological problems and addresses essential environmental issues, particularly by scanning values in literary texts, with deep ecological implications. Bryson (2002, p. 6) regards this as "an imperative toward humility in relationships with both human and nonhuman nature". The deep ecology movement, initiated by Arne Naess, made an attempt to illuminate the latent primary presuppositions underlying our economic approach in terms of religion, philosophy, and value priorities. Naess (1986) introduced deep ecology to focus on the need to go beyond our social and ecological problems that we confront. Using a philosophical perspective, readers are encouraged to think critically through inquiry or the questioning approach. Devall and Sessions (1985) had a

similar opinion and considered ecological thinking as requiring a shift from science to wisdom, which they termed as ecosophy, or deep ecology. The movement of deep ecology focuses on awareness and personal re-connection to nature as a kind of a 'back to the land' approach, which goes beyond intellectualism to address environmental issues. Arne Naess' (1986) definition of deep ecology comprises several great ideas, which he calls descriptive and prescriptive. These ecological proposals of Naess explore the role of deep ecology in directing human being's perceptions of nature and its nonhuman creatures. According to Zimmerman (1989, p. 24) deep ecology is informed by two basic principles; the first is interconnection between all life on Earth and that anthropocentrism "is a misguided way of seeing things." The second is the importance of shedding identification with our egos and finding associations "with trees, animals and plants, indeed the whole ecosphere." A similar sentiment was expressed later by the eco-critic Capra (1996, p. 6) who referred to deep ecology as "the new paradigm that may be called a holistic worldview, seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts." Such a view actually does not suggest a completely new philosophy but rather it is a revitalization of an awareness that already exists in our cultural heritage.

Moreover, such an ethical consciousness is necessary for contemporary science because as deep ecologists have mentioned, though science may aim to preserve life, it could also be life-threatening depending on the ethical system underlying its use. For example, the technology of nuclear power provides a means for the mass destruction of humans and nonhumans, as has already been demonstrated in war. Other scientific achievements in the forms of chemical and biological weapons, and the widespread use of chemicals in agriculture also pose a serious threat to both man and nature. Deep ecology propagates that all living beings have inherent value, and that our ecological and spiritual experiences reflect the relationship between the self and nature. Fox (1996) expressed his idea in relation to ecological awareness that "deep ecology should help persons develop an 'ecological consciousness' and an 'expansive self' that embrace outwardly all life" (as cited in Taylor, 2001, p. 181).

The ecological awareness propagated in deep ecology could emerge from the changing beliefs and attitude towards the natural world. Such an attitude can be cultivated through an ecopoetical reading. In fact, we consider ecological awareness as one of the features of ecopoetry that focuses on interdependence of all phenomena. It also promotes an ecoethical vision and the protection of the natural world against mechanical exploitation. According to Glotfelty (1996), raising readers' ecological awareness or consciousness is the most significant task of ecocriticism. Coupe (2000, p. 4) observed that ecocriticism is synchronous with the aims of earth care and that its goal was to contribute to the struggle to preserve the biotic community. Likewise, Devall and Sessions (1985) considered love for the land to be a necessary element of a land ethic. They state that one could be ethical only in relation to something one could see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.

Generally speaking, the main themes in the poetry of deep ecology include intrinsic interrelationship of all things in nature, the importance placed in the value of all things, the inseparable connection between humans and nature, the significance of communion with Earth, the need to manifest humility toward nature, the spiritual and sacred elements of nature, and the importance of letting nature be (Barnhill & Gottlieb, 2001). The result of the deep ecology world view was the emergence of a new system of ethics in Neruda's poetry, if we consider this deep ecological perception as a part of our daily consciousness. Leopold (1949, p. 202) defined ethics as a "limitation of freedom of action in the struggle for existence". He believed that ethical behavior needs voluntary acts of respect and self-restraint so as to promote and defend the right of existence for all community members, including its non-human members.

Concha (2013) states that the deep ecology world view is entrenched in Neruda's poetry as it "widens his conception of life, removing it from narrow anthropocentric boundaries" (cited in Aceituno & Grandon, 2016, p. 36). The following discussion of Neruda's poetry therefore utilizes the theoretical notions of deep ecology within the framework of ecocriticism to illuminate Neruda's ethical considerations of and reverence towards the wilderness, flora and fauna, in the land, the sea and the sky. The selected poems reflect a sense of ethics by the persona toward the various subjects and also convey the role of humility in shaping our sense of accountability towards nature. The analysis will reveal the themes of interdependency and interconnectedness between the human and the nonhuman as basic characteristics of deep ecology.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF THE LAND

One of the features of eco-poetry is man's ethical orientation to the natural world, stemming from the poet's ecological consciousness. Chiras (1995, p. 187) states that a new "land ethic" arises from an "ecological conscience" to make conservation become the norm and not the exception. Neruda was a poet who since his childhood could 'sense the smell of a falling tree' in his native homeland forest. In Neruda's poem, "Ode to the Wood", the persona nostalgically recalls that:

[...]
My childhood heart and my senses
were filled with falling trees,
with great forests full of future buildings ("Ode to the Wood").

The persona continues and explains how he heard the sound of sawmill and the axe that cut the trees. He laments the fate of endangered forests and the pain of the trees. He also expresses his great concern for the loss of the forests due to the building of man's dwellings:

cut and pierced by steel,
until it suffers and protects,
building the dwelling of
everyday man, wife and life ("Ode to the Wood").

The above lines depict the deforestation of his native land. In the next verse, the persona celebrates and personifies the earth, as he warns of the impending dangers from the activities of man:

I praise
Mineral earth, Andean rock,
The severe scar
Of the lunar desert, the spacious
Nitrate sand,
I sing to you
Because man
Will make you yield, will make you bear,
He will expose your ovaries,
He will spill his special rays
Into your secret cup ("Ode to The Earth I").

The above stanza focuses on Neruda's ecological concerns for the plundering activities by humans on earth. The lines illustrate the poet's accountability to the non-human world. The idea of protection of nature in ecocriticism was aptly articulated by William

Rueckert, who said “defense of non-human rights is one of the most marvelous and characteristic parts of ecological vision” (cited in Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. 108).

Our understanding and protection of nature stems from the principles by which we live. Milton (2002) states that our understanding of nature is formed by our direct experience of nature in which emotion has a significant function. Emotion is a fundamental ecological mechanism that links us to our will to protect the environment. More than any other genre, it is poetry that evokes our emotions most effectively. The persona in the next stanza seems to do just that when he laments the fate of the land, invoking sympathy in the readers:

The butchers razed the islands.
[...]
shattered, beaten
their fragile, stature of deer,
they were bound and tortured,
burned and branded
[...]
They were tied up and injured,
were burned and burned,
were bitten and buried.
Here the Virgin of the Cudgel. (“They Come Through the Islands, 1493”)

Neruda’s ecological ethics and his panoramic view of countries in Latin America have been echoed in most of his poems. Another example which demonstrates his concern and sense of accountability to the American continent is manifested in the following poem when the persona addresses Panama as his little sister and empathizes with her pain:

[...]
And so, small panama, little sister,
I am not taken by my first doubts,
I’ll whisper them in your ear for I believe
That one must speak of bitterness in privacy.
And what happened? Little sister, they cut
your finger, as if it were cheese
and then ate and left you
like a gnawed olive pit (“History of a Canal”).

In the above stanza, the persona shares an affiliation and displays affection by calling Panama his sister. His ethical consideration of the land is depicted through the use of metaphoric devices (*Little sister, they cut your finger, as if it were cheese...left you like a gnawed pit*). This seeks to direct our attention to a tangible and real world that sustains us, therefore morally engaging us to recognize that man must live in harmony with nature. A similar ethical consideration of the land is apparent in another poem “Ode to the Erosion in Malleco Province”:

I came back to my green land
And it was no more, the earth was not
There it was gone.
It had gone
With water to the sea (“Ode to the Erosion in Malleco Province”)

In this poem Neruda calls for sustainability of the land. The persona directly reflects Coupe’s (2000) claim that ecocriticism speaks both about and for nature. Likewise, Neruda’s poetry is delicately minatory; that is, according to Peter Barry (2009), that eco-poetry is a kind of literature that wants to warn us of environmental threats and dangers emanating from neocolonial, industrial and governmental forces. It is interesting to note Grandón’s (2016, p. 8) reflection on this poem “the horror that Neruda felt, the devastation and the deterioration of what he knew almost impoluto (unpolluted) in his youth when he lived in the South of

Chile”. The persona in the poem appears to feel the wound of the earth because it is his homeland, it is part of him and he knows it well. He further explains the condition of the earth which is now barren when he says:

[...]
And now
From the Burnt roots
The earth can be seen,
Nothing protect it
[...]
Earth,
What will you offer your children,
Mother of mine, (“Ode to the Erosion in Malleco Province”).

The verse above demonstrates that the poet is acutely aware of the dangers posed by humans to the natural world and to natural resources. His utilitarian vision is more than aesthetic; he attempts to give us considerable biological knowledge and leads us implicitly to ethical attentiveness.

There are other poems that represent Neruda’s ecological vision and ecoethical consideration of the land. For example, in his collection, *World’s End* (1969) he conveys the fundamental uncertainty of living for humans and the nonhuman in an unclear age when he writes, “*I am not sure about the ocean/ on this inauspicious day*”, and in another verse, “*even the beetles are not immune/ they may go toward the beach and eat radioactive cherry*” (cited in Devries, 2016, p. 148). In the next section, we explore Neruda’s ethical consideration of wildlife.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF WILDLIFE

Deep ecology and ecopoetry are two components of ecocriticism which highlight empathy for and reverence of animal rights. Having an ecological vision leads to empathy and in particular an ecological empathy that helps create a reverence of the creatures in our ecosystems. Possessing such an emotional connection lets us identify that our individual lives are actually connected with nonhuman beings and that our existence is interdependent on each other. In fact, having an ecological vision means to understand and appreciate all nonliving substances such as the water we drink, the land which gives us food, and the air that we breathe. Such a vision makes us attentive of our existence and of our delicate interconnections with the bigger world around us. By keeping this in mind, Neruda’s relationship with nonhuman creatures echoes his empathy toward them. With regard to Neruda’s ethical considerations of wildlife, Jaime Concha (2013) states “the animals that Neruda saw were exploited, mocked in the zoos and the circus of Western-Christian civilization, tailored to our anthropocentric pride, and hurt his sensibility to the point that, from *Extravagaria* (1958) onwards, it will be a persistent theme and obsession in his work (cited in Aceituno & Grandón, 2016, p. 1).

As an example, we refer to a poem entitled “Bestiary” in which Neruda depicts his longing to communicate with all sorts of animals and questions “whether he can be a poet without understanding the language of animals and suggests that the formalities of society and the demands of capitalism have contributed to his hesitancy to take this task seriously” (cited in Handley, 2007, p. 204). Thus, the persona in his poem remarks that:

I need more communication,
other languages, other signs;
I want to know this world.
[...]
I want to speak with many things
and I will not leave this planet

without knowing what I came to find,
without solving this affair,
and people are not enough (Extravagaria: “Bestiary”).

Neruda’s connection to the physical world and his care for it is portrayed in the crossing of man’s life with that of the world of animals. This is both an emotional and physical connection to the natural world based on logical interdependency and interrelationship rather than to the delusion of human mastery and domination over nature or wildlife. In various anthologies of Odes, there are elegies to different animals such as horses, panthers, deers, cats, dogs, lizards, whales, birds, bees, lions and elephants. DeVries (2016, p. 139) states “the poetry of Neruda is like that of the *modernistas* with regard to the expression of implicit animal protectionism”. One of the best examples of such a poem is “Ode to The Elephant” which conveys Neruda’s explicit rejection of human mastery over animals. In the verse below, the persona’s reverence for the elephant is clearly evident:

Thick, pristine beast,
Saint Elephant,
Sacred Animal
Of perennial Forests, sheer strength (“Ode to The Elephant”).

This reverence for the majestic creature resonates with a statement made by Gary Snyder, a Pulitzer prize-winning poet and considered by scholars as a poet laureate of deep ecology. Snyder (1974, p. 107) states:

At the root of the problem where our civilization goes wrong is the mistaken belief that nature is something less than authentic, that nature is not as alive as man is, or as intelligent, that in a sense it is dead, and that animals are of so low an order of intelligence and feeling, we need not take their feelings into account.

Snyder’s view is consistent with Neruda’s attitude towards the wilderness. Considering the majesty, value and honor of this mega fauna and sacred creature, Neruda warns of the unethical treatment of the wilderness by humans as evident in the following verse:

Make no mistake:
This gentle, huge jungle beast
Is not clown
But a father,
A priest of green light,
An earthly progenitor,
Ancient and whole (“Ode to The Elephant”).

As evident in the verse above, DeVries (2016, p. 142) states that the human relationship with animals is “categorically condemned by Neruda for the way in which animals are nearly always valued for their instrumental value to humankind, rather than for their own sake”. Neruda’s ethical consideration of wildlife is indicated by the poet’s focus on the animal’s dignity and its value. The persona reminds readers of the sacred status of the elephant: *A priest of green light*, as being a primordial parent of the species on earth: *But a father/ An earthly progenitor/ Ancient and whole*. In another stanza, Neruda explains the pitiful condition of an elephant that is captured by humans and imprisoned in a cage:

[...]
until they found him
into a circus beast
wrapped in human smells,
unable to breathe
through the restless trunk,
without the earth
for his earthly feet (“Ode to The Elephant”).

The above verse reflects the total lack of ethical awareness among humans and represents the significant role of empathy or emotions in shaping our sense of accountability towards the wilderness. The persona calls for respect of this sacred animal and wants humans to honor his freedom. The persona illustrates the circumstances of how the animal is now dethroned from his kingdom and its feelings completely disregarded. He describes the unjust treatment of this sacred animal, which had once lived and roamed freely in the wilderness, until it was captured and turned into a circus animal. As he gazes upon the animal, the persona remarks sadly:

That's why I invoke your gaze today,
Elephant,
Lost between the hard stakes
and the leaves ("Ode to The Elephant").

Other examples of Neruda's poems that express an ecoethical consideration of the wilderness can be found in the collection *Stones of Chile* (1960). The poem entitled "The Lion" portrays the misery and suffering of those animals living in the zoo. According to DeVries, (2016, p. 148) "As in several other instances in his poetry, Neruda creates empathy for the animals by assuming the unusual perspective from its experience of suffering". Neruda's sense of caring for nonhuman lives or an imperative toward humility with wilderness is further expanded to marine creatures as the following section illustrates.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF MARINE CREATURES

Neruda depicts the merciless behavior of whale hunters in "Leviathan", as they cruise the seas of Antarctica to hunt the whales. The poem reveals the atrocities of whaling:

Ark, wrathful peace slippery
Bestial night, Antarctic alien,
You won't pass by me displacing.
[...]
Your black fire of an exiled planet
Crackled South, the territory
Of your silent that moved algae
Shook the age of destiny (Canto General: "Leviathan").

What disastrous wounds, warm springs
gush out in defeated thunder,
the purview of the harpoon, stained
by the bloody ocean, bleeding out,
sweetly, nearly asleep, the beast is towed
like a cyclone of broken hemispheres
to the black flensing boats
covered with rancor and pestilence ("Leviathan").

In the above lines, the persona reveals in graphic detail the cruelty of humans that is inflicted upon the whales. This poem leaves an indelible mark on readers as the persona describes the unethical manner in which humans treat the ocean and its creatures. We are drawn to empathize with the plight of whales as they bleed to death as illustrated through Neruda's imagery, *What disastrous wounds / warm springs gush out in defeated thunder / stained by the bloody ocean, bleeding out / sweetly, nearly asleep, the beast is towed*. Also in *Canto General* in the poems entitled "The Enigmas", "Fisherman" and "Furious Struggle between Seamen and an Octopus of Colossal Size" Neruda depicts how humans cause the death of other marine creatures. In the next section, we will find that Neruda extends his ethical accountability to winged animals as well.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION OF WINGED CREATURES

Neruda, in his childhood days, had had every opportunity to observe and study nature and examine the personality and various aspects of winged creatures. Some poems of birds echo his emotional attachment and strong affection to the natural world. His ecological ethics is reflected in his moral considerations of the fate of both tame and wild animals as he laments the loss of their freedom and value. This attitude is echoed in the following poem as the persona remarks:

[...]
They brought you,
They made your pride travel
To an ashen sun
[...]
When your cage
came down
on the metallic aerodrome,
you had already lost
the majesty of the wind... (“Ode to the Yellow Bird”).

The above lines show the persona’s concern about the loss of freedom of the birds when he says, *you had already lost/ the majesty of the wind*. The persona describes the suffering of the birds and the violent behavior of humans toward them. The bird was separated from its origin and had lost its connection with nature. People had disturbed the harmony of the bird with nature. The persona seems to believe that the bird finally finds its freedom when it dies in captivity:

From fertile Goiania
They sent you.
You couldn’t stand it.
You went.
...
Afterward
With closed wings
You went back
To your sky
To the green fire, to the slopes,
to the air, to the stars
You went back
To your origin
To the earth and sky or your country (“Ode to the Yellow Bird”).

The poet is of the opinion that all birds are sacred as evident in another poem entitled “Not alone Albatross”. As the persona depicts the places where certain birds are expected to be seen, we understand that all birds are in harmony with nature:

Birds of salt, procellarian pigeon
[...]
You’re sacred, not only the one that rode
The gale of the bough like a cyclonic
Droplet: not only the one that nests
On the slopes of fury, but
the gull rounded off with snow,
the foam of the cormorant upon the foam,
the silver-plated bundle of platinum (“Not alone Albatross”).

[...]
When the pelican fell like a
clenched fist, plunging its volume,
when prophecy soared

on the vast wings of the albatross,
when the petrel's wind flew
over the old cormorants,
my heart took refuge in its cup
and extended the month of its song
to the seas and feathers ("Not Only The Albatross")

In the above verse, the persona appears to admire the beautiful soaring of the different birds which fills his heart with happiness. The verse illustrates the persona's strong affection for and emotional attachment to winged creatures. The expression of such feelings could enrich the capacities of humans for companionship, intimacy, and caring in their relationship with animals. This poem also appears to be alluding to the famous narrative poem of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", in which an ancient superstition was narrated by sailors that the albatross was a sacred bird and symbolized good luck. Note the following lines:

Watch out for the birds!
Don't touch those feathers
Which pined for flight,
Fight
Which you too, in your own
little heart, have longed for
Now they are sacred ("Not Only the Albatross").

In another poem, "Mistreated Birds", Neruda criticizes humans for their merciless action. The hunters heartlessly crush bird's eggs with soon to-hatch young simply because they could not be consumed for food. In this poem, the persona describes the violent manner in which hunters decimate a community of birds:

There arrived mankind.
[...]
They arrived at dawn, with clubs
and baskets, to beat the birds
and rob the treasure from their nests
they weighed and measured each egg with their devices
and crushed those that might soon hatch (Mistreated Birds).

What Neruda has succeeded in doing through his poetry is to echo the deep ecological perspectives that focus on equality of all creatures in their value, and to impose upon humans a certain sense of humility toward nature and the celebration of wilderness. Neruda's concern for wildlife and his ecological consciousness can be described as values that relate to 'biophilia', an innate love for the natural world. The ethical consideration and care for the natural world and the accountability for sustaining its integrity, health, and beauty are adoptive expressions of biophilia. Kellert and Farnham (2002, p. 54) define 'biophilia' as "an idea when people possess a genetic inclination to attach physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral meaning to nature". This is also consistent with the deep ecology theme of "letting nature be".

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to illuminate Pablo Neruda's ethical viewpoints towards nature, specifically those that relate to wilderness, in some of his ecopoetic works. Ecological ethics and consciousness are both components that underlie the rhetorical practices of ecocriticism. The findings reveal that the selected poems embody Neruda's contemporary vision of deep ecology; such as the interrelationship of all things on this earth, the intrinsic value and sacredness of nature and therefore a reverence for it, and the celebration of wilderness. Also

highlighted in the findings is Neruda's accountability towards the land itself, and the wildlife of the land, sea and sky. A significant implication of the findings is that, inherent in Neruda's ethical consideration, is the role of emotion as a powerful force that could guide humans to seek communion with nature. As Milton (2002) explains, emotion is a fundamental ecological mechanism that links us to our will to protect the environment. By evoking the emotions of readers, Neruda's poems serve to raise readers' ethical sense towards the nonhuman subjects of nature.

Another important feature that is apparent in many of the poems analyzed in this study is the poet's criticism of the extent of human cruelty inflicted on wildlife, especially on hunting grounds. The poet appears to convey to readers a considerable sense of ecoethical awareness towards nature in general, and wildlife in particular. This characteristic of Neruda's ecopoetry is the result of his own sense of ecological ethics, moral responsibility and empathy towards nonhuman creatures and non-living substances such as water, soil and air. Neruda, through his poems, also rejects human mastery and domination of the nonhuman world and calls for the care, respect, and reverence of the nonhuman creatures. This finding about Neruda's poetry also aptly illustrates the point made by Aceituno and Grandón (2016, p. 1) who state that Neruda's poetry "points to the vindication, appreciation and dignification of animal otherness as a response to suffering, exploitation, discrimination, death and other forms of Speciesism (the exploitation and mistreatment of animals resulting from the favoring of humans over animals)". In relation to this, DeVries (2016, p.151) points out that it is interesting to note that in Neruda's poetry, concern is expressed for the fate of flora and fauna rather than the dire consequences for mankind in a rapidly modernizing world. One could therefore regard Neruda as attempting to provide a voice to a voiceless world, the wilderness.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Goltaj David Khosravi is a Ph.D candidate at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). She is an instructor at Shahid pre-university in Ministry of Education and Training in Iran. Her research interests include Literary Studies and Mysticism Studies.

Ravichandran Vengadasamy is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. His research interests include Stylistics, Postcolonial Literature and Academic Writing.

Raihanah M.M. is an Associate Professor of literary studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her research interests include Literary Studies, Minority Fiction, and Muslim Diaspora.