

THE ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE IN SNYDER'S *MOTHER EARTH: WHALES*

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Abstract

Protecting nature is important to prevent disasters. It is necessary to shape the environmental values in a person to encourage nature preservation to have positive attitudes and behavior toward nature. The positive attitudes and behavior toward nature can be expressed through literature in poetry. Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales* is a poem that promotes environmental values. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate how literary devices reveal environmental values in Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales*. This study used an Ecocriticism approach and environmental values concept by Stern and Dietz to analyze one of Gary Snyder's poems in *Turtle Island* anthology of poems entitled *Mother Earth: Whales*. This study found that, in *Mother Earth: Whales*, Snyder endeavored to reveal environmental value of biospheric value by using figurative languages. In this poem, he used seven cynicisms, three similes, two allusions, two personifications and four metaphors. Furthermore, the researcher suggests a future researcher to use pragmatic approach and VBN theory.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Environmental Value, Biospheric Value*

INTRODUCTION

Deforestation that leads to global warming has become worrying environmental problems. According to Niankara (2019) deforestation threatens the survival of plants and animals which can lead to extinction. It is because the lack of trees reduces the natural habitat of animals and the food sources needed by them. In addition, Ebadi, Toughani, Najafi and Babaei (2020) state that global warming is the most worrying environmental issue. It happens because of excessive use of fuel. Moreover, it can cause many disasters such as forest fires, floods, sea level rise, and the clean water crisis. Briefly, deforestation and global warming endanger the survival of the ecosystem which may lead to the destruction of the place where humans live called Earth.

Because of those environmental issues, many literary works exist as a medium to portray and remind readers about the awareness towards ecology. One of the poets who convey environmental values through his poem is Gary Snyder. His poems contain advice that humans can overcome their egos to coexist with nature (Almon, 1979). The

environmental issues portrayed in Snyder's poems have received attention from ecocritic researchers. Several previous studies on Snyder's poems fall into two categories. The first is critics of anthropocentrism. Such studies found the critic of the idea that humans are the rulers of nature in Snyder's poems *Mother Earth: Whales* (Astuti, 2019) *Riprap and Cold Mountain* (Merzah, 2021; Li, 2020) *Riprap* (Yulianto, 2020; Dahal, 2021), and *Smokey the Bear Sutra* (Yulianto, 2021). The second is human-nature relationship. Such studies discovered human and nature interconnectedness and interdependence in Snyder's poems *Riprap* (Ghani, 2018), *Turtle Island* poems (Zhijie, 2018), *I Went into the Maverick Bar*, *Prayer for The Great Family*, *Manzanita*, *Magpie's Song*, and *For the Children* (Subedi, 2020). Thus, those studies of environmental behavior provide a milestone for the analysis of environmental values concept by Stern and Dietz (1994) which have not been studied in any of Snyder's poems.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how one of Stern and Dietz environmental values in Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales* is revealed. This study focuses on understanding the way figurative languages help reveal one of the environmental values in Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales*. Understanding the relationship between the figurative language and the implied value is important since, by understanding this value, readers can be expected to be aware of the driving factor for one to preserve or conserve nature. Additionally, as the previous studies of Snyder's *Turtle Island* have found that the anthology plays a pivotal role to form an ecological perspective, the present study aims to highlight an environmental value that underlies the preservation or conservation of nature as depicted in one of Snyder's poems in the anthology.

This study departs from two arguments. Firstly, humans are influenced by environmental values in preserving and conserving nature. As stated by Groot and Steg (2009), environmental values are important to shape ethics and environmental behavior. From the statement, it can be seen how important a value is as it determines how humans perceive the environment and act towards it. Secondly, Dominick in Wibowo and Widisuseno (2021) states that poetry is the best medium to instill value in readers. Poetry has become one of literary works that provide a space to instill awareness towards environmental values. This is because poetry can build emotional intensity with readers through the elements contained, which can help readers to enjoy, reflect, and understand more deeply the environmental messages conveyed (Harms and Lettow, 2000). Thus, this study uses the ecocriticism approach towards poetry to reveal the ways the figurative language used in Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whale* reveal the environmental value which may later persuade readers to care more about nature.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Ecocriticism

In the past, environmental issues were not enough to inspire literary scholars. This makes literary scholars often criticized for being too academic and not paying attention to the surrounding environment. However, literature has a role to lead to a deeper

understanding of the wider interest in nature (Mishra, 2016). This is certainly an inspiration for literary scholars to evaluate and develop an ecological perspective in studying literary works (Zulfa, 2021), and in the end, ecocriticism emerged which was initiated by the modern environmental movement. Glotfelty (1996) defines ecocriticism as a study that studies the relationship between the environment and humans in cultural artifacts such as language and literature. The existence of this relationship between the physical and human world becomes a critical and theoretical discourse for negotiation. Meanwhile, Kerridge and Sammells (1998) define ecocriticism as a tool to uncover ideas and trace environmental representations that appear in various things, including literary texts. This is also in line with the thoughts of Garrard (2004) who states that ecocriticism can help determine, explore, and even solve ecological problems in a broader sense, including in literary texts. From the thoughts of these ecocritic figures, it can be concluded that ecocriticism has the potential to reveal ideas, representations of attitudes, and views of ecology, ecological issues and environmental values contained in literary texts.

In the literary paradigm, ecocriticism belongs to the mimetic paradigm. The mimetic paradigm views that literary works are imitations of real life. This is in line with how the field of literature cooperates with the field of ecology to give rise to ecocritical theory (Harsono, 2008). With ecocriticism, it is easier for literary readers to explore the views, attitudes, and values related to the environment contained in literary works as a response to environmental issues that occur in this world.

Environmental Value

Stern and Dietz, (1994) mentioned that environmental value is one's motivation in protecting nature. Gumelar, (2016) added that environmental values are beliefs about the environment and are closely related to the formation of attitudes to protect the environment. If the values held are pro-environment, then someone will always try to protect and preserve the environment. Conversely, if the values held are values that are not in line with the environment, one will exploit nature and be oriented to personal gain without considering the impact on nature. On this, Stern and Dietz (1994) developed the concept of environmental values. The concept of environmental values are distinguished into biospheric value, altruistic value, and egocentric value.

The first environmental value is biospheric value. This value encourages humans to protect nature for the sake of nature. This value of biospheric views that humans are part of nature. They are not exalted and are not rulers of nature. Humans are not the only living beings. Nature is believed to be something that has its own value, regardless of human interests. Therefore, the sustainability and welfare of nature must come first without considering the advantages and disadvantages for humans.

The second value is altruistic value. This environmental value views that protecting environment is very necessary because the environment provides benefits to society. Based on this value, humans should perceive that they are a part of a society that must prioritize the interests of the group. This also applies to preserving nature. One will strive

to conserve nature for the resources that make a group survive. This makes altruistic values rank second after biospheric in terms of pro- environmental behavior (Rahman, 2020).

The third is egocentric value. This is a value of the environment that encourages humans to take care of the environment if it brings benefits for themselves. This egocentric value views humans more than others or the environment around them. One who has this kind of value will not care about the environment if the environment does not provide benefits for them personally. However, at a certain time, egocentric people will be encouraged to protect nature if environmental damage is detrimental to their existence.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a literary criticism as it analyzed literary work. In line with what Van Rees (1983) states, literary criticism is a way of accepting literature with a critical reading process that aims to interpret, assess, and evaluate literary works. In addition, this study used an ecocriticism approach to answer the research question. Furthermore, since literary study is a scientific study that requires a theory (Ambarini, Harjito, and Umaya, 2010), this study used environmental values theory by Stern and Dietz (1994). Finally, by using the approach and theory, this study emphasized the environmental value contained in Snyder's poetry.

The source of the data was an electronic book of anthology of poems. It was *Turtle Island* book which was published by New Directions in 1974. From the book, it was taken only one poem, namely *Mother Earth: Whales* in which in this research will be shortened to MEW. This poem talks about how several nations exploit nature for food or scientific research. Furthermore, the data were in the kind of word, clause, and sentences in the poem.

Furthermore, the data was collected in several steps. Firstly, the researcher used a close-reading strategy to get a deep understanding of the poem. Secondly, the researcher identified words, phrases, and sentences that utilized figurative languages and gave code for each. Thirdly, the researcher did note-taking of the words, phrases, and sentences which provide data of figurative languages.

The collected data were analyzed through several steps. Firstly, the researcher analyzed the collected data in the form of figurative languages. Secondly, the researcher interpreted and described the collected data which were in the form of figurative languages. Thirdly, the researcher analyzed environmental values revealed by the figurative languages by using Stern and Dietz's theory of environmental values. Fourthly, the researcher drew a conclusion as a wrap of the discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Mother Earth: Whales (MEW)

Mother Earth: Whales narrates anthropocentric behavior implemented in several countries that result in environmental damages. Furthermore, this poem contains several

figurative languages, namely imagery, allusion, personification, metaphor, simile, and cynicism. The explanation is as follows.

Imagery

Mother Earth: Whales contains imagery. It describes images that can be captured by the human senses in several lines. The explanation is as follows.

*"An owl winks in the shadows
A lizard lifts on tiptoe, breathing hard
Young male sparrow stretch es up his neck,
big head, watching--
The grasses are working in the sun. Turn it
green." (MEW 1-6)*

The MEW 1-6 above consists of several sentences using visual imagery (**Im1**). The data tells a story of the activities of animals and plants in nature, there are owls, lizards, sparrows, and grasses. The line *"An owl winks in the shadow"* (MEW 1) illustrates that owls are active at night and look for prey in the dark because their eyes can see in the dark. Then, the line *"A lizard lifts on tiptoe, breathing hard"* (MEW 2) describes a lizard gasping for air as it tries to escape from *"Young male sparrow..."* (MEW 3) which *"... stretches up his neck, big head, watching--"* (MEW 3-4).

In the datum above, it also can be seen that the sparrow eats the lizard to survive. Such behavior is purely for energy transfer in the food chain (Wardana and Sulistyanto, 2017). Thus, from these two lines, it can be concluded that there is a food chain execution process in which the lizard becomes the sparrow's meal. This also indicates that if the lizard becomes extinct then the food chain will break and cause the sparrow to become extinct as well. Apart from that, the grasshoppers that are the food for the lizards will also experience very rapid development and of course, it will be detrimental to farmers.

*"The whales turn and glisten, plunge
and sound and rise again,
Hanging over subtly darkening deep"(MEW 14-16)*

The MEW 14-16 above is visual imagery (**Im2**). The line describes the life of whales that are free in the ocean. They go to the surface, spout water, and make a sound "phwargh". They are free to swim to the surface, make sounds, and swim back into the dark depths of the sea.

*"The forests of Lo-yang were logged and all the silt &
Sand flowed down" (MEW 29-30)*

The MEW 29-30 above contains a figure of speech, namely visual imagery (**Im3**), which is to directly criticize the Chinese state for allowing the Lo-yang forest to be cut down. Then, in the line above, the bad effects of using visual imagery are also explained. The bad effects are *"... all the silt & Sand flowed down"* (MEW 29-30) or in other words "landslide". Furthermore, in the datum above, the negative impacts of human actions (illegal logging) are highlighted more in their effects on nature itself.

Simile

Mother Earth: Whales also contains simile. This figurative language is used in one line. The explanation is as follows.

*Flowing like breathing planets
in the sparkling whorls
of living light– ” (MEW 17-19)*

The MEW 17-19 above contains a simile (Si1). This figurative language supports an explanation about the whales' life above (see Im2). Furthermore, the figurative language is found in line "*Flowing like breathing planets in the sparkling whorls of living light*" (Snyder, MEW 19). The word "*Flowing...*" (MEW 19) depicts where whales alternately swim to the surface, and heal the water, and return to the depths of the ocean. The behavior of the whales looks like "*...breathing planets in the sparkling whorls of living light*" (MEW 19-21). This datum is talking about the beauty of nature as a form of respect for nature.

Personification

Mother Earth: Whales contains personification. It attaches human's ability to animals or non-living things. The explanation is as follows.

*The grasses are working in the sun. Turn it
green.” (MEW 6)*

The MEW 6 above contains personification (Pr1). It explains the activity of the grass during the day. The line "*The grasses are working in the sun.*" (MEW 5) describes the process of photosynthesis. The process of photosynthesis occurs when chlorophyll in leaves captures sunlight, and uses it to convert water and carbon dioxide into sugar and oxygen (Khansa, 2015). Furthermore, the results of the work of the grass in the sun can also be seen as "*Turn it [the grass] green.*" (MEW 1-6) due to the presence of light turning proplastids into green chloroplasts. Meanwhile, the absence of light causes dark green leaves to turn paler because the chloroplasts turn into plastids (Khansa, 2015).

*“Flowing like breathing planets
..... ” (MEW 17)*

The MEW 17 above contains a personification (Pr2). The phrase "*...breathing planets...*" (MEW 17) is attached with human's ability, namely breath. The phrase implicitly describes that the planets move up and down like the chest of a human being or other breathing living things.

Allusion

Mother Earth: Whales also contains allusion that associates something to something else that well-known. By using allusion, this poem delivers about the exploitation of North America island of natural resource and explains how the Elaphure became extinct. The explanation is as follows.

“North America, Turtle Island, taken by Invaders” (MEW 43)

In the MEW 43 above, the stanza begins with a figure of speech of allusion (AI1), namely "*North America, Turtle Island,*" (MEW 49) which refers to the northern American continent which is often nicknamed *Turtle Island*. Thus, the discussion in this verse is about how nature is treated by the people of North America.

"Père David's Deer, the Elaphure" (MEW 26)

In the MEW 26 above, the line "*Père David's Deer, the Elaphure,*" (MEW 26) is a figurative allusion (AI2) that refers to a large species of deer that lives in the swamps of China, in Tule in the Yellow Rivers to be precise.

Metaphor

Mother Earth: Whales contains metaphor. It is indirect comparisons based on equations found in several lines. The explanation is as follows.

"from the robot nations." (MEW 47)

MEW 47 support the explanation about North America in the previous line (See AI1 page 35). This datum uses a metaphorical (Mp1) figure of speech, namely "... *robot nations.*" (MEW 47) which means a country that has no sympathy for nature. It can be said so because robot is something that has no feeling or sympathy like human. It also can be said that robot is a form of technology usage that can endanger nature.

"How can the head-heavy power-hungry politic Scientist" (MEW 53)

The MEW 53 above explains the inability of humans to protect nature. The inability is described with a figure of speech metaphor (Mp2), namely "*politic scientist*" (MEW 53) which means scientists who are more likely to conduct or use research results for purely political purposes. They too, described in a metaphorical (Mp3) figure of speech, are "...*head-heavy...*" (MEW 53) which can be interpreted as dizziness or an inability to think about nature. Moreover, they are also described, by using metaphor (Mp4), as "... *power-hungry...*" (MEW 53). They are indirectly compared with one who is power-hungry which means wanting high power, not only power over humans, but also nature.

Cynicism

Mother Earth: Whales also contains cynicism. The figurative language is used to give critics found in several lines. The explanation is as follows.

*"Ah China, where are the tigers, the wild boars,
the monkeys,
like the snows of yesteryear
Gone in a mist, a flash, and the dry hard ground
Is parking space for fifty thousand trucks."* (MEW 35-39)

The MEW 35-39 above contains a figure of cynicism (Cy1), namely conveying criticism of China. This is because the Chinese state cannot preserve animals. China eliminates animals such as tigers, wild boars, and monkeys. It can be said so because China has no nationwide law to protect animals (Schaffner, 2010). The extinction of these animals

is illustrated by using a simile, that is, with a phrase "...like the snows of yesteryear Gone in a mist, a flash,..." (MEW 38) which means lost without a trace. This critique is also a form of a direct order of preserving animals' habitats. This order can be included as behaviour that is affected by the attitude of protecting nature.

*May ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk
Rise! and pull away their giving (MEW 45-46)*

The MEW 45-46 above contains a figure of cynicism (Cy2), namely directly criticise the people of North America (See A11 page 35) by praying that "... ants, may abalone, otters, wolves and elk..." (MEW 45) can withdraw their gifts from the American population. The gifts are in the form of food and clothing.

*Solidarity. The People.
Standing Tree People!
Flying Bird People!
Swimming Sea People!
Four-legged, two-legged, people! (MEW 48-52)*

The MEW 48-52 above contains a figure of speech of cynicism (Cy3), namely direct critics on the inhabitants of North America. The phrase "*Solidarity. The People.*" (MEW 48) contains the meaning of solidarity that is only for humans. The phrase "*Standing Tree People!*" (MEW 49) meaning that the trees that stand are only for human needs. The phrase "*Flying Bird People!*" (MEW 50) means that humans have authority over birds, for example making birds as objects of hunting. The phrase "*Swimming Sea People!*" (MEW 51) This means that humans seem to have absolute power over the sea. The phrase "*Four-legged, two-legged, people!*" (MEW 52) means that animals with four legs or two legs always end up in humans, whether they become food or just a souvenir.

*"And Japan quibbles for words on
what kinds of whales they can kill?" (MEW 22-23)*

MEW 22-23 above uses cynicism (Cy4) to criticise Japan directly. The line above illustrates that Japan tends to exploit whales for its needs. Usually, whales are hunted for food or scientific research (Aditama, Windiani, and Farabi, 2017). For these two things, various kinds of whales are often hunted. In this poem, Japan is criticized for disturbing the whales's harmonious life as previously described.

*"A once-great Buddhist nation
dribbles methyl mercury
like gonorrhea
in the sea." (MEW 22-25)*

Furthermore, in the MEW 22-25 above, line "*A once-great Buddhist nation dribbles methyl mercury...*" (MEW 22-24) contains cynicism (Cy5). This line criticizes Japan, which was originally a great Buddhist country, which got Buddhist teachings about protecting nature, instead polluting the sea with methyl mercury. Methyl mercury is a very dangerous compound for marine biota because it can kill them (Yusuf, Hamzah, Rahman, 2013). This contamination is emphasized by a simile, namely "... *methyl mercury like gonorrhea in the sea.*" (MEW 23-25). This sentence emphasizes the severity of marine

pollution due to methyl mercury, to the point that it looks like pus and is as dangerous as gonorrhoea. In this datum interpretation, it can be seen that nature is more highlighted than human interest. In other words, humans are not the only living thing, and nature has its own value regardless of human advantages and disadvantages.

*"IS man most precious of all things?
— then let us love him, and his brothers, all those
Fading living beings—"* (MEW 40-42)

MEW 40-42 above, the line *"IS man most precious of all things?"* (MEW 40) contains cynicism (Cy6), namely questioning whether humans are so very valuable compared to other creatures; thus, they can treat other beings arbitrarily. Furthermore, the question above has no answer because the answer is instead an affirmation to love humans, and establish good relations between humans, and between humans and nature. These are proven in the line *"— then let us love him, and his brothers, all those Fading living beings—"* (MEW 41-42).

"Speak for the green of the leaf? Speak for the soil?" (MEW 57)

The MEW 57 above contains cynicism (Cy7) figurative language. This figurative language questions humans' ability and desires to protect nature. This indirectly underestimates human environmental concerns. In other words, this is an insult to humans who do not care about nature in the form of understatement questions.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that *Mother Earth: Whales* mainly uses cynicism and imagery to reveal environmental value and are supported by other figurative languages such as simile, metaphor, and allusion. In more detail, Im1, Im2, Im3, Cy1, Al1, Cy2, Mp1, Si1, Pr1, Pr2, and Cy3 indicate the urge to preserve or conserve nature is indicated by exposure to animal life in the wild before being exploited by humans. This indirectly tells the reader that their life is very beautiful and harmonious; and instructs the reader to take care of it. It indicates that *Mother Earth: Whales* has environmental values. This is because explanations about animal life in the wild indicate that there is protection for nature.

Moreover, Cy4, Cy5, Cy6, Mp2, Mp3, and Cy7 show people's point of view towards themselves and nature which is indicated by the view that humans are part of nature and must treat nature equally. This is reflected in the criticism conveyed in the poem. Criticism is often delivered in the form of questions that belittle humans' ability to protect nature. From this explanation, it can be seen that the perspective or point of view in this poem is equality between nature and people. However, in this poem, the importance of the page is more highlighted and conveyed. Thus, this point of view can be said to view nature as more meaningful than human interests.

Furthermore, Al2 and Im4 reveal the motivation of preserving or conserving nature which is fulfilled by paying more attention to nature and animals. This poem indirectly conveys that humans may use natural land, but must maintain it, no need for illegal logging, for the preservation of animals. Furthermore, humans must also protect nature

so that nature is not damaged by landslides. Therefore, animals and plants are still able to live in their natural habitats in a harmonious way.

From the above analysis, it can be said that those figurative languages reveal biospheric environmental value. It is confirmed by the theory of Stern and Dietz (1994). First of all, the figurative languages Im1, Im2, Im3, Cy1, Al1, Cy2, Mp1, Si1, Pr1, Pr2, and Cy3 reveal the concern for the environment and animal conservation that is implicitly conveyed in the poem. It describes the damage to nature caused by humans as very severe. Thus, the narrator hopes that nature can take back what it has given to humans. This is because the narrator feels compassion for the damage to nature that has an impact on nature itself. Furthermore, this indicates an attitude toward protecting nature, so it can be said that this poem contains environmental values according to the theory of Stern and Dietz (1994). This indicates that this poem contains an environmental value.

Furthermore, the second point, the figurative languages Cy4, Cy5, Cy6, Mp2, Mp3, and Cy7 reveal that this poem contains a point of view that nature is more meaningful than human interests as stated by Stern and Dietz (1994) that nature is higher than human indicates biospheric value. This is proved by the insults at humans who do not care about nature in the form of understatement questions. Thirdly, the figurative languages Al2 and Im4 reveal the fundamental motivation of protecting nature. It is protecting nature for nature. According to Stern and Dietz (1994), such motivation is included in the biospheric value. Briefly, those three points revealed by figurative language indicate biospheric environmental value.

CONCLUSION

The environmental value in Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales* was revealed through the use of figurative language. In Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales*, cynicism and imagery were mostly used in revealing biospheric environmental value. In more detail, the biospheric value revelation in *Mother Earth: Whales* was supported by allusion, personification, and metaphor. Those figurative languages revealed that *Mother Earth: Whales* contained the urge to preserve nature as they indicate the harmony of nature that must be protected by humans. Moreover, they also revealed people's point of view that actually nature and humans are equal. Finally, those figurative languages revealed that *Mother Earth: Whales* contained a motivation of protecting nature because of nature. Furthermore, by revealing those, the figurative languages had revealed biospheric environmental value. Overall, Snyder's *Mother Earth: Whales* revealed biospheric environmental value through the use of cynicism, imagery, simile, personification, metaphor, and allusion.

The researcher suggests future researchers to conduct similar research. The research can use a pragmatic approach and the theory of Value-Belief-and-Norm (VBN) by Stern, Dietz, Kalof, and Guagnano (1995). Briefly, the researcher suggests a future researcher to use a relevant approach and theory to conduct the research.

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