POETIC ANIMALS IN E-CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POEMS:
BUILDING AND FORGING INDIVIDUAL ECOLOGICAL CONCERN

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Abstract

Poetry not only illustrates the beauty of plants and trees in human’s nature and environment but it also needs to delineate other non-human creatures such as animals in their relationship with humans in their ecosystem. Poetic animals then serve as such kind of aesthetic representation to build individual’s awareness of the importance of conserving their environment, particularly his care and concern for the preservation of diverse flora and fauna in one’s respective nature. In view of ecocriticism principles that highlight environmental issues in literary works, animal imageries used in e-contemporary American poems not only redefine the indispensable presence of animals for humans but also negotiate the more harmonious relationship between human and non-human for a better and more sustainable nature life.

Key words: poetic animals, ecocriticism, e-contemporary American poems, human-non-human

INTRODUCTION

Animals have co-existed with humans throughout the years. In pre-historic times, ancient people hunted animals for food or used certain animals for hunting other animals. Then, in modern times, people used animals for various purposes. People consume certain animals for food, such as chicken, cows, pigs, goats, buffaloes, and the like. They no longer have to hunt them in any forest or jungle, but they even already breed them in their farms for a living. In many rural areas especially in south-east Asean countries such as Thailand, Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, many villagers use bigger animals such as elephants for helping them in their work or for transportation. In a word, it is known that the relationship between humans and animals is a kind of mutually dependent symbiosis. However, animals do not really need humans to survive but humans do as long as they merely rely on animals for their food.

In today’s world, the relationship between humans and animals has been changing. People tend to exploit animals in many ways for satiating their purposes. People no longer really consider the privilege of animals, even they often do torturing and violent acts towards animals. In some areas in Indonesia or some south-east Asean countries, animal fighting such as cock fighting, cows race, and the like are some common human’s acts that seem to disdain the animals’ rights for freedom and security from any hazards. Meanwhile, the more increased number of humans’ exploitation over forests such as land clearing, deforestation, illegal logging for business purposes has also intensified the decreasing population of various endangered animals in the wildlife. Among the endangered animals include orang utan,
Sumatran tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes, and others from their natural habitats in the wild. In marine life, human’s overfishing or sea mammal hunting and waste disposal also become another hazardous threat towards marine ecosystem (www.greenpeace.or.id). Several months ago, there were some whales and spotted sharks which were stranded dead in two different seashores in Indonesia. It is still unknown why the marine mammals were stranded to the shores. Yet, it might be possible that the mammals were poisoned by plastic waste and the like or the sea water got shallowing because of human’s clearing practices of mangroves and coral reef.

In works of arts including literature, animals have important roles in their relationship with humans. Joseph Campbell, an American expert in mythology in his interview with Bill Moyers asserts that hunting animals of the Bushmen of Africa was a kind of ritual act, which means to recognize human’s dependency on the voluntary giving of the hunted food to the humans by the animal who has given its life (Flowers, 1988: 73). Campbell further says that people should maintain a religious attitude, a form of reverence and respect toward animals since animals often help humans in some works in their life (1988: 74-75). In line with Campbell’s notion, Randy Malamud, a professor of English at Georgia State University in his article “The Culture of Using Animals in Literature and the Case of Jose Emilio Pacheco” published in an e-journal CLCWeb Volume 2 Issue 2 (June 2000) (http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/CLCWeb/vol.2/iss2/5) says that “a person’s soul is explicitly connected with an external animal counterpart, or co-essence,” referring to the Mesoamerican spiritual idea of “animal souls” (2000: 2). In another article entitled “How People and Animals Co-exist”, professor Malamud named the study of human-animal relations as Anthrozoology (the study of human-animal relations) that human’s relationship with animals is dealt with (http://chronicle.com.section: The Chronicle Review Volume 49, Issue 20, Page B7). The study examines what our relationship with animals illustrate about us since it found out that the status of animals in scholarly work was regarded by the dominant group (human) as subordinate and defined in generic and reductive terms.

This paper discusses poetic animals in four e-contemporary American poems entitled “The Cricket in the Sump” by Catherine Tufariello, “Cicadas at the End of Summer” by Martin Walls, “The Animals are Leaving” by Charles Harper Webb, “Great Blue Heron” by T. Alan Broughton of Vermont (www.poetryfoundation.org). The discussion focuses on two questions: first, What does the representation of poetic animals in these poems signify in regard to human and non-human relations?; second, How does the portrayal of poetic animals in these poems evoke individual’s concern for the significance of animal souls for harmonizing human’s relation with his nature and similarly build up his awareness of ecological conservation? In analyzing these poems, I refer to some principles of Ecocriticism especially those notions about poetic animals and animal souls conveyed by Professor Randy Malamud as well as some other sources related to animals representation in literary works.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

a. Poetry and Contemporary Poetry

Poetry is one literary genre which uses more concise words compared to other genres. Yet, the briefness in its language can mean to say more than ordinary language does. Perrine and Arp define poetry as “a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language. It is because language is employed on different occasions to say quite different kinds of things” (1992: 3). Furthermore, they explain that poetry is language used to communicate experience and it has at least four dimensions. First, it must be directed at the whole person, not just at one’s understanding; second, it must involve not only one’s intelligence but also his senses, emotions, and imagination; third, it adds a sensuous dimension, an emotional dimension, and an imaginative dimension; fourth, it achieves its greater pressure per word by drawing more fully than does ordinary language on a number of language resources (1992: 9-10). The elements of poetry include denotation and connotation, imagery, figures of speech, symbol, rhythm and pattern, tone, and theme (1992: 10).

McClatchy in an introduction of his book The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry, says that by the word ‘contemporary’, he means, poets of this period (2003: xxx). He further says that contemporary poets sought an ‘impersonal’ manner “that could brood over spiritual conditions rather than emotional instants”. Besides, contemporary poets also felt the force of plain speaking – “of the colloquial, the commonplace, a naturalistic aesthetic that was free from design or pretense” (2003: xxvii). In contemporary American poetic tradition, one previous literary era will influence the former era – “Beneath the landscape of trends and schools and movements run underground streams of sympathy and influence” (2003: xxiv). By quoting Alexis de Tocqueville’s notion, he says that the subject of American poetry is mostly on the self (2003: xxiv).

b. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (Glotfelty, 1996: xix). William Howarth, an ecocritic in his article “Ecocriticism in Context”, explains that the word ‘ecocriticism’, ‘eco’ and ‘critic’ are derived from Greek, ‘oikos’ and ‘kritis’. In tandem, they mean ‘house judge’. An ecocritic then means “a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action” (Coupe, 2008: 163). Yet, ecocriticism is not the same with other literary criticisms as it does not forward certain theoretical assumptions as new criticism or new historicism do. Slovic says that “ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus – rather, it is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of thousands of literary scholars around the world” (Coupe, 2008: 161). Nevertheless, what differentiates ecocriticism from other criticisms is that the former considers non-human and human contexts in a literary work as Glen A. Love an ecocritic argues that ecocriticism “encompasses non-human as well as human contexts and it is
necessary to consider the interconnections between the text and the environmental surroundings” (2003: 16).

Meanwhile, Karla Armbruster & Kathleen R. Wallace explain that ‘environment’ in ecocriticism does not only refer to ‘natural’ or ‘wilderness’ areas but it also includes cultivated and built landscapes, the natural elements and aspects of those landscapes, and cultural interactions with those natural elements (2001: 4). Ecocriticism principles as influenced by deconstructive assumptions, hold on dismantling the former relation that privileged humans and subordinated non-human as suggested by an ecocritic, Patrick Murphy. He says that “the human self needs to be related to the natural ‘other’, that relationship being one of ‘heterarchy’ rather than ‘hierarchy’. It means that humans must replace the former opposition of humanity as ‘one-for-oneself’ and nature as ‘things-for-us’ with the principle of ‘anotherness’, by which culture opens itself up to ‘interanimation’ with nature (Coupe, 2008: 159). Hochman calls ecocriticism as green cultural studies and suggests that “plants and animals are granted separateness, independence, and liberation” (Coupe, 2008: 192).

Kate Soper in her article “The Idea of Nature” sums up the multiple roles which nature can play in ecological discourses – ‘metaphysical’, ‘realistic’, and the ‘lay’ (or ‘surface’) ideas of nature:

1. Employed as a metaphysical concept, which it mainly is in the argument of philosophy, ‘nature’ is the concept through which humanity thinks its difference and specificity. It is the concept of the non-human, even if, as we have seen, the absoluteness of the humanity-nature demarcation has been disputed, and our ideas about what falls to the side of ‘nature’ have been continuously revised in the light of changing perceptions of what counts as ‘human.’

2. Employed as a realist concept, ‘nature’ refers to the structures, processes and causal powers that are constantly operative within the physical world, that provide the objects of study of the natural sciences and condition the possible forms of human intervention in biology or interaction with the environment.

3. Employed as a ‘lay’ or ‘surface’ concept, as it is in much every day, literary and theoretical discourse, ‘nature’ is used in reference to ordinarily observable features of the world: the ‘natural’ as opposed to the urban or industrial environment (‘landscape’, ‘wilderness’, ‘countryside’, ‘rurality’), animals, domestic and wild, the physical body in space and raw materials. This is the nature of immediate experience and aesthetic appreciation; the nature we have destroyed and polluted are asked to conserve and preserve (Coupe, 2008: 125).

In sum, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. In practice, ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature (1996: xix).
POETIC ANIMALS AND ANIMAL SOULS

In his e-article entitled “Poetic Animals and Animal Souls”, Professor Randy Malamud from Georgia State University, asserts that “animal poetry may facilitate an enlightened, perhaps even a spiritually transcendent, outlook towards animals” (downloaded from e-journal Society and Animals vol. 6 no. 3, October 1998: 264 on www.english.gsu.edu). In his study, Professor Malamud especially refers to Mesoamericans’ rich spiritual beliefs about the importance of animals and the relationship with human beings. The Mesoamericans believe in the concept of animal souls or “the idea that a person’s soul is explicitly connected with an external animal counterpart or co-essence” (1998: 263).

The Mesoamerican philosophies toward animals have been bringing a significant role since western industrial culture in common tends to disdain the integrity of animals and disregard their importance in the ecosystem (1998: 264). Accordingly, Professor Malamud continues, animal poetry serves to counter human’s speciesist chauvinism, setting out a righter path, and resisting the damage done on so many other fronts (1998: 264). Animal poetry is then aimed to facilitate a better understanding and appreciation of animals and certainly of nature and the world around us – better than human’s performance record in most of their political, economic, and cultural practices (1998: 264). In a word, a representation of animals in literary works does not only show human’s care for the animals but signify more about privilege of animals as living creatures that co-exist with humans in their nature.

Still referring to the Mesoamerican beliefs about non-human animals, Professor Malamud identifies the idea called “animal souls.” In his article entitled “The Culture of Using Animals in Literature and the Case of Jose Emilio Pacheco” (published in CLCWeb Volume 2 Issue 2, June 2000 Article 5 downloaded on http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/CLCWeb/vol_2/iss2/), Professor Malamud situates his reading of Pacheco’s poems against the Mesoamerican spiritual idea of “animal souls.” By quoting Gary H. Gossen’s writings who studies on animal souls, he says that “Mesoamerican souls are fragile essences that link individuals to the forces of the earth, the cosmos, and the divine, in which the link originates outside the body of their human counterparts, the bodies of animals” (2000: 2). He further reports that Gossen especially studies on the culture of the Chamula Tzotzil Community of Southern Mexico (descendants of the ancient Maya). The community has a pan-Mesoamerican indigenous belief in what is known as nagualismo or tonalismo. The terms respectively signify the transformation of a person into an animal and a person’s companion animal or destiny, which everyone is believed to possess” (2000: 2) (1998: 266). Professor Malamud also refers to Menchu’s writing of her Guatemalan Quiche culture, in which it resembles the Chamula’s in affirming animals’ importance to people and interdependence with people. He quotes Menchu’s idea on nagualismo or tonalismo as quoted as follows:

Every child is born with a nahual. The nahual is like a shadow, his protective spirit who will go through life with him. The nahual is the representative of the earth, the animal world, the sun and water, and in this way the child communicates with nature. The nahual is our double,
something very important to us…..The child is taught that if he kills an animal, that animal’s human double will be very angry with him because he is killing his nahual. Every animal has its human counterpart and if you hurt him, you hurt the animal, too (1998: 266).

The Mesoamerican animal beliefs through the idea of nagualismo or tonalismo then functions to redefine and re-assert human’s relationship to animals. What should or might the relationship be? They believe that human existence is directly linked to, and dependent upon, the fortunes of other creatures (1998: 267).

As the manifestation of the Mesoamerican animal beliefs, animal poetry is assumed to embody a displaced realm of contemporary Western intellectual/aesthetic spirituality, which emanates from the natural world that exceeds the merely human realm (1998: 267). The idea suggests a defense and privilege humans give towards animals. It is also asserted by Patrick Murphy that the relationship between human and non-human (animals) should be one of ‘heterarchy’ rather than ‘hierarchy’. Humans should no longer perceive them as ‘one-for-oneself’ and nature as ‘things-for-us’ but consider the principle of ‘anotherness’ or ‘interanimation’ with nature (Coupe, 2008: 159).

Furthermore, in his e-article “Poetic Animals and Animal Souls”, Professor Malamud asserts that animal poetry not only helps humans to discover an incipient sensibility within their culture, but it also embodies a sound relationship with animals and an appreciation of their importance to the earth (1998: 270). He refers to Kowalski’s writing about animal spirits, in which one of the ideas says that “animals are humans’ spiritual colleagues and emotional companions” (1998: 270). Kowalski explains the reason why humans need to open their hearts to other creatures and sympathize with their joys, which is because “there is an inwardness in other creatures that awakens what is innermost in ourselves” (1998: 270). This idea discloses the importance of animal souls for evoking the essential things in humans’ lives.

**DISCUSSION**

The four poems selected as the objects of analysis in this paper represent animals both individually and in groups. The first poem “The Cricket in the Sump” by Catherine Tufariello describes a cricket with its shrill sound yet melodious and marvelous tune staying in a sump or a hole. The second poem “Cicadas in the End of Summer” by Martin Walls talks about another insect ‘cicadas’, a kind of cricket described in one season. The third poem, “Great Blue Heron” by T. Alan Broughton of Vermont describes the poet’s experience in encountering a rare bird, blue heron. The fourth poem, “The Animals are Leaving” by Charles Harper Webb, tells about the steady extinction of animal species (www.poetryfoundation.org). These four poems are published by Poetry magazine and edited by Poet Laureate Consultant, Ted Kooser.
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<th>Poetic Animals In E-Contemporary American Poems: Building And Forging Individual Ecological Concern</th>
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| **The Cricket in the Sump**  
By: Catherine Tufariello |
| He falls abruptly silent when we fling  
A basket down or bang the dryer shut,  
But soon takes up again where he left off.  
Swept by a rainstorm through a narrow trough  
Clotted with cobwebs into Lord knows what  
Impenetrable murk, he’s undeterred  
You’d think his dauntless solo was a chorus,  
This rusty sump, a field or forest spring.  
And there is something wondrous and absurd  
About the way he does as he is bidden  
By instinct, with his gift for staying hidden  
While making sure unseen is plainly heard.  

All afternoon his tremolo ascends  
Clear to the second story, where a girl  
Who also has learned blithely to ignore us  
Sings to herself behind her bedroom door.  
Maybe she moves to her invented score  
With a conductor’s flourish, or pretends  
She’s a Spanish dancer, lost in stamp and whirl  
And waving fan – notes floating, as she plays,  
Through the open window where the willow sways  
And shimmers, humming to another string.  
There is no story where the story ends.  
What does a singer live for but to sing? |
| **Cicadas at the End of Summer**  
By: Martin Walls |
| Whine as though a pine tree is bowing a broken violin,  
As though a bandsaw cleaves a thousand thin sheets of titanium;  
They chime like freight wheels on a Norfolk Southern slowing into town.  
But all you ever see is the silence.  
Husks, glued to the underside of maple leaves.  
With their nineteen fifties Bakelite lines they’d do  
Just as well hanging from the ceiling of a space museum –  
What cicadas leave behind is a kind of crystallized memory;  
The stubborn detail of, the shape around a life turned  
The color of forgotten things: a cold broth of tea & milk in the bottom of a mug.  
Or skin on an old tin of varnish you have to lift with lineman’s pliers.  
A fly paper that hung thirty years in Bird Cooper’s pantry in Brighton. |
| **Great Blue Heron**  
By: T. Alan Broughton of Vermont |
| I drive past him each day to the swamp where he stands  
on one leg, hunched as if dreaming of his own form  
the surface reflects. Often I nearly forget to turn left, |
| **The Animals are Leaving**  
By: Charles Harper Webb |
| One by one, like guests at a late party  
They shake our hands and step into the dark:  
*Arabian ostrich; Long-eared kit fox; Mysterious starling.*  
One by one, like sheep counted to close our
buy fish and wine, be home in time to cook
and chill.
Today the bird stays with me, as if I am
moving through
the heron’s dream to share his sky or water –
places
he will rise into on slow flapping wings or
where
his long bill darts to catch unwary frogs. I’ve
seen
his slate blue feathers lift him as dangling
legs
fold back, I’ve seen him fly through the
dying sun
and out again, entering night, entering my
own sleep.
I only know this bird by a name we’ve
wrapped him in,
and when I stand on my porch, fish in the
broiler,
wine glass sweating against my palm, glint of
sailboats
tacking home on dusky water, I try to
imagine him
slowly descending to his nest, wise as he was
or ever will be, filling each moment with that
moment’s
act or silence, and the evening folds itself
around me.

eyes,
They leap the fence and disappear into the
woods:
Atlas bear; Passanger pigeon; North Island
laughing owl; Great auk; Dodo; Eastern
wapiti; Badlands bighorn sheep.

One by one, like grade school friends;
They move away and fade out of memory:
Portuguese ibex; Blue buck; Auroch; Oregon
bison; Spanish imperial eagle; Japanese
wolf; Hawksbill Seat turtle; Cape lion; Heath
hen; Raiatea thrush.

One by one, like children at a fire drill, they
march outside,
And keep marching, though teachers cry,
“Come back!”
Waved albatross; White-bearded spider
monkey; Pygmy chimpanzee; Australian
night parrot; Turquoise parakeet; Indian
cheetah; Korean tiger; Eastern harbor seal;
Ceylon elephant; Great Indian rhinoceros.

One by one, like actors in a play that ran for
years
And wowed the world, they link their hands
and bow
Before the curtain falls.

Representation of Poetic Animals and Its Relevance to Human – Non-Human
Relationship
a. The Cricket in the Sump
This poem has two stanzas. Each stanza consists of 12 lines. In the first stanza, Tufariello
describes the cricket and its behavior while hiding in a sump. While in the second stanza, she
still recounts the cricket with his typical behavior and qualities but she also describes a girl
who likes to sing just like the cricket does. The girl might be a singer. In stanza 1, she
represents the cricket to have a somewhat unique way of living, which is by hiding in a hole but giving his shrill yet melodious sound to the surroundings, as stated in lines 8-12:

And there is something wondrous and absurd
About the way he does as he is hidden
By instinct, with his gift for staying hidden
While making sure unseen is plainly heard.

The way the poet describes the cricket’s behavior in the lines above shows her interest in the insect. Her interest reveals a good relationship between human and animal. In stanza 2, she again euphemizes the cricket’s sound as ‘tremolo’ appealing to auditory imagery; it means ‘a tremulous effect produced on musical instruments or in singing (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 1535). Yet, from lines 2 to 12, she portrays a girl, as appealing to visual imagery, and be juxtaposed with the cricket. She describes the girl’s behavior as the cricket’s. The girl likes to sing while staying indoors in her bedroom – “where a girl who also has learned blithely to ignore us, sing to herself behind her bedroom door.” In stanza 2 line 12, the poet asserts that the girl whom is supposed to be a singer, might keep singing as she was born to sing –

There is no story where the story ends
What does a singer live for but to sing?

In stanza 1, the poet personifies the cricket’s sound as dauntless solo in a chorus (line 7). The poet’s representation of the cricket signifies her respect for the insect as one kind of animals in which its presence and existence through his shrill chirping sound has evoked human’s curiosity as well as admiration; it encourages humans to just give place for crickets to stay and unnoticed and chirp shrilly. Furthermore, her inquisitive and astonished observation towards the cricket shows her goodwill to maintain a good relationship with the cricket.

Figuratively, the representation of the cricket might unfold a metaphor to stand for something or someone. But looking at stanza 2 that tells about a girl who likes singing just as the cricket, I assume that ‘the cricket’ while representing animal literally, it also metaphorically represents the singer (human). A singer is described to have several traits as the cricket – “where a girl who also has learned blithely to ignore us” (stanza 2 line 2-3). The word ‘also’ suggests a similarity between the girl as the singer (stanza 2) and the cricket with his shrill sound (stanza 1) – “his dauntless solo was a chorus.” Therefore, the Cricket in the Sump figuratively serves a double meaning. First, literally it refers to the cricket itself, while the girl as the singer figuratively might represent the cricket himself; second, the imagery ‘cricket’ might signify people who have the characteristics of a cricket, being fond of singing while staying unnoticed.
b. Cicadas at the End of Summer

In this poem written by Martin Walls, representation of animals appears in the title ‘cicadas’; it is a large homopterous bug or another kind of cricket in which the males make a loud shrill chirping sound at night (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 263). The poem has four stanzas in which each has different number of lines, for instance – stanza 1 has four lines, stanza 2 five lines, stanza 3 two lines (couplet), stanza 4 six lines. Different from “the Cricket” which is more literal and narrative in describing the cricket, the poem “Cicadas” uses more figurative language such as simile and metaphor in communicating the poet’s visual, auditory, tactile, and organic imagery about the cicadas. In stanza 1 for instance, the poet uses simile as well as auditory imagery in describing ‘cicadas’ as the insects which have shrill sound as if a pine tree, a cleaving bandsaw, and rolling freight wheels –

Whine as though a pine tree is bowing a broken violin,
As though a bandsaw cleaves a thousand thin sheets of titanium;
They chime like freight wheels on a Norfolk Southern
slowing into town

The comparison of the cicadas by the above imageries also contains hyperbole, a figure of speech which exaggerates a sensory description of any object. From stanza 2 to 4, the poet uses metaphor through a series of visual, auditory, tactile, and organic imagery in describing the cicadas. Different from stanza 1, the poet then describes ‘cicadas’ as the insects, which are exhausted by the summer so that they remain mute, and as dry as husks or the dry outer covering of some fruits or seeds (1996: 692), which are glued to the underside of maple leaves (stanza 2 lines 1-2). From lines 3-5, the poet compares the parts of cicadas’ bodies with ‘1950s Bakelite lines’, which enable them to hang from the ceiling of a space museum. ‘Bakelite’ is a thermosetting resin or plastic made from formaldehyde & phenol used for cables, buttons (1996: 104).

In stanza 3 and 4, the poet uses conceit or an extended, far-fetched comparison/metaphor (1996: 298) to describe cicadas. In stanza 3, the poet illustrates what cicadas leave behind are ‘a kind of crystallized memory’; the stubborn detail of’, and ‘the shape around a life turned’. Then in stanza 4, he extends the comparison (conceit) by picturing a series of imageries that portray cicadas as ‘the color of forgotten things’, ‘a cold broth of tea and milk in the bottom of a mug’, ‘skin on an old tin of varnish’, and ‘a fly paper hanging thirty years in Bird Cooper’s pantry in Brighton’. The representation of cicadas in this poem is somewhat dismal and melancholic in tone, which illustrates how the sizzling heat of summer might influence on causing the drab appearance and lethargic motion of the cicadas. The cycle of season itself is commonly ordered into spring, summer, autumn, and winter (1996: 1307). ‘At the End of Summer’ in the title suggests the beginning of autumn. During this season that lasts from September to November in the northern hemisphere and from March to May in the southern hemisphere, crops and fruits are gathered and leaves fall.
It is also a time of maturity and developing decay (1996: 93). Since the leaves begin to fall and the crops and fruits are harvested during the season, the cicadas will get difficulty in sustaining their flourishing lives. Consequently, they will suffer from the season decays and inexpedient habitat. The representation of cicadas in the poem then expresses the poet’s appreciation of the insects though the ways he describes them are dreary, especially in comparing the cicadas with several imageries that are despondent in tone. Yet, at least the poet wants to describe such a kind of inconvenient situation that the cicadas experience only at the end of summer. Probably during the other seasons, such as spring, summer, or winter the atmosphere and situation will change and so the description about the cicadas will be more sprightly and sparkling accordingly.

c. Great Blue Heron

In this poem written by T. Alan Broughton of Vermont, the representation of animals emerges in the visual imagery, great blue heron. It is a tall wading bird of the family Ardeidae, with long legs and a long S-shaped neck (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996: 661). The poem has only one stanza written in blank verse with unrhymed sound pattern. The poet expresses his experience of encountering the blue heron and even his closer interaction with the bird though a series of imageries and figure of speech. The poem begins with the poet’s visual capture of the bird –

I drive past him each day in the swamp where he stands
on one leg, hunched as if dreaming of his own form
the surface reflects (lines 1-3).

Then it continues with the poet’s closer interaction with the bird as he lets the bird stay with him – “Today the bird stays with me,”. At face value, the line suggests the bird’s physical presence in the poet’s home. However, when looking at the next line –“as if I am moving through the heron’s dream to share his sky or water – places, I assume that the bird’s stay does not literally mean to linger physically in the poet’s home but more figuratively it represents the image of the bird, which lingers in the poet’s fancy – the image to be a freely flying blue heron. In the lines, the poet expresses his experience by visual imagery through the images such as heron, long bill darts, unwary frogs; organic imagery in the line moving through the heron’s dream to share his sky or water; kinesthetic imagery in slow flapping wings. In the next lines, the poet illustrates his further visual experience of the heron when he saw the bird flying through the night

The poet uses visual imagery in slate blue feathers and kinesthetic imagery in fly through the dying sun. The imagery of ‘fly through the dying sun’ can be literal but also figurative in ‘entering night, entering my own sleep’, in which the poet pictures the heron as a vision in his dream. The poet’s fancy of the heron also appears in the last lines –

I try to imagine him slowly descending to his nest,
wise as he was or ever will be, filling each moment
with that moment’s act or silence, and the evening folds itself around me.

The image ‘descending to his nest’ appeals to kinesthetic imagery though it is only the poet’s daydream; whereas, ‘filling each moment with that moment’s act or silence’ appeals to organic imagery. The representation of blue heron in the poem especially as it is expressed in lines 5-8 signifies the human’s good relationship with animals, especially with the blue heron

   Today the bird stays with me, as if I am moving through
   the heron’s dream to share his sky or water – places
   he will rise into on slow flapping wings or where
   his long bill darts to catch unwary frogs.

Then from lines 10-11, the poet says that the blue heron has come to his dream. This shows his respect for and preoccupation with the blue heron so that the heron often haunts the poet through his dreams. In the last lines, the poet also expresses his feeling for the blue heron to fill each moment with that moment’s act or silence. The line also reveals human’s expectation of the blue heron to fill each moment with that moment’s act or silence. The image ‘act’ and ‘silence’ appeal to kinesthetic and organic imagery. Figuratively, the image ‘act’ signifies ‘human’s physical activities’ while the image ‘silence’ represents ‘human’s spiritual reflection’.

d. The Animals are Leaving

   This poem written by Charles Harper Webb, like the title, suggests the number of animals which has been disappearing because of some factors. The poem consists of four stanzas, in which each has a different number of lines. In stanza 1, the poet uses simile to compare ‘animals’ with ‘guests at a late party.’ He compares several vanishing endangered animals with ‘children at a free drill who march outside’. He uses visual imagery in describing the endangered animals which are decreasing every single day. In the first stanza, he mentions the animals such as the Arabian ostrich, long-eared kit fox, mysterious starling.

In stanza 2, he mentions other endangered animals such as atlas bear, passenger pigeon, North Island laughing owl, great auk, dodo, eastern wapiti and Badlands bighorn sheep. In stanza 3, he compares the other disappearing exotic and rare animals with moving grade school friends; this includes Portuguese ibex, blue buck, auroch, Oregon bison, Spanish imperial eagle, Japanese wolf, Hawsbill Sea turtle, Cape lion, Heath hen, Raiatea thrush.

Among these last animals include waved albatross, white-bearded spider monkey, pygmy chimpanzee, Australian night parrot, turquoise parakeet, Indian cheetah, Korean tiger, Eastern harbor seal, Ceylon elephant, Great Indian rhinoceros. Then in stanza 5, the poet uses simile in comparing the vanishing animals with ‘actors in a play that ran for years’. The poet also describes the animals’ behavior as if they were actors that link their heads and bow before the curtain falls.

The representation of animals in the poem through the illustration of the steady disappearance of the endangered animals, signifies the poet’s concern for the threatened
environment. Though the poem does not explicitly tell the reason what and why the animals disappear, it is certain that the animals go for a more secure habitat since their former habitats have probably been devastated by humans’ practices. It is obvious that animals co-exist with humans on nature ecosystem. So when they move away, it is certain that their living habitats are no longer convenient to live and humans are the primary agents that contribute to the loss of their secure habitat. At least this assumption can be inferred in stanza 2 line 2 – “They leap the fence and disappear into the woods”, in which the first sentence suggests the animals’ breaking through the fence that restrain them to go to the woods as the unrestrained place.

The representation of the animals in the poem then is to exemplify what and how many animals there might be endangered if people do not soon realize the urgency to preserve the forests and their wildlife from any excessive deforestation and land clearing so that the diverse flora and fauna will remain sustainable.

Relevance of Poetic Animals and Animal Souls and Its Significance on Building One’s Ecological Awareness

In regard to the Mesoamerican spiritual beliefs in “animal souls” especially those related to the terms ‘nagualismo’ or ‘tonalismo’, the representation of animals in these four poems signifies human’s close relationship with animals living in the nature. According to their beliefs, human existence is directly connected to and dependent upon the fortunes of other creatures (Malamud, 1998: 267). Specifically, the terms nagualismo and tonalismo respectively signify “the transformation of a person into an animal and a person’s companion animal or destiny, which everyone is believed to possess” (Malamud, 1998: 266).

The four poems discussed in this paper portray animals in different ways. In “the Cricket in the Sump”, the poet cherishes the cricket as a marvelous insect with his chirping and musical sound. Besides, he also compares the cricket with a girl who also likes singing. He describes the girl’s behavior in staying in her bedroom as similarly as the cricket makes himself unseen in the sump. The comparison between the cricket and the girl shows the transformation of a person into an animal or nagualismo. At the same time, the cricket serves as a companion for humans since the cricket behaves and lives in the humans’ habitat. Through these poetic animals, the poets as humans want to redefine their relationship with animals in sharing the life on the nature. Through these poetic animals, the poets want to illustrate the animals as nahual (the Mesoamerican belief) or the protective spirit who go through life with humans (Malamud, 1998: 266). They recognize this nahual by identifying the specific and unique characteristics both in appearance and in behavior of these animals.

In “the Cricket” poem, the poet expresses his admiration of the cricket by firstly flattering his chirping and shrill sound – “you’d think his dauntless solo was a chorus” (stanza 1 line 7); and then, by inquisitively and excitedly telling the cricket’s unique living, which hides himself in the sump but keeps chirping from inside – “with his gift for staying hidden while making sure unseen is plainly heard” (stanza 1 lines 9-12). In stanza 2, the poet again reveals the nahual aspect of the cricket by personifying the cricket’s sound as ‘tremolo’
and ‘girl’ (line 2). Literally, the image ‘girl’ appeals to visual imagery; yet, at the same time, it figuratively suggests a metaphor. ‘She’ and ‘a girl’ represent a female cricket to be a counterpart of the male cricket. The representation of a person into an animal or a person into an image of animal is relevant to the idea of *nagualismo*. Figuratively, “the Cricket in the Sump” can represent humans themselves. What the crickets do in their living is analogous with what humans do in their nature. In a word, the poetic animal through the cricket signifies the poet’s idea about how humans and animals could relate and share the world; how human species is connected in some ways with the crickets and with all of their behavior.

In “Cicadas” poem, the poet expresses the *nahual* through his recognition of what cicadas have done to his surroundings. The cicadas have left behind a kind of crystallized memory and turned the shape around a life (stanza 3). Similar to ‘the Cricket’ poem, ‘Cicadas’ poem also has two sides. First, the cicadas represent a visual imagery of one kind of animals; second, they represent a metaphorical image of things related to humans’ lives. I assume that these things might be days and moments that people experience at the end of summer or at the onset of autumn. The comparison the poet gives in the poem between ‘cicadas’ and other objects that are first noisy and shrill but then drab and dreary conveys the poet’s sensory experience of days throughout the season. Yet, literally the representation of cicadas as poetic animal in this poem shows his respect for the animals. In describing the cicadas by some metaphors, the poet wants to assert how cicadas can be humans’ companions to awake what are innermost in themselves – “what cicadas leave behind is a kind of crystallized memory” (stanza 3). Accordingly, cicadas are the *nahual* or protective spirit for human’s souls. Cicadas’ reaction towards the inconvenient season might be comparable to humans’ reaction.

In “Great Blue Heron” poem, the poetic animal represented by the blue heron signifies human’s relationship with animals especially the blue heron. The poem begins with the lines in which the poet seems to be preoccupied with the blue heron’s presence in the swamp so that he often forgets to shop and cook his food –

> I drive past him each day in the swamp where he stands on one leg, hunched as if dreaming of his own form the surface reflects. Often I nearly forget to turn left, buy fish and wine, be home in time to cook and chill (lines 1-4).

The image ‘blue heron’ becomes a companion or *nahual* for the poet when he illustrates the bird’s stay in his place and how the bird’s sojourn gives him a sense of sharing the sky or water with the heron (lines 5-6). Here, the poet describes this experience by visual, organic, and kinesthetic imagery. Next, the representation of the blue heron again unfolds the *nahual* through the blue heron’s image in the poet’s vision of dream – “I’ve seen him fly through the dying sun and out again, entering night, entering my own sleep” (lines 10-11). The ways the poet describes the blue heron are caring and respectable. He does not do any threatening acts towards the bird, but instead he lets him fly and live candidly in his habitat – “I try to imagine
him slowly descending to his nest, wise as he was or ever will be” (lines 15-17). Through the blue heron, the poet wants to redefine his connection with his living and animals in the natural environment. The blue heron becomes his nahual or counterpart in his soul, through which he situates, perceives, and establishes his role and action in nature –

I try to imagine him
slowly descending to his nest, wise as he was
or ever will be, filling each moment with that moment’s
act or silence (lines 15-18).

The poet’s fancy of this heron as expressed in the lines above clears up how the poet as human perceives and privileges the heron as the creature that has its freedom, unconstrained by any human’s touch or disturbance. The line “filling each moment with that moment’s act or silence” suggests the poet’s shared moment with the heron in every motion and step he takes in his living. The poetic animal of the blue heron then shows his respect for the bird and his desire to make a good relationship with him.

In “The Animals are Leaving” poem, the poetic animals appear in a series of endangered rare and exotic animals that disappear gradually because of human’s misdemeanor. Arabian ostrich, long-eared kit fox, mysterious starling, Atlas bear are among many other vanishing animals that the poet describes. They move away to search for more convenient and flourishing habitats. The poet describes these animals as human’s partner or companion. He uses several human images to address these animals. For instance, he compares the animals with guests at a late party (stanza 1), grade school friends (stanza 3), children at a fire drill (stanza 4), actors in a play (stanza 5). The use of this comparison signifies the poet’s recognition of nahual of the animals as the shadow and protective spirit that are inherent in human’s soul. The poet explicitly personifies the animals by giving them humans’ attributes and behavior, such as shaking our hands, step into the dark (stanza 1); move away and fade out of memory (stanza 3); march outside (stanza 4), link their hands and bow (stanza 5). While re-asserting the significance of the animals as parts of nagualismo and tonalismo in regard to their relationship with humans in the ecosystem, the representation of the poetic animals is also meant to criticize humans’ practices towards the environment such as deforestation and land clearing that significantly contribute to the deterioration of many forests and so the devastation of their diverse wildlife.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with today’s life with its changing ecosystem, poetic animals in literary works will always be indispensable poetics in sharing the ideas about human-animals relationship living in the nature. Representation of animals in the works such as poetry will make a bridge over the discrepancy in the former hierarchy of humanity as the center or privileged and animals the unprivileged, into the latter heterarchy, by which humans and animals have an equal interaction and relationship. By referring to the Mesoamerican
spiritual beliefs in animal souls, people are supposed to respect and appreciate animals as their companions and partners in sharing the living in the nature. In view of ecocriticism principles, the representation of poetic animals in poetry can evoke people’s care and love for animals as the living creatures in the nature, no matter what animals are since the animals existence in many ways help humans to maintain and sustain their life in the natural environment. However, since both humans and animals are contending the global ecological changes due to several detrimental practices, it is a task and duty for each individual to take some role and action in accomplishing a flourishing habitat and ecosystem for every living creature by preserving the forests and their diverse wildlife secure and undamaged. Animal poetry can help people in evoking their awareness of environment and the living harmony that people can have by co-existing with animals and respecting their existence.

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