

Ecocentrism, Irony, and the Wounds of Nature in the Poem “Aku Ini”: Ecocriticism in the Context of North Maluku

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Abstract—The poem "Aku Ini" is from the anthology *Karang Menghimpun Bayi Kerapu* by Ibrahim Gibra. This poem conveys ecological irony: humans are praised for their clever symbolic "embroidering" of nature, yet they fail to sustain the environment. This study uses an ecocritical approach in a descriptive-qualitative design with textual close reading of diction, metaphors, stanza structures, and natural imagery. The main data, in the form of poetic texts, is contextual data that includes depictions of ecological degradation in North Maluku (deforestation, coastal pollution, plastic waste, mining pressure) as a background for the reading. The analysis maps the imagery of dew, sea, river, and socio-political realm (democracy) into Garrard's ecocritical theme clusters—pollution, pastoral, wilderness, animals or non-human agents, and the earth—to examine the construction of human-nature relations and traces of anthropocentric ideology. In the research, the findings show that there are three main elements, namely (1) the poem constructs a landscape of ecological wounds through the metaphor of a damaged natural body, (2) the repetitive irony of "cleverness" versus failure to act becomes a critique of ecological indifference and the decline of public ethics, and (3) the lyrical voice opens a shift towards eco-centric sensibility and a reflective call to ethical responsibility across creatures. In an eco-social functional way, this poem serves as a cultural warning and a pedagogical medium to foster ecological awareness in Indonesian literary studies, especially those rooted in environmental experiences in North Maluku.

Index Terms—ecocritical, irony, ecology, ecocentrism, North Maluku

I. INTRODUCTION

Systematic environmental damage has occurred since the Industrial Revolution era in the 18th century (Jambeck et al., 2015), but has become more widespread and become a central issue in global discourse in the mid-20th century (Carson, 1962; Shiva, 2005a; World Bank, 2021; Guha, 2000; UN, 2022), not only in science and politics, but also in literature (Gore, 2006; Plumwood, 2002; Merchant, 1980). Literature has the power to reflect and criticise ecological issues through (poetic) language, as stated by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) and Buell (2005), that literature can act as a medium, a mouthpiece that voices the ecological crisis and encourages strong environmental awareness through aesthetic representation. In this context, Ibrahim Gibra's poem "Aku Ini" serves as a compelling example of how literary works can be a space for critiquing the environmental crisis.

In Indonesia, environmental damage is inextricably linked to various massive natural resource extraction practices, including mining and waste management (Rauf et al., 2024b). In North Maluku, for example, the expansion of the nickel and gold mining industry has led to environmental degradation and even destruction, including deforestation, river pollution, and coastal habitat destruction (Jambeck et al., 2015; United Nations Environment Programme, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Consequently, these mining activities not only damage local ecosystems but also give rise to social conflicts that threaten the sustainability of indigenous (local) communities that are highly dependent on nature (Li, 2014; Rangkuti, 2009). This reality provides a relevant contextual background for interpreting the poem "Aku Ini" as a critique of humans' exploitative relationship with nature.

Aesthetically, this poem depicts "Me," an intelligent individual capable of symbolically interacting with natural elements, such as forests, seas, and rivers (Taha et al., 2024). However, the figure of "I" actually demonstrates a failure to carry out concrete responsibilities towards the environment. The discrepancy between rhetoric and real action is the main criticism of the poem "Aku Ini," offering a space for reflection and prompting readers to realise the paradox of humanity in an ecological context: the imbalance between intellectual claims and ethical responsibility towards nature. More exclusively, the poem "Aku Ini" presents a representation of nature through powerful symbolism: deforested forests, seas strewn with plastic waste, and rivers clogged with waste—a landscape of ecological wounds conveyed aesthetically and politically (Subuh et al., 2024). In this context, nature is not merely a backdrop but also a suffering subject, voicing its grievances through humanity's failure to maintain balance in life (Rauf et al., 2025). This symbolism conveys the profound impression that environmental damage reflects humanity's moral and spiritual decay. Forests, seas, and rivers become metaphors for the torn body of the world, which harbours a narrative of profound pain caused by human arrogance (Rasiah et al., 2024).

The critique of indifference is a dominant theme in this poem. When "I" claims to be intelligent but fails to plant trees, or is eloquent in speaking but unable to save rivers, what results is a confirmation of the distortion of reality, the moral nakedness of modern humans—skilled at stringing words together but dull in concrete action regarding environmental concerns. This situation is sufficient to illustrate satire of contemporary society, which is more preoccupied with rhetoric than with concrete action to save or heal the wounded (damaged) earth. This indifference appears as a form of human alienation from nature, a previously harmonious relationship, but has now turned into an exploitative relationship.

The poem "Aku Ini" exudes eco-centric awareness, a view that places nature as an entity with intrinsic value, not merely an object of human exploitation. Each stanza implicitly calls for humanity to review nature as an integral part of its existence, rather than as an enemy or a tool. In "Aku Ini," ecological awareness is not presented declaratively but conveyed through irony, regret, and a poignant, reflective awareness. This ecocentrism challenges the dominant anthropocentric view that places humans at the centre of all events, while calling for reconciliation between humans and the earth as a shared ethical community (Rauf et al., 2024b).

In light of this awareness, the urgency of examining the poem "Aku Ini" becomes even more apparent. This research is crucial because the poem not only addresses nature aesthetically but also voices ecological concerns through powerful social critique. In the context of growing global awareness of the impacts of climate change, deforestation, marine pollution, and other forms of environmental degradation, literary works that address ecological themes can serve as instruments for fostering collective awareness. This awareness of ecological urgency aligns with Buell's (2001) view, which emphasises that literary works intervene in how society views and treats nature. Furthermore, an ecocritical approach to poetry analysis is important because it provides an interdisciplinary perspective that connects literature, ethics, and ecology. In the Anthropocene era, when human activity has become a dominant geological force transforming the planet's ecosystems, literary works such as the poem "Aku Ini" can serve as a means to contemplate the moral crisis of modern humanity in the face of ecological destruction (Heise, 2006). Therefore, this study is highly relevant to literary literacy, supporting the discourse on sustainable development and interdisciplinary ecological responsibility.

The novelty of this research lies, first, in the application of a contextual ecocritical approach to contemporary Indonesian poetry that addresses environmental damage in North Maluku. Second, this research integrates poetic symbolism, such as dew, the sea, and rivers, with the real ecological crisis caused by extractive activities, and interprets irony as an aesthetic expression of human ethical failure to preserve nature. Third, it positions North Maluku as an ecological-cultural space that integrates environmental issues and local politics into the literary repertoire, thereby broadening the scope of ecocriticism to encompass the social and geopolitical realms of eastern Indonesia. By considering several ecological explanations, this study is expected to contribute to the development of ecocritical studies and emphasise the important role of literary works, particularly poetry, as agents of social and ecological change. This

approach emphasises how literature is not merely a reflection of reality but also capable of provoking awareness and encouraging transformative action in response to the global environmental crisis.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory used in this research is ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a branch of literary studies that has developed since the 1990s and focuses on the relationship between literary texts and the natural environment, both physically and ideologically. According to Garrard (2004), ecocriticism examines how nature is represented in literary works and how the relationship between humans and the environment is constructed, critiqued, and interpreted within the text. Beyond simply reading natural settings descriptively, ecocriticism explores the ethical, political, and symbolic dimensions of the human-nature relationship deliberately presented in literary works. Ecocriticism also assumes that the ecological crisis is not merely a scientific or technical issue but also a matter of culture and imagination. Therefore, literature is seen as having great potential to shape public ecological awareness through reflective, engaging narratives. In this context, ecocritical theory not only examines environmental representations but also uncovers the anthropocentric ideology inherent in the text, affirming eco-centric values that give space to nature as a living entity equal to humans (Buell, 2005; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

In this study, Garrard's ecocritical tools are operationalised to map the poem "Aku Ini's" natural images into key thematic clusters, including pollution, wilderness, and the earth. These themes should inspire the audience to see the connection between local ecological issues and broader global environmental concerns. The next step is an ideological reading, examining the extent to which the lyrical voice reproduces or challenges anthropocentrism, opening up the possibility of an eco-centric reading that gives symbolic agency to non-human elements (dew, sea, river). This approach facilitates the relationship between textual representation and ecological experiences in North Maluku, including Central Halmahera, East Halmahera, North Halmahera, and South Halmahera—particularly ecological pressures resulting from extractive activities and coastal landscape changes—as part of a cultural discourse that can shape ecological awareness. For example, in 2023, the local indigenous people living near the Sagea River faced a change in the freshwater. The mining exploration in the Weda district causes it. Thus, the acceleration of ecocritical theory here does not stop at describing natural settings, but also works as a tool of ethical and political criticism that negotiates local environmental values within global ecocritical conversations (Buell, 2005; Garrard, 2004; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

Operationally, each of Garrard's mapped themes is used as a reading lens: (1) pollution is characterised by the diction of damage, waste, and wounds of nature; (2) pastoralism highlights the contrast or longing for relatively intact natural spaces compared to modernity or industrial exploitation; (3) wilderness evokes the image of wild areas or spaces beyond human control; (4) animals present non-human figures as witnesses, victims, or ecological partners; and (5) the earth opens up broader ecological horizons—collective, planetary, or cosmic. This mapping helps to trace the layers of ecological irony in the poem, namely when poetic language simultaneously celebrates nature and hints at its degradation, and allows for a reading of the shift from an anthropocentric attitude towards an eco-centric sensibility in the lyrical voice (Garrard, 2004). Modern ecocritical studies often draw on the work of Greg Garrard, who maps key themes such as pollution, wilderness, animals, and the earth, and how these themes operate within literary texts and cultural discourse (Garrard, 2004). Garrard's categorical framework provides a useful reading tool for analysing the symbols of nature (dew, sea, river) in the poem "Aku Ini." However, unlike Garrard's focus on Western traditions, this study applies these tools to contemporary Indonesian lyric poetry and anchors it in ecological damage in North Maluku.

The initial foundations of ecocriticism were laid in the anthology "The Ecocriticism Reader," edited by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996). In this context, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, and it asserts that literary texts can serve as vehicles for ecological awareness. This study builds on this basic idea by demonstrating how Ibrahim Gibra's poetry—born within the socio-environmental landscape of eastern Indonesia—functions as contextual ecological critique, not merely aesthetic expression. Two works by Lawrence Buell enrich the theoretical foundation. In "The Future of Environmental Criticism," Buell (2005) calls for a more global, cross-cultural ecocriticism and emphasises the role of the literary imagination in shaping public responses to environmental crises. Elsewhere, in *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), Buell introduces the notion of toxic discourse—the way literature mobilises empathy through depictions of threatened places. This study actualises both of Buell's ideas by reading the line "sea wallowing in plastic" as a toxic image, while also placing regional poetry (North Maluku) within the global ecological conversation envisioned by Buell.

Heise (2006) emphasises, through the concept of eco-cosmopolitanism, the need to bridge the "sense of place" (local attachment) with the "sense of planet" (global awareness). This framework is highly relevant for current research linking local symbols—dew, sea, rivers—in Ibrahim's (2019) poetry with global issues such as plastic pollution and climate change. In line with this view, Naess (1973) distinguishes shallow anthropocentric ecology from deep ecology, which recognises the intrinsic value of all creatures. Naess's eco-centric notion helps interpret the failure of the "I" who "cannot pick dew" or "neglects to plant trees" as an ecological ethical crisis in the poem.

Shiva (2005a) emphasises the dimension of ecological justice in *Earth Democracy*, showing how the expansion of extractive and corporate capital marginalises local communities and damages ecosystems. This research translates Shiva's critique into a poetic reading. The poem's stanza "democracy" is read as an ironic commentary on the promise of political representation that collapses when mining, deforestation, and pollution injure community living spaces. The perspective

of resource political ecology is deepened through Li's (2014) ethnography, which documents how the penetration of extractive capital changes indigenous peoples' relationships with the land. While Li's work draws on socio-economic field data, this research focuses on absorbing that sensibility to read the echoes of ecological conflict in the symbolic imagery of the poem "Aku Ini".

The empirical aspect of the environmental crisis—particularly marine plastic pollution—is underscored by global research by Jambeck et al. (2015), which estimates that millions of tons of plastic waste leak from land into the ocean each year, particularly from coastal areas with weak waste management. The United Nations Environment Programme Report, *From Pollution to Solution* (2021), confirms these findings, noting that plastic dominates marine debris and has widespread impacts on ecosystems, the economy, and health. This study did not conduct biophysical measurements but utilised the data to argue that the image of a "sea wallowing in plastic" in poetry is not aesthetic hyperbole but rather the poetic resonance of a real ecological crisis, including on the coast of North Maluku.

Three additional references help position this study within a broader context. Guha (2000) traces the history of the global environmental movement with an emphasis on the experiences of the Global South. His historical perspective helps situate the ecological case in North Maluku within a long line of resource conflicts. Gore (2006) popularised the moral urgency of the climate crisis with an audience. This urgency is rhetorically adopted in this study, where he emphasises the importance of reading poetry as an ecological alarm. Merchant (1980) in *The Death of Nature* critiques modern mechanistic rationality that objectifies nature. This study demonstrates the echo of this objectification in lyrical form—nature as a body wounded by human arrogance—through the voice of the "I" in poetry.

Overall, the theoretical literature on ecocriticism (Buell, 2005; Cislighi & Heise, 2020; Garrard, 2004; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996) provides a strong conceptual framework, while studies of ecological justice and political ecology (Li, 2014; Shiva, 2005b) highlight power structures in resource exploitation. Environmental science studies (Rauf et al., 2024b) supply empirical data on the coastal and plastic crises. However, studies rarely bring these three together in a reading of Indonesian poetry anchored in a specific ecological case. It is within this open space that this research takes on a role, namely integrating poetic symbols, the context of environmental damage in North Maluku (mining, plastic pollution, river and coastal degradation), and an ethical-ecological critique to broaden the horizons of ecocriticism in Indonesia.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative method with a textual approach. The primary data source was the poem "Aku Ini" by Ibrahim (2019). The analysis focused on the poem's diction, metaphor, and structure, as they relate to ecological themes. The interpretation process was conducted by referring to basic ecocritical concepts through careful, meticulous, and repeated readings of the poem "Aku Ini," particularly those related to environmental degradation, the paradoxes of modernity, and critiques of anthropocentric culture. An alternative approach was a descriptive-qualitative approach, which is considered capable of exploring the deeper meanings of the symbols and natural imagery contained in the poem "Aku Ini." This method allowed the analysis to go beyond textual aspects, such as diction or structure, to broadly interpret the connotative dimensions of meaning through an ecocritical theoretical framework. Close reading techniques were used to identify patterns of natural representation and ecological critique, which were then linked to the socio-cultural context and environmental degradation of North Maluku. This process enabled researchers to examine how metaphors, ironies, and paradoxes in Ibrahim's poetry reflect the complex relationships among humans, modernity, and nature.

IV. DISCUSSION

The poem "Aku Ini" possesses complex and reflective layers of meaning. With a lyrical, contemplative style, this poem depicts the figure of the "I," praised for its symbolic ability to interact with nature. However, this style also demonstrates its practical failure to care for and protect the environment. In each stanza, this poem emphasises the irony that social recognition of the "I" as intelligence and the ecological reality demonstrate neglect, or even powerlessness, in resisting. By positioning literature (poetry) as critique, the poem "Aku Ini" offers a sharp critique of humanity's relationship with nature, especially in the face of technological advances in the modern, global era, which are rife with rhetoric but lack concrete action. Through dense diction and symbolism, the poet weaves images of deforested forests, polluted seas, and rivers choked with waste, all presented as landscapes of ecological wounds rooted in human negligence.

A. Representation of Nature and Symbolism

The poem "Aku Ini" consists of four stanzas, each presenting a natural element as the main symbol: dew, the sea, the river, and democracy as a socio-political space that should support the sustainability of life. These four keywords represent aspects of nature and social life that are being or have been harmed, including forests losing their trees, seas filled with plastic, and rivers trapping garbage due to a lack of genuine human concern. Referring to the title, "I" is an individual who asserts himself over the existence of attitudes trapped in praise or arrogance that have lost face. In each stanza, "I" claims to be good at speaking, parsing words and using beautiful diction to invite readers to communicate—"embroidering nature," "calling the sea," "standing in front of the river," "arranging discourse"—but all of this fails to be realised in real

action. These symbols indicate a paradoxical content or conflict between the symbolic and practical, specifically the ability to speak without concern for nature and others (colleagues, individuals, society, and/or communities).

Dew symbolises the hope for sustainability and greenery in a beautiful yet fragile life. In the verse, “People say, I am skilled at embroidering nature, but I cannot even pick a flower from a single dewdrop,” the failure of “myself” to pick a flower from a single dewdrop indicates an inability to maintain nature’s delicacy and balance. In the ecological context of the North Maluku community, dew can be interpreted as a symbol of local wisdom and the ecological spirituality of indigenous peoples, as well as the balance of mountain ecosystems and tropical forests, such as those found in Halmahera. This ecological space has long supported the region’s biodiversity and microclimate. The failure of “myself” to pick a flower from the dewdrops reflects humanity’s inability to sustain natural ecosystems, which are fragile due to illegal logging, nickel mining, and forest conversion for extractive industries. Dew, which should be part of the natural water cycle and help cool a forest microclimate, has now become a symbol of an ecosystem nearly lost due to the destruction of vegetation cover, disrupting the eco-hydrological balance. In this context, the dew in the poem “Aku Ini” speaks not only to an aesthetic exploration of words but also to a warning about the fragility of North Maluku’s natural environment, which is constantly threatened by a lack of ecological awareness. It is a form of ecological disconnection or alienation from nature, meaning a condition in which humans no longer feel connected to nature, either emotionally, spiritually, or practically.

In the second stanza, the sea, which is generally a symbol of longing and inner adventure, is presented as an ocean “walled in plastic.” In this stanza, anxiety is expressed. In the verse “but even on a line of the coast I cannot roll my longing/in a sea walled in plastic,” the once romantic sea now marks an ecological crisis caused by plastic waste pollution. In the concrete context of coastal ecology, such as on the islands of Ternate and Tidore and along the coast of Halmahera in North Maluku, the sea “walled in plastic” reflects an increasingly real reality. It means that the once clean coastline is now filled with household waste, single-use plastic packaging, and even ship waste. The sea, which has historically been a source of livelihood for fishermen and a spiritual space for coastal communities, has now lost its sanctity due to consumption and poor waste management. The phrase “I cannot roll my longing” serves as a metaphor for human longing for a clean sea, which is currently difficult to achieve because environmental pollution has altered the ecological landscape and the aesthetics of the coast. At various points along the coast of North Maluku, piles of plastic waste carried by currents and/or flowing from settlements in the highlands have accumulated, a symptom of the flow of waste that threatens coral reef ecosystems, marine life, and even the livelihoods of fishing communities. In the poem “Aku Ini,” the sea is no longer a calm inner refuge, but rather a mirror of a terrifying ecological wound born of human indifference.

In the repetition of the complaint in the third stanza, the river reveals the problem of the garbage-labyrinth, depicted as a source of life that is now dirty and no longer suitable for sustaining life. The metaphorical phrase “I neglected to plant trees, then the thick currents trap the garbage” illustrates human negligence towards environmental concerns, an attitude that transforms the river from a source of life to a garbage dump, rendering it an unhealthy place to sustain life. In an ecological context, especially in the inland areas of South Halmahera, Obi, and the surrounding areas, the river that was once clear and a primary source of clean water is now polluted by mining activities, illegal logging, and domestic waste disposal. The phrase “I neglected to plant trees” refers to the loss of vegetation in the upstream area, which leads to severe erosion and sedimentation. At the same time, “the thick currents trap the garbage” concretely depicts the reality of small rivers that are now full of mud, household waste, and inorganic waste. In this stanza, the river is no longer a source of life. However, it has become a waste channel that threatens public health and the sustainability of the freshwater ecosystem. Through the metaphor of the poem “Aku Ini,” the river serves as a signifier, namely a symbol of ecological damage caused by collective human negligence, including societal neglect, corporate negligence, and weak state oversight of activities that harm river basins.

Democracy, as a socio-political symbol, is presented as meaningless. In the final stanza, “even in a single piece of democracy, I cannot weave joy in words that have lost their face,” words lose their value because they become mere rhetoric (empty), statements that are not followed by actions that side with the people or nature. In the socio-political context of eastern Indonesia, including North Maluku, democracy often exists only in procedural form—elections take place, directed representatives are elected—but is not followed by real support for actions in the interests of the people, especially on ecological issues. The phrase “words that have lost their face” reflects the reality that many political promises related to environmental protection are not kept, for example, in the case of mining permits granted in customary areas and protected forests, without community consent. When local communities voice opposition to mining or deforestation, their aspirations are often ignored or silenced by law enforcement officials and civil servants. In this context, democracy becomes a symbol of a system that has lost its conscience, as it no longer accommodates society’s ecological aspirations but instead supports the exploitation of nature. The text, the poem “Aku Ini,” in this context reflects the loss of substance in political discourse: language no longer liberates and protects, but merely serves as a tool to justify policies that harm the earth.

Within the realm of natural representation and symbolism, this poem combines natural and social symbols to portray ecological damage and the human condition on the verge of a moral crisis. Through “the self,” modern humans are represented as individuals or groups who like to make promises, full of promises, but reluctant to take real action to protect the earth. Nature, which should be guarded, cared for, and protected as a form of respect, instead becomes a silent witness to the occurrence of destruction and indifference. The symbolism of the poem “Aku Ini” has inspired readers,

particularly in contemplation, to realise that love for nature cannot be expressed solely through words; it must also be demonstrated through concrete actions.

B. Criticism of Indifference

In the poem “Aku Ini,” diction such as “I cannot pick flowers,” “I cannot roll away my longing,” and “I neglect to plant trees” convey a sense of powerlessness or reluctance that leads to apathy caused by a loss of hope, an attitude fueled by the failure of great men who were expected to bring new hope to take concrete action to save the environment. Through “Aku Ini,” the poem critiques modern human culture, which lives in a global era characterised by excessive talk and rhetoric, but minimal action. This view is emphasised through the diction “democracy” and “words that have lost their face,” which reinforce the social critique that even the system that should represent the will of the people has lost its meaningful value and its primary nuances of meaning.

In the poem “Aku Ini,” each diction represents a painful ecological reality and human negligence in preserving nature. The phrase “I cannot pick flowers” signifies the damage that has occurred so that “I have lost the ability and motivation to enjoy the beauty of nature”; “I cannot roll my longing” symbolises the emotional disconnection (intimacy) between humans and nature. Meanwhile, “I neglected to plant trees” is an expression of honesty, an admission of negligence in environmental conservation actions. In this phase, these sentences reflect the character of humans who are more busy constructing verbal narratives than taking real action. The symbol of “democracy” and the critique of “words that have lost face” emphasise that ecological issues certainly do not stand alone. Ecological destruction is closely related to the decline of public ethics and the collapse of public trust in the social and political systems that supposedly guarantee the sustainability of living together in a shared space, namely, a peaceful nature.

The critique of indifference in the poem “Aku Ini” principally targets two groups: individuals and social and cultural structures that perpetuate the imbalance between discourse and action. The “I” as a signifier represents the figure of modern humanity, possessing symbolic awareness but weak and blunted in ecological responsibility. When words lose their meaning and actions fail to follow suit, the environmental crisis is further amplified. The phrase “I neglect planting trees” in this context is not merely a metaphor but a concrete depiction of the loss of human empathy for the regeneration process or for the protection of nature. This statement demonstrates that environmental damage is not solely the result of industrial activity but also stems from apathy and a weakening moral awareness of the need to preserve nature. As a form of critique, the poem “Aku Ini” serves as a stern rebuke to modern culture, which tends to worship discourse while neglecting concrete action—a form of ecological hypocrisy that exploits nature for the benefit of oligarchs or certain groups (Rauf et al., 2024b).

The poem “Aku Ini” is a sharp critique of the apathy of modern humans living in the era of globalisation, depicted through the lyrical voice of the self. Diction or phrases such as “I cannot pick flowers,” “I cannot roll up my longing,” and “I neglect to plant trees” serve as metaphors for humanity’s inability to enjoy, care for, and sustain nature. These expressions signify the loss of emotional intimacy with nature; the self not only feels disconnected from the beauty of the environment but also acknowledges its negligence in taking concrete action to preserve the ecosystem. This critique is emphasised through the symbols of “democracy” and “words that have lost their face,” words that indicate that the social and political systems have failed to fulfil their ecological responsibilities. Democracy, which should be a space for public participation for the common good, has instead lost its substance—the sense of democratic togetherness, promoted from the beginning, is merely empty rhetoric deliberately designed to trap, unaccompanied by concrete steps to preserve nature. In this context, Ibrahim’s poem, through its juxtaposition of ecological critique with socio-political critique, demonstrates that the environmental crisis is inextricably linked to the decline of public ethics and the collapse of public trust in power structures.

This attitude is evident in the “I,” whose actions symbolise modern humans who are aware of their consciousness but cannot take concrete action. The phrase “I neglect to plant trees” is not merely a metaphor, but a concrete reflection of moral failure and a loss of empathy for the natural regeneration process. Environmental damage, as depicted in this poem, is not only the result of industrial exploitation but also arises from a human attitude that worships words and discourse while rejecting ecological responsibility. Through the “I,” the poem “Aku Ini” not only rebukes individuals but also exposes the hypocrisy of modern culture. This culture exploits nature for the benefit of a small group (oligarchy) while disregarding the ecological suffering it causes.

C. Ecocentrism and Ecological Awareness

The poem “Aku Ini” radiates eco-centric values, namely, viewing nature not as an object to be exploited but as an equal subject. The emphasis on the loss and damage to nature indicates that the poet is not worshipping nature in a romantic, bombastic manner, but rather is voicing a truly critical ecological crisis. Ecological awareness is apparent through the irony and regret of “the I” in all stanzas, marked by the choice of the word “clever,” which represents modern humans who are always in discourse but minimal in real action. Eco-centric awareness in the poem “Aku Ini” is evident in the depiction of nature as an entity with life, feelings, and the right not to be harmed. In a series of stanzas, the poet depicts nature in two aesthetic orientations: the setting or resources, and nature as a body that is experiencing injury and pain due to human actions. Expressions such as “I neglected to plant trees” or “the sea has become a place to dump my failed longing” show three interrelated signs: environmental damage in physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The poet presents the human-nature relationship as broken—not due to ignorance, but rather to a deliberate disregard for ecological

responsibility. In the eco-centric perspective, Naess (1973) and Plumwood (2002) have positioned nature as a subject suffering due to human arrogance and a sense of superiority (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

This poem demonstrates the irony of a profound gap: modern humans in a globalised world often feel capable of explaining and controlling nature, yet, emotionally, they have lost their sense of intimacy. Words like “I embroider the dew,” “calling the sea,” and “departing the river” reflect the symbolic ability to touch or speak with nature, but all of this is merely rhetoric and empty talk. This symbolism suggests that the human relationship with nature is reduced to language rather than to action, discourse, or genuine concern. This irony reinforces the impression that humans have lost their intimacy and respect for nature as fellow creatures in the web of life.

The ecological awareness in the poem “Aku Ini” is demonstrated through regret and the “I” delay in realising the impact of the wounds inflicted on nature. This regret is felt in the nuance of a quiet confession that all the words ever spoken are not enough to heal the bare forests with gaping wounds, the seas filled with garbage, or the rivers that are lifeless from clogging with waste. This awareness is a form of critical reflection on the anthropocentric paradigm, namely, the positioning of humans as the centre of the universe.

The poem “Aku Ini” represents an eco-centric view in which the main axis of life (nature) is no longer positioned as a passive object to be exploited, but as a living subject with the right to be respected. This eco-centric value is reflected in the criticism of the damage and loss of nature, which is depicted not as romantic nostalgia, but as a sign of a real, critical ecological crisis. Ecological awareness is evident in the irony and regret of the “I” in almost all stanzas, particularly in the word “clever”—a satire on modern humans who are rich in discourse but poor in action. In this context, the poet presents nature as a living entity that experiences wounds and suffering due to human greed. Diction such as “I neglected to plant trees” or “the sea became a place to dump my failed longing” reveals three layers of wounds: physical (environmental damage), moral (negligence of responsibility), and spiritual (loss of intimacy with nature). This entity aligns with the eco-centric concept of Arne Naess and Plumwood, which posits that nature is an integral part of the network of life, equal to humans. In terms of description and argumentation, the poem “Aku Ini” serves as a rebuke to anthropocentric superiority that justifies the exploitation of nature in the name of progress.

V. CONCLUSION

The poem “Aku Ini” offers sharp, reflective ecological criticism. Through an ecocritical approach, this poem demonstrates that modern humans are not only clever at talking about nature but also neglectful of protecting and preserving it. In “Aku Ini,” nature is depicted as an entity wounded by the absence of concrete human action to care for it. The poem “Aku Ini” emphasises that language and symbols are insufficient means or markers of love for nature without a commitment to and concrete action to preserve the sustainability of life. An analysis of the poem “Aku Ini” demonstrates that literature is not merely a medium for aesthetic expression but also a tool for social criticism and ecological reflection. This poem presents a wounded ecological reality through irony, metaphor, and poignant symbolism, thereby touching readers’ ethical awareness of the environmental crisis. These findings have theoretical implications for strengthening the ecocritical approach in literary studies, positioning it not merely as a complement to textual analysis but rather as a more robust theoretical framework that is relevant and adaptive in facing the challenges of our time, particularly the climate crisis and environmental damage caused by modernisation and the exploitation of natural resources in North Maluku.

This article is a concrete step toward raising environmental awareness among the younger generation in North Maluku, especially among those majoring in literature. By studying ecocriticism, they will understand how literature can be used to promote environmental advocacy, helping them become environmental agents who will educate their relatives—who live around mining areas across almost all of Halmahera Island—about the prohibition on destroying nature and the call to preserve forest ecosystems to avoid natural disasters such as floods and landslides. We can give an example, such as what happened in 2023, when the Sagea River—located below Bokimaruru Cave, North Weda District, Central Halmahera Province—was polluted by mining waste generated by several mining companies operating around the river. The water of the Sagea River, which was originally clean, clear, and fresh, turned brown. As a result, indigenous communities experienced difficulties in obtaining clean water.

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