

GREEN ROMANTICISM: A PROBLEMATIC PORTRAYAL OF LOVE AND NATURE IN DAMOMO'S *KOLAM* THROUGH ECOCRITICISM STANDPOINT

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ABSTRACT

Is love natural or cultural? Can love be perfect in itself, or does it depend much on something outside itself? The research attempted to analyze the theme of interdependence, balance, and uneasiness in the relationship between a love that seemed more dominant and the nature that was often considered as merely the background of a story in Kolam, a collection of poems by Sapardi Djoko Damono. The goal of the research was to reveal the symbolic interdependence between nature and love where the very nature-love played a role as the subject per se, and these nature-oriented poems from Damono (though not always explicit) comprised the texts constructed culturally through literary study in ecocriticism perspective. Textual analysis was conducted through the works to expose the author's concerns, including romance, nature, and worries. Damono's poems had been proven to reveal the symbolic interdependence of romance and nature. The researcher analyzed 20 poems from Damono. The research result shows that through eco-sensitive reading—'an earth-centred approach to literary studies'—by positioning nature not only as the background, human's love story cannot in any way escape from its dependence on surrounding nature. Human romanticism can only be perfect when it is signified in its symbolic and, at the same time, problematic relationship with nature. As a whole, the poem collection has proven to equalize nature and culture, of love and nature as the subject per se of the poet's concern.

Keywords: green romanticism, problematic portrayal, love, nature, ecocriticism

INTRODUCTION

The research begins by regressing to two short yet long-lastingly remembered poems by Damono, *Aku Ingin* (I Want) and *Hujan Bulan Juni* (The June Rain), but in a different way of reading by omitting the whole words connected to nature. This reading practice highlights how the elements of nature are proven to be inseparable from the whole meaning of the poems.

Aku Ingin (1989)

*Aku ingin mencintaimu dengan sederhana:
dengan kata yang tak sempat diucapkan ---
kepada --- yang menjadikannya ---
Aku ingin mencintaimu dengan sederhana:*

*dengan isyarat yang tak sempat disampaikan ---
kepada ----- yang menjadikannya tiada*

I Want, translated by John. H. McGlynn

I want to love you simply:
in words not spoken
--- to --- which transforms it to ---
I want to love you simply:
in signs not expressed
--- to the --- which makes them evanesce

Hujan Bulan Juni (1989)

*tak ada yang lebih tabah
dari --- --- ---*

*dirahasiakannya --- rindunya
kepada --- --- itu*

*tak ada yang lebih bijak
dari --- --- ---
dihapusnya --- --- ---
yang ragu-ragu di --- itu*

*tak ada yang lebih arif
dari --- --- ---
dibiarkannya yang tak terucapkan
diserap --- --- --- itu*

The June Rain

Nothing is more steadfast
than the June rain
keeping its speck of longing in secrecy
to the blossomed tree

Nothing is wiser
than the June rain
wiping off the footprints
full of doubts in that avenue

Nothing is more sensible
than the June rain
letting go of unspoken words
absorbed by that blossomed tree roots

How is it different? It is quite obvious when omitting certain ‘nature’ words that the meaning—let alone the beauty—of the poems is blurred and curtailed, showing that the existence and maintenance of love and romanticism are unavoidably attached to something similar in essence out there: nature. The wood, tree flower and root, fire, ash, cloud, and rain, including June rain, are all elements and, most of all, a ‘process’ of a natural cycle that pricelessly contributes to the wholeness of the meaning of human romanticism: loving, longing, and in the process of becoming resolute, wise and discerning. Published both in 1989, these poems have interestingly juxtaposed romance and nature side by side. Thus, the research topic strongly indicates that nature plays an essential role in human culture, and romantic love life is no exception. Moreover, both poems show a crucial process in nature: the life cycle in the life ecosystem.

Twenty years later, Damono (2009) wrote a similar poem, still utilizing nature as a dominant part to metaphorically describe human love and care through natural phenomena such as fog, sunshine, cloud, hill, and rain. Damono seemed to empower nature to speak about human emotions and feelings, such as love and care, making use of the nature characteristics as disappearing, materializing, and showering.

51. *Seperti Kabut* (2009)

*aku akan menyayangimu
seperti kabut*

*yang raib di cahaya matahari
:
aku akan menjelma awan
hati-hati mendaki bukit
agar bisa menghujanimu
:
pada suatu hari baik nanti*

51. Like Fog (2009)

I will love you
like the fog
that is disappearing before the sunshine
:
I will turn into the cloud
carefully climbs the hill
as to be able to pour the rain on you
:
on a good day someday

The strength of the poem *Seperti Kabut* (the researcher’s translation) lies in using those natural elements to depict how the persona cares for his or her lover. It shows that human beings cannot detach themselves from nature in any aspect of their life, including the cyclic interaction between their life romance—their hopes and worries—and nature. Based on the theme raised in Damono’s mentioned poems, the research objective is to eco-sensitively read several poems in Damono’s *Kolam* to reveal similar uneasy and problematic relationships between human beings and nature in expressing their romantic feelings and emotions.

Sadly, Damono passed away on 19 July 2020 in Jakarta. Sarumpaet called Damono “a friend, teacher, literary expert, and a great writer...” and wrote *In Memoriam* saying,

“Shrouded in unease and silence, an already corona-stricken Indonesia has had to let go of this great poet with a heavy heart but with the consolation of reminiscing about his work and loyalty” (Sarumpaet, 2020).

Damono, one of a few Indonesian poets, has inspired many people through his poetry and other literary works regarding love and nature from an ecocriticism perspective.

The pioneers of ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, has simply defined ecocriticism: “What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). Bracke has highlighted that

“Ecocriticism is founded on the belief that literary criticism can somehow contribute to alleviating the environmental crisis, if only by raising awareness about human–nature relations” (Garrard, 2014).

Critically reading and analyzing the seemingly common texts with an ecocritical perspective may trigger awareness that humans naturally cannot be separated from nature and must coexist side by side with nature. Simply defined, ecocriticism is a critical reading of literary texts by focusing on the relationship between the texts and nature. Glotfelty has defined ecocriticism as

“...the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (Garrard, 2023).

Lousley in Garrard (2023) has recently provided a more comprehensive definition of ecocriticism related to its multidimensional aspects and aims:

“Ecocriticism describes and confronts the socially uneven encounters and entanglements of earthly living, from petro-capitalism to cancer stories to the poetry of bird song. As a political mode of literary and cultural analysis, ecocriticism aims to understand and intervene in the destruction and diminishment of living worlds. Ranging in its critical engagements across historical periods, cultural texts, and cultural formations, ecocriticism focuses on the aesthetic modes, social meanings, contexts, genealogies, and counterpoints of cultural practices that contribute to ecological ruination and resilience. A core promise is that environmental crises have social, cultural, affective, imaginative, and material dimensions”.

It covers such a complex reality of human earthly cultures and their relationship with the living nature. The crisis has colored this modern life of human-nature relationship along with the rapid change in the uncertainty of technology and human behaviors. Rigby and Rigby (2021) has highlighted this world as less livable, saying that

“This is undoubtedly the case for people today, who are struggling to orient themselves in the face of massive change and uncertainty on numerous fronts, as the weather grows weirder, wildlife dwindles and many places become strange or even unliveable”.

How romanticism inserts hopes and sympathies becomes relevant when put into ecopoetics in the middle of the crisis. The role of poetry in raising environmental issues is also significant, as McKusick (2020) has stated,

“In an era of impending threats to the global environment, the emerging discipline of ecocriticism is engaged in a vital re-vision of the fundamental task of poetry.”

It is stressed further that ecocriticism is one helpful tool for studying human beings' relationships to this complicated nature and cultural world through the study of ecosystems. He has quoted Wordsworth and Coleridge, who

“shared a common perception of the natural world as a dynamic ecosystem and a passionate commitment to the preservation of wild creatures and scenic areas.”

The position of poets and other fiction writers can be strategic in voicing the environmental issues through their creative works, especially in urban living, because urban ecocriticism

“examines how literary texts position the nonhuman nature of the city and explores strategies that can be used by writers to create new environmental imaginaries of cities in their narratives” (Bates, 2023).

To be more specific on poetry, when talking about the relationship between poetry (literary text) and green romanticism (nature), McKusick has used the term “romantic poetry as a literary ecosystem” to describe the intricate acquaintance comprising of coexisting synergy and separating opposition between exploitive-cultural human beings and fatalistic-natural environment. He has also stressed the significance of adopting a new way of perceiving environmental problems as seemingly natural consequences of cultural evolution have surpassed human DNA evolution

“Such chaotic and unstable interrelationships are well known to those who study the development of literary movements, and thus it may prove useful for our present purposes to posit the existence of Romantic poetry as a literary ecosystem, a vibrant community in which competition and synergy, exchange of ideas and flow of information, predators and prey, hosts and parasites, all coexist in the turbulent vortex of a shared intellectual environment. ... cultural evolution has been far more important than biological evolution, and the pace of changes in our conceptual repertoire has far outstripped the pace of changes in our DNA. In this very concrete sense, the old-fashioned study of the 'history of ideas' may be usefully re-conceived for our time as a study of the dynamics of intellectual ecosystems” (McKusick, 2020).

It is hard to deny that cultural activities are associated with destructive forces deposited on nature, while natural activities are associated with constructive

ones. Bertens talks of *the Lord of the Rings* about this, as follows: “The message is clear...: there is a close link between the natural and the good, just as there is a close link between unnatural environments and evil” (Bertens, 2024).

The problem of culture-nature distinction is one focus of ecocriticism, especially when deciding the area of inclusion or exclusion because nature and culture are not always clearly cut or easily separated. There is what people know as the grey area where both nature and culture belong to the same category. Barry (2017) has provided the following areas, moving from the purest (given materiality) nature to the most tainted (man-made) culture:

“Area one: ‘the wilderness’ (e.g., deserts, oceans, uninhabited continents); Area two: ‘the scenic sublime’ (e.g., forests, lakes, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls); Area three: ‘the countryside’ (e.g., hills, fields, woods); and Area four: ‘the domestic picturesque’ (e.g., parks, gardens, lanes)”.

The green schematic effort of ecocriticism starts from changing the perspective and awareness towards nature by signifying the true meaning of living in harmony with nature, of having an earth-centered approach in literary studies:

“Ecocriticism has a 'green' agenda, Ecocriticism began ... in consciousness-raising, in alerting us to the way in which our activities posed an ever greater threat to our natural environment and in making us think about what it means to live with rather than simply on the earth ... Ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies – to which we may now add cultural studies” (Bertens, 2024).

The ideal text then, according to Buell in Marland (2013), one of ecocriticism’s founding fathers, has the following features or standards.

“The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device, but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history; the human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest; human accountability (responsibility) to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation; and some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text”.

Texts should not fail to represent these needs to highlight the equal importance of nature and human culture. No human history can be detached from its natural context, and human beings must always consider the environment in fulfilling their interests, unseparated from ethical consideration in viewing the environment and signifying the meaning of

nature as a dynamic process, not merely as a static object, especially in relation to green romanticism. Ecocriticism allows

“a deeper understanding of how literature not only mirrors ecological realities but also has the potential to influence and inspire ecological consciousness and action... delves into the symbiotic relationship between literature and the natural world...that literary texts do more than merely depict nature; they actively engage with environmental issues, offering insights into humanity’s interconnectedness with the earth” (Tajane et al., 2024).

The symbiotic relationship also includes the idea of green romanticism, where human and nature are actually impacting each other. Green romanticism roots in Bate’s *Romantic Ecology*, first published in 1991, a reassessment of William Wordsworth’s pastoral tradition and human integration with nature in English literature, in which he has emphasized the inseparable connection between human romance and green earth or nature,

“The ‘Romantic ecology’ reverences the green earth because it recognizes that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without green things; it proclaims that there is ‘one life’ within us and abroad, that the earth is a single vast ecosystem which we destabilize at our peril... it is, in fact, an attempt to enable mankind the better to live in the material world by entering into harmony with the environment” (Bate, 2013).

Today, the discussion about green romanticism should shift from green villages and countryside to the crowded urban-metropolitan life where real environmental problems reside. Akhtar (2022) has put forward the need to return to nature,

“It’s time that humanity takes a lesson in Green language and returns to Nature, which is its only savior, ... to teach a lesson or two to the ignorant and egoistic human creed which is busy erecting and building its giant concrete jungles punctuated densely with flouting skyscrapers, gigantic shopping malls and sooty industrial establishments”.

The new paradigm should direct its attention to the mutual interdependence between human culture and nature dynamism, where nature is not merely a passive romantic background but also an active contributing agent to the meaning-making foreground of human romanticism.

There are some existing studies on Damono’s poetry collection, such as *Konsep Cinta pada Puisi-Puisi Karya Sapardi Djoko Damono: Analisis Semiotika Carles Sanders Pierce* (Love Concept in

Sapardi Djoko Damono's Poems: Semiotic Analysis of Carles Sanders Pierce) by Mustika and Isnaini (2021). They have concluded that

“the concept of love in the poems of Sapardi Djoko Damono is found in the level of diction, imagery, and language style. The concept of love found at the level of the structure becomes an important part of understanding the poem as a whole and interpreting the poems”.

Previously, Isnaini (2020) has also discussed the representation of Javanese Ideology in Damono's poems. It has shown

“an ideological representation of Sapardi Djoko Damono's poems covering the concept of Javanese human ideology on the concept of human birth, good relations with others, death, and a perfect human. These concepts represent the image of Javanese as a whole ...”.

Al Aziz and Mulyawati (2022) has also discussed the personification in *Kolam* and shown that

“57 data on personification figures are found in 25 poems. Personification figure of speech can reveal the meaning of poetry in the anthology of *Kolam* through a hermeneutical approach, which partly tells about topics related to death and daily life ...”.

Aprilia and Hidayanti (2023) have written *The Structural Analysis of Damono's 'Aku Ingin' (I Want)*, describing the physical structure and inner structure of the poetry. Further, Purba et al. (2024) have elaborated on Damono's poem *Hatiku Selembar Daun* (My Heart is a Leaf), highlighting insights and hidden meanings from the metaphors, symbolism, and connotations of the poem. However, there is no discussion yet on the topic of green romanticism in Damono's poems from an ecocritical perspective. Therefore, the research can contribute to the debate and discussion of Damono's rich poetries.

METHODS

The research applies library research through a deep textual analysis of the poems from an ecocritical perspective, focusing on poetic elements such as diction—the choice of everyday words about nature and human activities, character, perspective, symbol, personification, and metaphor. Thus, the method follows what Barry (2017) has suggested to eco-sensitively read 20 poems by Damono (out of 51) collected in *Kolam* (Pond) and re-approach the familiar texts with a new alertness of foregrounding nature's essential roles in human culture, including their romantic life. These 20 poems have green or nature and romance topics both literally and symbolically.

Thus, the research has an eco-centered reading of the following poems: *Bayangkan Seandainya* (1), *Pohon Belimbing* (2), *Kolam di Pekarangan, Awan Putih* (6), *Hari Ulang Tahun Perkawinan* (7), *Anak Kecil* (11), *Kota Kami* (12), *Secangkir Kopi* (15), *Pohon Rambat* (18), *Segalanya* (21), *Sonet 2* (23), *Sonet 3* (24), *Sonet 11* (32), *Sonet 13* (34), *Jejak Burung* (38), *Ketika Penghujan Tiba* (39), *Asap Pabrik* (41), *Hanya* (43), *Taman Kota* (46), and *Seperti kabut* (51). The numbers between brackets refer to the number of poems in the collection. The researcher provides English translations of most of the poems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are three interrelated topics that the researcher explores in the discussion: How nature harmony is supposed to be, how human romance gets its fruitful meaning only through its association with nature, and how worries are created when the harmony is teased. Although it is not easy to discuss the three separately—just like the grey area in the nature-culture focus of ecocriticism—the researcher attempts to scrutinize the issues from three clear and different standing points.

To imagine the harmony of nature with human culture inside the countryside is not difficult. However, that is not the case with the poems in this collection because the work deals a lot with the urban nature and human culture in the modern metropolitan world where factory smoke pollutes the whole air, traffic jams have created various new cultures, green trees and tranquil lakes have lost ideas as where to keep on, and ignorance has slowly overtaken human warmth and socialization. The question is then how is the ideal nature harmony supposed to be and explored in Damono's poems?

Damono uses a child's perspective and innocence to illustrate the harmony. Look at this line:

“*Anak kecil itu melihat sekuntum bunga mengembang,/ dan itu sudah cukup baginya. Bunga memang mengembang,/ hidup* (The little child sees a blooming flower bud,/ and that is enough already for her/him. Flower indeed blooms,/ alive)”.

It is clear that the child is happy with the flower, and it is enough for her/him. There is no intention to exploit the plant. He does not even want to know the relation of the sun with the plant and flower (of which each is part of a natural symbiotic relationship). Moreover, the child does not imagine himself/herself as a flower to strengthen the non-exploitive nature of the child toward nature.

The next nature harmony can be traced to *Ketika Penghujan Tiba* (When Rain Comes). This poem does not depict the worries (of floods) but the harmonious nature, seeing the rain as a blessing to the plant to grow new generations of plants caringly.

The harmony is obvious when the trees suddenly and symbolically long for the sunshine through chanting mist and shower of prayers. The only complaint is seen in nature dampness and soft thunder, but they do not spoil the process of tree regeneration. Look at the short poem:

"ketika penghujan tiba/ pohon-pohon mengenang/ matahari kemarau/ dengan melantunkan/ zikir kabut dan azan gerimis/ dan gumam lembab dan geludug/ : /ketika penghujan tiba/pohon-pohon sibuk merawat/ anak-anaknya. (when the rainy season comes/ the trees remember/the dry season sun/by enchanting/ fog dhikr and drizzle adhan/ and damp muttering and thunder/ : /when rainy season come/the trees are busy/ taking care of/ their saplings)".

The natural ecosystem and symbiotic harmony are explored in detail through the third poem, *Kolam di Pekarangan* (Pond in the Garden), (which seems to comprehensively represent the whole 51 poems—thus the title of the collection. The poem personifies ecosystem symbiosis, giving human qualities such as longing, understanding, knowing, doing pilgrimage, caring, thanking, and loving through three different angles which is marked by the choice of the leaf, the fish, and the pond water. They have their problematic relations, but overall they are in harmony with one another. This pond represents the last area of ecocriticism—the domestic picturesque—where human beings (e.g., the gardener as the owner of the pond) have interfered with nature with their culture. However, the stress is still put on the synchronization and interdependence among them through their natural struggles. Look at the following quote:

"Ia [air kolam] pun harus habis-habisan menyayangi ikan itu/ agar bisa terus-menerus meluncur dan menggoyanginya./ Air baru sebenar-benar air kalau ada yang terasa meluncur, kalau/ ada yang menggoyanginya, kalau ada yang berterima kasih karena/ bisa bernapas di dalamnya (It has to completely love the fishes/ as to be able to continuously slide and shake them./ The water will be truly water when there is something sliding, if/ there is something shaking it, if there is something thanking it as/ it can breathe inside it)".

This depiction of unconditional harmony is strengthened by the last two lines, marked by the diction *tanpa ibarat*, emphasizing the needless of any condition to live side by side in this world, meaning without condition and without parabolic requirement: */Ia kini dunia/ */ Tanpa ibarat./ (*He now is the world/ */ Without supposition./)

The unconditional relationship between nature and human beings also exists in poem number 18, *Pohon Rambat* (Vines). Despite the space limitation

of urban life, the wisteria has grown well and colored the environment. Most of all has appreciated the owner of the wisteria creeping web by indicating that the owner's effort is not in vain if the plant can keep growing in its limitation of space.

In the next topic, life can be so boring without referring to nature, even only through the imagination. This is the case with the first poem *Bayangkan Seandainya* (Imagine If). The poem metaphorically compares—through imagination—the human face (when standing in front of the mirror) to everyday nature such as the bird in the cloudy sky, spreading the wind beneath its wings, or the cloud witnessing the bird swooping down the city, or the rambutan tree that attracts the bird to perch on it. What will happen if the person standing in front of the mirror does not imagine anything, only staring at her or his face?

As mentioned in the introduction, human love and romanticism can only be meaningful when nature participates either directly or metaphorically. Love and romanticism are intricate areas covering both nature and culture with worries (to be discussed later) alongside. It is clear when reading Damono's poems eco-sensitively. There is a consistent use and reference to nature when romance is a topic of expression, showing that nature is an essential part of human culture in expressing romantic feelings and emotions. There are four themes traced in the poems relating to romance and nature: love, parting, memory, and prayer.

Firstly, love is imperfect without nature. This is evident in *Pohon Belimbing* (Starfruit Tree). There is an uneasy feeling described by the poet when the two personas chat about their love and its connection to the *belimbing wuluh* (*wuluh* sour starfruit) tree. The poem describes symbolically that the tree is wandering due to some reasons, and one of them is its inconvenience, though a bit, in growing in the persona's environment:

"Kau pernah bilang ia [belimbing] tidak begitu nyaman sebenarnya/ dipekarangan kita yang tak terurus dengan baik, juga karena/ konon ia tidak disukai rumput di sekitarnya yang bosan/ menerima buahnya berjatuhan dan membusuk karena kau/ jarang memetikinya. **Kau, kan, yang tak suka sayur asem?** (You have ever mentioned it actually does not feel so convenient/ in our yard that's not well-taken care of, also because/ it is not liked by the grass around which is bored/ of getting the fruits falling and rotten because you/ rarely pick them up. **You, don't like mixed sour cooked vegetables, right?**)".

The connection is then apparent—thus the next reason—when the persona finally expresses his understanding by saying "*Aku paham, cinta kita telah kau sayur selama ini tanpa belimbing wuluh....* (I understand, you have cooked our love so far without wuluh sour starfruit)". The readers may assume that their love is paralleled to *sayur asem* (mixed sour cooked vegetables) and can imagine how flavorless

the dish is without *belimbing wuluh* and how sour or perhaps tasteless their love is without understanding and openness (not prohibition and secret). Damono has intentionally bolded the subject 'you', the activity 'don't like' and the metaphor 'sour cooked vegetables' to stress the situation and his understanding of it.

Still connected to love, the other poem *Hari Ulang Tahun Perkawinan* (Wedding Anniversary), portrays how love means small attention to trivial everyday routine such as coffee or tea but meaningful with true care: *Kubikinkan teh apa kopi?* (Shall I prepare you tea or coffee?) This simple romance is previously explained through the depiction of a marriage anniversary that seems to trivialize time and number (read: celebration), and it is also through the account of how the couple passes their days in their memory, including having a chat and small talks within their social life. The poem climaxes in the real act of love by one of the couples who all of a sudden gets up and is ready to serve tea or coffee that will warm up their togetherness. Here, again, nature also participates in their simple yet warm situation when the persona says that during his/her being left for the coffee/tea, he/she instantly refers to his/her attention to nature:

“Pada hari ulang tahun kita itu yang mungkin/ saja kebetulan jatuh hari ini kau tiba-tiba bangkit dari bangku/ dan masuk rumah meninggalkanku sendirian di beranda/ memandang pohon mangga yang beberapa buahnya setiap/ malam berjatuhan dimakan codot. (On our birthday which probably/ was merely a coincidence that happened today, you suddenly rose from the bench/ and got inside the house, leaving me alone on the veranda/ staring at the mango tree of which fruits fell every/ night eaten by the bats.)”

The next poem is mainly related to romance, and it is quite similar to Damono's famous *Aku Ingin* (I Want). The poem is *Seperti Kabut* (Like Fog). As has been discussed in the introduction, the poem utilizes nature very much in expressing love. It apparently shows that love means sacrificing oneself (the disappearing mist under the sun). It is for the sake of giving (becoming a cloud and turning into rain to shower the lover). This expression is interesting because it describes a process peculiar to nature, that loving or caring is a process or progressing involving sacrificing, changing, and giving. Love is the mist, the cloud, and the rain.

Secondly, romance also involves parting. Some of the poems deal with this topic by using nature as a medium. *Awan Putih* (White Cloud) is a good medium for lovers to express their way of virtually meeting each other after a temporary farewell and a kind of consolation because, through this imagined cloud, they can promise each other how they will meet again. A similar situation is found in *Sonet 3* (Sonnet 3) and *Sonet 11* (Sonnet 11). A more in-depth parting (perhaps

forever) is revealed in *Segalanya* (Everything) where nature such as the scattered clouds (again), newly colored twilight, well, wind, ocean, and hill (and so many other detailed home accessories) is still used to console their feelings that those natural elements will still be there, befriending the one who is left away and relieving the one who is leaving forever. It finally strengthens the idea that nature is a part of someone's loyalty because nature is the true example of loyalty.

Thirdly, memory is also a part of human romance. *Jejak Burung* (Bird Footprint) explores how bird footprints can be a remembrance, though temporarily, of lovers who have spent time together. Here 'you', 'we' and 'nature' (bird, sky, seashore, sea, waves) integrate to signify the meaningfulness of meeting, parting and having sweet memory of the event.

Lastly, even in praying, people need nature to perfectly express their sincerity in accompanying someone with their unconditional prayer. This kind of prayer is analogous to the bird's sound from a bird, though invisible, the readers are sure of its existence, or the hissing sound of the wind, though the readers never see the wind. So, the bird, the wind, and the night are inseparable parts of the praying.

Garrard begins his chapters of ecocriticism book with *Beginnings: Pollution* (2023). It is a very typical problem for urban life, and Damono's poems are no exception. Out of 20 poems analyzed, nine deal with worries about nature exploitation. The uneasy feelings of Damono can be easily traced in some of the poems, although they are not always direct. The first poem *Bayangkan Seandainya* (Imagine If) for example slips this worry:

*“bayangkan seandainya yang kaulihat di cermin pagi ini/ bukan wajahmu tetapi **awan** yang menyaksikan burung itu/ menukik ke atas kota kita dan mengibas-ngibaskan **asap pabrik** dari/ bulu-bulunya (Imagine if the one that I look in the mirror this morning/ was not your face but **the cloud** that witnessed that bird/ nosediving onto our city and wagging its wings against the factory smoke through/ its feathers;)”*

The uneasy feeling is traced in the bolded words that signify the polluted city air, cloud, and sky. The supposedly likable face of the persona's partner is compared to the polluted cloud and sky due to the uncontrollable smoke from the city factories, thus creating uneasy feelings. Similar worries are obvious in *Sonet 3* (Sonnet 3):

*“Kudengar getar dari kota nun di sana,/ terpisah oleh jalan-jalan berdebu/ dan langit yang bagai rasa cemas./ Kata melenting di dinding-dinding/ kabin, tak berhak lepas/ dari kaca jendela yang tak lagi bening./ **Awan** yang di bawah bergumpal melata/tampaknya **tak siap lagi menjadi lambang/cinta kita**... (I heard the tremble from the faraway city/ separated by the dusty roads/ and the sky like worries./ Words*

were shrilling on the cabin walls/ having no right to get freed/ from the window glass of not clear anymore./ The **clouds** underneath clotted creeping/ seemingly **not ready anymore to be the symbol/ of our love.../)**".

A cloud is only ideal as a symbol of love if it is white, pure, and soft, which are none of the characteristics of the cloud described in *Sonet 3*. That is why the (polluted) cloud is not appropriate to be a love symbol anymore.

The worry about this polluted environment reaches its climax in its clearest and direct form in *Asap Pabrik* (Factory Smoke), where the poet questions philosophically in-depth human ignorance toward environmental issues. Although the folks know the consequences of having a polluted environment, they do not care by closing their eyes to the knowledge that they know the direct relationship between the polluted environment and their responsibilities as God-fearing folks. This poem is a satire, showing to some extent that people begin to feel desperate for this never-ending ignorance by putting forward that, finally, only God is the wisest judge. Have a look at this short yet strongly environmentally sensitive poem:

*asap pabrik di kota
membumbung, hanya Tuhan
yang tahu ke mana*

*hanya Tuhan yang tahu
kenapa ia membumbung
dari cerobong itu*

*hanya kita yang tak tahu
hubungan antara asap
dan Tuhan –*

*yang sama sekali tidak pernah
menyembunyikan apa pun
dari kita (Damono, 2009)*

(Factory smoke in the city
soaring, only God
knows where it is heading

only God knows
why it is soaring
from the chimney

only us who do not know
the relationship between smoke
and God—

who never at all
hides anything
from us)

The next worries cover problems of urban living such as traffic jams (particularly in Jakarta), no more space for relaxation in terms of spacious green places (read: city parks/gardens/lanes, lakes), or cultural traditions such as having enough time for coffee early

in the morning before work or afternoon social life. Traffic jam is touched in *Sonet 11* (Sonnet 11)

*“Aku sedang kena macet, Jakarta tetap seperti/
yang dulu juga/ ketika suatu sore buru-buru
kau kuantar ke stasiun. (I was in the middle of
a traffic jam, Jakarta is still like it used to be/
when one afternoon hurriedly I took you to the
station)”*.

This poem also contrasts Jakarta with Yogyakarta, though only through memory, where forest, rice field, fruit garden, and park are still a part of living. While *Kota Kami* (Our City) pictures the uneasy feelings of witnessing the unfriendly city development in ecocriticism perspective:

*“Kota kami telah menyaksikan gedung-gedung
dan pabrik-/ pabrik dibangun sampai tumpah-
ruah keluar dari pinggir-/ pinggirnya./ Dulu,
kata dongeng itu, pernah ada sebuah danau
agak di/ pinggirnya tapi ia tidak ingat lagi kapan
suasana yang mungkin/ bisa menenteramkan
hati itu tak lagi ada/...sehingga tidak ada lagi
burung yang suka singgah padanya. (Our city
has witnessed the buildings and/ factories built
up to/ the city edges/ Once upon a time, said the
fairytale, there was a lake a bit/ close to the edge
but it could not remember when the situation of
which could possibly calm the heart down was
no longer existed/...therefore there was no more
bird which loved to stop by it.)”*

It is clear that there are no more lakes that can soothe people's worries with tranquility. It is sad to witness the disappearance of this serenity which has caused the reluctance of the 'bird' to stay there.

Finally, the growth of the city is not in line with the space needed for workers to relax and escape from their workload, including the social and psychological space. Damono has realized the need for physical, psychological, and spiritual space in human connections to nature, as highlighted by Fadzil saying that,

*“The key conceptual point is that people are
not separate from nature, but rather, exist in
nature, as is discussed through an examination
of concepts such as the soul, spirit and sacred
spaces” (Yeow & Tham, 2024).*

This less humanized city can be traced in *Secangkir Kopi* (A Cup of Coffee) which depicts the reality that the city does not understand anymore why people need coffee when they leave for work or return home afterward. This shows the extreme business, hectic time, and lack of space or room for socialization:

*“...ketika berangkat dan pulang kerja di kota
yang semakin tidak/ bisa mengerti kenapa mesti
ada secangkir kopi yang tersedia di/ atas meja*

setiap pagi. (... when departing and returning home from work in the city that cannot/ understand why there must be a cup of coffee served on/ the table every morning)".

The sad situation is also felt in *Taman Kota* (City Park), where the persona can only imagine having and sitting in a city garden or park after a daylong and tiring work, getting on and off the city bus.

CONCLUSIONS

Through an eco-sensitive reading, Damono's poems have revealed the symbolic interdependence of romance and nature, of romance that can only be meaningful when nature takes part in it. Further, this romance-nature relationship is not always easy. However, it is problematic because human culture is also seen through the poems as not friendly to nature to some extent, especially in the typical life of urban people. Nature exploitation is an inseparable part of this modern and metropolitan life, causing the lack of space for escape and tranquility. As a whole, the poem collection has proved to equalize nature and culture, of love and nature as the subject per se of the poet's concern.

The research only focuses on Damono's poetic works. Hence, it will be interesting to compare and contrast Damono's works with other Indonesian poets or fiction authors of today's digital societies for further studies with a more complex coverage of the environmental issues in Indonesia. For instance, the researchers can compare Damono's works to other Indonesian poets, e.g. *Sajak Matahari* (The Sun Poetry) by W. S. Rendra, *Biru Bukit, Bukit Kelu* (Blue Hill, Blue Dumbness) or *Taman di Tengah Pulau Karang* (Garden in the the Coral Island) by Taufik Ismail, *Gunung Lokon* (Mount Lokon) by Acep Zamzam Noor, or *Lereng Merapi* (Merapi Slope) by Sitor Situmorang.

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