

# Rhetorics of Ecocriticality: The Ecomposition of the Selected Poems of Francis C. Macansantos

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## **abstract**

Based on Hubert Zapf's theory of the "Ecological Force" of Literature and Timothy Morton's theory of "Ambient Poetics", this study attempts to flesh out tropes of ecocriticism in the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos from his collection *Snail Fever: Poems of Two Decades* (2016). From these theories, Macansantos' selected poems are revealed to deploy the rhetorics of ecocriticality linking literature to a greater web of discourses concerning nature and the environment. In particular, discourses which are grounded in the interactions of the spheres of culture and nature become, in literary studies, the springboard for fleshing out ecocritical ranges and forces. This is further shown by expanding and thematically analyzing Dobrin and Weisser's concept of ecomposition or "literature's constitutive

existence.” Capitalizing on ecocomposition supported by ecomimesis, the study posits that the ecocomposition and ecological rhetoric of Macansantos’ selected poems take their cue from his ecocritical-creative stance from which place, situatedness, ambience, nature, and environment become discursive ecocritical categories. The analysis of the selected poems with strong ecological bent reveals a remarkable variety of ecocritical themes: the polarity transpiring between the anthropocentric and ecocentric domains of ecology, the precepts of shallow ecology that support the continuity of the anthropocene’s life through the resources of nature and the environment, the decentering of the anthropocene through the notion of deep ecology, the rhetorics of environmental debasement, and thoughts on sustainability as reflected in literature.

**Keywords:** Anthropocentrism, Biosphere, Ecology, Ecological Force of Literature, Ecocriticism



## Introducing Ecocriticism

In literary studies, the concepts of nature, wilderness, environment, ecological wisdom, and physical settings have played an important role in rendering literature a remarkable site for environmental discourse and as an avenue for examining the negotiation between the human and non-human domains. This very assumption falls under the literary lens called “ecocriticism”—a theory that attempts to “green” the endeavor of literary criticism made possible through its biocentric and geocentric approaches. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, two of the leading names in this area of specialization, in their anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, have defined it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment taking the literary endeavour from the perspective of ecology and its concomitant complexities. It takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (1996, xviii).

It proposes to project a literary world where the environmental concerns, ecological values underscoring geography and biography, life interactions and processes, movements of materials and energy, disasters, and biodiversity are rendered as core elements and key features in examining literature. Literature is viewed and imagined as a compound biosphere in which matter, physical phenomenon, theoretical ideas and discourses engage with each other as if it has one foot in literature and the other on land showing the anthropocene and the environment as broad problematic ecocritical categories (Glotfelty 1996, xix). The whole ecosphere becomes a springboard for literature to problematize on the

interconnections between nature and culture disclosing its complexity and duality.

As an avenue for “greening” the theoretical discourse in literature, it is essential to assert that the biosphere can also stand as a character on its own, being presented as an ecocritically interlacing narrative of alteration, aftermaths, chaos, and interconnectedness. Stuart Cooke, in an article titled *What’s an Ecologically Sensitive Poetics? Song, Breath, and Ecology in Southern Chile*, is right to argue that the ecology, when examined from the point of view of poetic consciousness, can offer many ways of articulating and presenting the very relations between its attendant elements (Cooke 2014, 92). The unrestrained environmental continents of literature are then furnished to become the avenue for scrutinizing the word “nature” and the notion of place as a distinct conception. Literature is seen to function both as a referent and a participant in the environmental condition (Potter 2005, 1). This paper aims to underscore the conceptualization of the ecomposition and ecological rhetoric of the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos dealing with nature and the environment from his collection *Snail Fever: Poems of Two Decades* (2016) leading to the perusal of the ecological foreground in his poems shaped by ecocentric and anthropocentric ideologies.

In fleshing out the ecomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos, the selected poems of Macansantos are chosen for their notable eco-poetic undertones. Such undertones reveal that the figuration of landscapes are presented not as merely symbols of representation as ascertained from the vista of place, situatedness, and ambiance, but also as metaphors and

emblems for the varying stances of the anthropocentric and ecocentric domains in the ecological foreground of his poems. It touches on the notions of connection/disconnection on an intimate ground with the ecological domain projected in the light of unity, diversity and disarray. In this regard, literature and the environment become a potent avenue for creating discourses on ecological and environmental shifts (Potter 2005, 2). The ecocritical approach utilized shifts the critical focus from social to natural and situates the subject as someone who is emplaced in the complexity of the biosphere—the totality of ecosystems and the very system that unifies all living beings and their attendant relationships with each other. In consonance with Vathana Fenn’s ecocritical concepts discussed in her essay *Roots in Ecocriticism*, the literary sense of place is not only viewed as a setting, but as an essential expression of bonding or even alienation from a specific natural context (Fenn 2005, 114). This makes the environment in literature a voluble domain to examine.

J. Scott Bryson, in his book titled *The West Side of Any Mountain: Place, Space, and Eco-poetry*, mentioned the earmarks that comprise the concept of eco-poetry. These earmarks posited by Bryson can also be seen as forming and comprising the foreground of Macansantos’ selected nature poems. To quote Bryson:

Eco-poetry is seen to be having an ecological and biocentric perspective recognizing the independent nature of the world. It also possesses a deep humility with regard to our

relationships with human and non-human natures. (2005, 82)

It is from such assumption in which one can see that one speaks not only from one's gendered, classed, and racialized position as affirmed by the various lenses of literary theory, but also from an ecologically situated body and perspective. It is in this regard whereby one can see that discourses in literature are not heavily dependent upon location and position, but also within specific ecological contexts, geographics, and natures. In dealing with the ecological foreground, ecomposition, and tropes of ecocriticism as reflected in the selected poems of Francis Macansantos, this study introduces the concept of ecomposition. In this paper, this concept is considered as a descriptive-analytical avenue for examining concepts and literacies from the perspective of ecology, bringing to light nature and environment as dominant characters and as interwoven narratives imbued with various ecocritical foregroundings in the poems of Macansantos.

### **On the Notion of Ecomposition**

In examining the environmental rhetoric and consciousness in the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos, this paper will capitalize on the so called "ecomposition." In their book *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*, Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin provided an operational definition of the term. To quote Weisser and Dobrin:

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Ecocomposition is an area of study which, at its core, places ecological thinking and ecocomposition in dialogue with one another in order to both consider the ecological properties of written discourse and the ways in which ecologies, environments, locations, places, and natures are discursively affected. That is to say, ecocomposition is about relationships; it is about the constitutive existence of writing and environment; it is about physical environment and constructed environment; it is about the production of written discourse and the relationship of that discourse to the places it encounters. (2001, 2)

The whole ecosphere is a resilient springboard for literature to problematize on the interconnections between nature and culture. This is the very endeavour of engaging with the action of “greening” literature as reflected in the selected poems of Macansantos, noteworthy for its resilient poetics of ambience and situatedness, a strong foundation for this paper to also underscore the ecological themes of biophilia, the shallow and deep ecologies, anthropocentrism, environmental debasement, and sustainability. In further exploring these themes, this paper gives the very affirmation that it is possible for literature to be preponderantly ecological and biocentric in its point of view (Bryson 2005, 82)—a testament to the field’s interdisciplinary aspect further

differentiating it from the earmarks offered by the Romantic movement and perspective in literature. Nature and the environment are considered as the forces directing and guiding literature (Relph 1981, 168).

In attempting to deduce the ecological and biocentric foreground of the selected poems of Francis C. Macansantos as guided by Dobrin and Weisser's concept of ecomposition, this paper attempts to answer the question that highlights the relationship between the human and non-human spheres bringing to light the various ecological concepts of the biosphere, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, ambiance and situatedness as discursive ecocritical categories:

- ❖ What is the ecological rhetoric and ecomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos as indicated by their metaphors, images, symbolisms, and nuances disclosing the environment and nature as an ecologically interweaving image of relation, disharmony and disconnectedness?

Taking the cue from Dobrin and Weisser's definition of ecomposition, the area of study and upshot of ecocriticism that centers on the "constitutive existence of writing and environment" underscoring the interdependent relationship of "written discourse" and "ecological thinking" (Dobrin and Weisser 2001, 2), Hubert Zapf's *Theory of the Ecological Force of Literature* and the *Theory of Ambient Poetics*, or simply called as *Ecomimesis Theory*, by Timothy Morton provide good lenses for highlighting the ecocritical metaphors, images, symbolisms and nuances that reveal the biosphere as a

threshold concept in literature. With Zapf and Morton's ecocritical notions situated in the foreground of the analysis, the tropes of ecocriticism can be further fleshed out in the selected poems of Macansantos.

### Zapf's Theory of the Ecological Force of Literature

Zapf's essay titled *Literature as an Ecological Force within Culture* from his critical work *Literature as Cultural Ecology*, asserts that literature possesses great dynamism as shown in its power to partake in all areas and aspects of the "discourses of the larger culture" (Zapf 2016, 27). It is in this assertion in which one can see how literature is rendered as a remarkable site of contestation—opening avenues for critically ruminating on and even challenging the beliefs and truth-claims of human life. The textual ecological potency of literature links literature to a greater web and system of discourses. Literature is rendered as a metamorphic and reframing site of exploration and reflection operating on both constructive and deconstructive heights. In this conception, literature becomes noteworthy for engaging other vistas and discourses. To quote Zapf:

Literature as an ecological force within culture operates as a sensorium and imaginative sounding-board for hidden conflicts, contradictions, traumas, and pathogenic structures of modern life and civilization; and as a source of constant creative renewal of language,

perception, imagination, and  
communication. (2016, 28)

The ecological force of literature underscores the transitory and dynamic foreground of literature. Such a foreground is not delineated by merely euphuistic or notional terms but through a kind of a “textual energy” which is defined by Zapf as a cardinal and constitutive reciprocal action between nature and culture. It is the very force that contravenes social and worldly conventions creating the discourses that focus on ecocritical energy ranges and forces. This situates such discourse in the fluid and invigorated processes of life and in “the ecocultural biotopes of language and the text” (Zapf 2016, 28). Grounded on the interactions of domains of culture and nature, literature becomes integrative and compositional reflecting the complexity of the ecocritical ranges and forces. Using this as assertion as groundwork, Zapf avers that literature becomes a viable textual site operating “in a high-energy field of open discursive space” obtaining its spontaneous and calculated creativity and concentration from the linkages transpiring between cultural and natural ecosystems. The “force”, or simply labeled as “vision” and “imaginativeness” when placed in the context of literature, goes beyond the social sphere as it can also exhibit the very elucidation and restatement of the natural into “cultural energies, elemental forces of life into the communicational, self-reflexive space of language, culture, and aesthetics” (Zapf 2016, 29). The ecological potency of literature discloses the idea that literature has opened various avenues and created many means when it comes to underscoring the reciprocal action between nature and

culture. This shows that literature can remarkably partake in the production of ecological knowledge.

### **Ecomimesis: Morton's Theory of Ambient Poetics**

Timothy Morton, in *The Art of Environmental Language* from his book *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, underscores the notions of “place referentiality” and “situatedness” as essential concepts to consider in fleshing out the rhetorical stance of ecological texts. In positing such concepts as a means of enkindling the so called “here and now of writing” (Morton 2007, 32), Morton offers the theory of ambient poetics or ecomimesis. This is a theory that invokes “emplacement” as opposed to the idea of “where one is coming from.” The person, dealing with the texts, primarily centers his prospect on the environment, and subsequently on the mobile elements such as the person or the anthropocene in the foreground.

Ecomimesis is a means of attesting to the ecological foreground of a literary work. In accordance with this, “situatedness” and “emplacement” become a form of rhetoric that is grounded on ambience and the encompassing world. It offers a narrative of relation with the circumambient whole of a multifaceted structure disclosing the regard for land or earth, place, water, time, wind, trees, and even the nation. Such an assertion show that its excursive stance complements its critical foregrounding. For the literary criticism of the environment to be deemed as accordingly analytical, it must capitalize on the concept of ecomimesis. To quote Morton:

Ecomimesis is a pressure point, crystallizing a vast and complex ideological network of beliefs, practices, and processes in and around the idea of the natural world. It is extraordinarily common, both in nature and in ecological criticism. (2007, 33)

Ambience is the very core of ecomimesis. For Morton, the term aids in rendering the literary discourse on ecology to be multifarious, vibrant and dual in nature moving in consonance with its goal to make antic and peculiar the idea and view on the environment. Ecomimesis is comprised of six principal components: *rendering, medial, timbral, Aeolian, tone* and the *re-mark* (Morton 2007, 34).

Rendering is the most fundamental goal of ambient poetics. It is concerned with creating a pursuant sense of atmosphere moving in relation with the idea of the “simulacrum” by Jean Baudrillard. For Morton, rendering “attempts to simulate reality itself” (2007, 35). It is through this rendering in which one can see that a present and unmediated world is projected by the literary text disclosing as well the realistic imaging of the environment with no illusions fomented by an augmentative framework of some sort.

The medial element is parallel with the concept of foregrounding. It centers on the atmosphere in which the message is transmitted (Morton 2007, 37). As ecomimesis works to underscore the environment, the medial is also being engaged. Ecomimesis makes one cognizant of the

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atmosphere encompassing the environment and the action transpiring. The medial can be regarded as the very “echo” that is situated in the background of the action.

The Aeolian is conceived to be synesthetic in nature. This is the element that provides the consecrated and transcendental intensity of ecomimesis—a means of echoing the environment through textuality. This element entails expanding one’s conceptuality and perception of the natural. The stance and outlook of a particular work augments its physicality. The Aeolian element guarantees that ambient poetics effects the “sound form” of the place that is being unfurled.

Ambience is an expansion of the space-time continuum in a work of art (Morton 2007, 43). It is with this assertion that Morton brings in his delineation of *tone*. For Morton, tone is equivalent to place resulting for him to posit the concept of the “ecozone” (2007, 43). The tone in ambient poetics refers to atmosphere and to the environmental space. It is fomented by the narrative forefront of ecomimesis. Tone is further concretized through pictorial description or ekphrasis.

*Re-mark* is the last element and is also considered as an essential and underlying property of ambient poetics. This the element that distinguishes the concepts of the *background* and *foreground* in an environmental work. Background refers to materiality and concreteness. The foreground is highlighted when a particular sound, concept, or notion is fleshed out in a narrative or text. Merging both background and foreground, re-mark becomes a sort of echo—a peculiar and uncommon mark to be considered as they make one conscious of nature and environmental signifiers embedded in an

environmental artwork. The logic of the re-mark makes one sentient to the idea that there is something to comprehend and realize in a work of art that deals with the complexity of nature and environment.

### **Establishing the Connection: On the Ecocritical Bond**

In ecocriticism, one does not examine nature as an entity on its own or from a one-sided point of view. The study of nature is rendered inclusive—one that includes the complexity of the physical environment projecting the bond between the human and non-human realms. This notion serves as the foundation by which one can further examine the “ecocritical bond” operating on the grounds of being biocentric and anthropocentric with a vantage point that is commiserative and radical respectively. The interconnection between the two creates a bond which is the basis of ecocriticism (Mishra 2016, 169). Utilizing a sympathetic vantage point in examining this bond, the concept of a “perfect ecology” is brought into the picture in which one can see the relation between the living and the non-living elements. In its generic sense and as an earmark of ecological consciousness, this affirms the balance and affinity between the natural and human spheres. It is through this assumption that the concept of nature is further delineated from the ecocritical perspective. It is imperative that this notion be raised as it provides the springboard for liberating nature writing from its conventional conception—one that shows an area of study that simply deals with looking into the

representation of nature in the text. Expanding these precepts, it must also reveal the “connection” of man with his environment, supporting the viewpoint that in ecocomposition, writing is deemed to be “constitutive” (Dobrin and Weisser 2001, 2).

The poem *Baguio Fog* discloses the ecological consciousness of maintaining the image of a “perfect ecology” or the idea of maintaining the bond between the human and the non-human domains. In the poem, the speaker, as seen in his apostrophe and in the poem’s “rendering” and “foreground”, incites the power of nature symbolized by the “strange” and “nudging” “fog” and how it can reinvigorate his wearied predilection. The “sense of commitment” (Buell 1995, 430) imbued to this ecocritical approach on nature is corroborative of the notion that the “human” and the “natural” live in “such a harmony that none dominates or destroys the other” (Suresh 2012, 147). The interactivity between the two elements, particularly that of the human and the non-human, underscores the emotive dimension and aspect of the poem:

What is this privacy  
 We share, moist-lipped,  
 Eyed? You seize me  
 By the muffler,  
 By the heart,  
 Me, a private denizen (Macansantos  
 2016, 1)

The apostrophe in this poem espouses the idea of interconnection—an affirmation of what Lawrence Buell

calls as “cognitive biophilia.” The innate tendency revealed by the kind of “privacy” that the speaker shares with nature or his environment projects the interactive and interpersonal form of ecological thought and consciousness. Love and affection with one’s environment serve as the basis of this “biophilia”. In consonance with what Gregory Bateson said in *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, this ecological consciousness and its attendant relational principles entails the act of sensing and detecting configurations in the various provinces of the environmental domain (2007, 2). The center of this pooled predicates is stated in the last line of the poem:

This hushed presence, I  
 Am immersed  
 In this immensity  
 Of an embrace,  
 Precipitately blessed,  
 So many times  
 At once  
 Reborn (Macansantos 2016, 1).

The relational precept of ecological consciousness is in contrast with the ecocentric conception of the poem *In My Garden*. Examining the ecocritical bond from a twofold perspective, the poem *In My Garden* projects the image of the speaker finding recluse in his garden, deemed as symbolic of “nature” in the poem, and at the same declaring his mawkish melancholy emanating from his anthropocentric nature and mindset. The emotive conception that can be deduced from the speaker’s

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disposition as reflected in the first line of the poem: “I swear, nothing loves me here” reveals the contempt of himself juxtaposed to the “garden” that “is all wealth.” As a sort of wealth and armament, the poem’s pictorial description espouses an image of nature that is regenerative and edifying as the “trees and shrubs” provide a “screen” from “the sun at random.” From such a dualistic interpretation, the foreground of the poem, in consonance with the subject’s perception of the natural, professes the ecocritical foundation of the “anthropocentric” moving in opposition with the “biocentric.” The first stanza of the poem supports this notion:

I swear, nothing loves me here.  
 And yet I am at peace—even under  
 that vine  
 That seems to spring at me from the  
 limb of a tree,  
 But had coiled around the branch  
 Before it could make its point,  
 An admonition that is best well-taken,  
 With no malice, at all, presumed  
 (Macansantos 2016, 61).

The repercussions of anthropocentrism is seen asserted in the first line of the poem and in the “coiled limb” of the tree—taken not as an instance of self-pruning but as a metaphor for the tree already starting to lose its vitality which the speaker takes as an “admonition” without biased and wrongful intentions. The pronouncement of the speaker in the first line of the

poem is a testament as to how the “biocentric” decenters the “anthropocentric” character and disposition of humans. The first stanza of this poem encompasses two notions of anthropocentrism. The first is seen on the part of the speaker declaring his “sentimentalizing” of the peculiar pacification that he is acquiring from “under the vine,” and from this sentimental dejection emanates the idea of the “ecocentric” that decenters the “anthropocentric” vision because of his actions and its attendant “dominant civilizational reality-systems” (Zapf 2016, 104). The poem reveals over again the dangers of this anthropocentric consciousness as supported by the “carcass of an animal who wandered in” and the neglectful gardener who is not cognizant of the business of “reaching sunlight” or establishing a strong affinity with nature that results to the interrogation of the notion of “perfect ecology.” Supporting the poem’s biocentric undertone, the last stanza of the poem provides a sort of a “counter” to the tendencies and coercion of domesticating, violating, and symphonizing nature with the anthropocentric eye and will-power:

Yet this garden is all wealth, all  
generosity—  
Perspective, even: A carpet-ride  
That crosses the sky by day, by night—  
With grass, leaf, and flower the flag I  
clip  
And trim and swear by. Not love but  
pure constancy  
That I admire but cannot make my  
own (Macansantos 2016, 61).

The profusions and prosperousness of the “garden” is considered as the ecocentric domain’s counter to the anthropocentric ideology. In this regard, the essence of the anthropocene is seen as to be defined by its association with the “nonhuman other” (Zapf 2016, 110). In accordance with the “re-mark” and “tone” of the poem, the figuration of the garden in the poem, on one hand, shows the superlative revelation of the ecocentric vision providing a kind of a cradle to the anthropocentric subject. On the other hand, the ecocentric decentering power of the “garden” typified by “wealth”, “generosity”, “perspective” underscores the dissipation of the anthropocentric narrator. With the poem acting as a sort of a “sensorium”, the affluence of the garden is a signifier of the imaginative counter to the anthropocentric hubris.

### **Who are the Life Forms of Value?: The Shallow Shades of Ecology**

A fundamentally anthropocentric point of view is associated with the concept of shallow ecology. The anthropocentric mindset discloses the idea that humans are the masters and controllers—the think tanks that usher in the methodical and efficient thinking concerning sustainability and continuity. The anthropocene can use nature’s resources to maintain the continuity of its life. This notion of instrumentality is upheld by the poem *Fisherman’s Sonnet*. The “timbral” and “Aeolian” earmarks of the poem project the utilitarianism of the environment espousing the idea that the anthropocentric subjects are

the ones that benefit from this shade of ecological consciousness. The images of the father and son conducting their quotidian affair of fishing aver the foreground of taking on a pragmatic approach towards the environment as a means of advocating for the sustainment of the anthropocentric subject at present and for future generations. The fishing activity in the poem is reflective of the anthropocene's consumerist agenda and attitudes towards nature:

As the banca lolled on the water, we  
waited,  
Father and I, for the tardy fish to bite.  
The sea, rolling out of its rim and sight  
Counseled                   patience—indeed,  
exaggerated.  
The sun hurt my skin, my eyes, but  
Father seemed elated.  
Likely, he chose that day to set things  
right.  
His patience with the fish, with me,  
held us tight  
In a fishing-line bind that all but  
lacerated (Macansantos 2016, 6).

The fishing activity of the anthropocentric subjects in the poem, particularly the father and the son, situates them as the “life forms of value” in the octave of the sonnet. As shown by the “elation” of the father as he conducts the activity of fishing, the “counseled patience” of the father is indicative of the fact that he knows how to interactively deal with sphere of place (the sea in the

poem) that he is emplaced in. As anthropocentric subjects, they are the representative of culture dependent on nature for their survival. The anthropocentric medial of the poem underscores the mind that is situated in what Sergio Manghi calls as the “self-generating grammar of living processes” (2002, xi). With the father and son dependent on nature, human interests are the only things deemed essential. Their “consumption-oriented values” are further shown in the following lines (Drengson 2012):

The rod he was wont to wield had  
sprung a line  
Tipped with something I could  
only guess.  
Whatever it was, I suspected a  
hook (Macansantos 2016, 6).

The father holding a hook flaunts the image of the consumerist disposition of the father and son’s cultural emplacement. They become the bearers of value in an anthropocentric world. The “grammar of living processes” (Manghi 2002, xi) is both understood by the father and son in the sonnet. The activity of fishing discloses the shallow shades of ecocomposition because the sonnet remarkably shows how the anthropocentric ideology of the subjects (father and son) reveal how they establish the social circuit of communication when it comes to dealing with nature and in sustaining the anthropocentric life-forms of value—reflective of the notion that they both process, balance, maintain and drive the survival and evolution of their anthropocentric world.

In fleshing out the shallow shades of ecology, it is remarkable to note that the shallow undertones of ecology in the poem *Fisherman's Sonnet* establish a strong link with the poem titled *Fish*. We see how the anthropocene's disposition provides a new imaging to the monolithic view on "nature. In *Fish*, the opposition between nature and culture is further upheld in as one can see the anthropocentric subjects working to have the treasures of the sea "dredged" for them to be raised in "expectant joy". The discourse of the anthropocene can be seen to have unsettled the equilibrium of the ecosystem. From a shallow ecological perspective, the concept of "nature" no longer operates on a undiversified perspective as espoused by the ecocentric vista and natural ecology. The anthropocene and their cultural histories have effected and constructed its radical and manifold foregrounding. As "man enters the ecological scene, he markedly introduces the super-organic factor of his culture" (Steward 1955, 323). The pictorial description of the fishes in the poem is an asseveration of the anthropocene's humanistic magnitude:

They had flapped about, crimsonly  
 iridescent,  
 Like rebel flags on the boat's hull-floor.  
 Some rippled their sinuous quicksilver,  
 Some zigzagged a hopeless vacant  
 getaway.  
*No water, no water to breathe*, in horror  
 declared  
 The fish-eyes, mouths agape gasping  
 for water,

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Taking in the treacherous air, instead—  
 Oh too much air, filling up the body  
 with nothing (Macansantos 2016, 85).

Using the notion of the “tone” in highlighting the ecomimetic shade of the poem, the fishes are seen personified as captives experiencing horrible torments by the anthropocentric subjects. Man’s nature in this poem moves in accordance with authority, power, control and hierarchy. Cultural ecology underscores this relational stance between the culture (the anthropocentric subjects weightily dredging the treasures of the sea”) and nature (the tormented fishes moving like rebel flags at the feet of nature’s master) further affirming their despondent state:

But death, the loss of motion, did not  
 change the fish.  
 Under the ruthless afternoon sun the  
 catch  
 Refused to look like they had come  
 From the dark depths of the sea. Their  
 blues  
 Were a jewel version of the cloudless  
 sky,  
 Their reds richer than the sun’s  
 vehemence.  
 Death rigorously recorded, mimicked  
 Each final swerve toward an imagined  
 refuge (Macansantos 2016, 85)

When examined from the perspective of the shallow shades of ecomposition and ecology, the first two

stanzas of the poem strongly conveys the notion of what Hubert Zapf calls as “cultural ecology” (Zapf 2016, 86). As reflected in the poem, this idea of the cultural ecology unveils the two broad notions of “connectivity” and “difference.” Through the fishermen conducting the activity and livelihood of fishing, the poem makes one aware of culture’s evolution and history. Such a twofold relation (connectivity and difference) is reflective of the idea that the human domain greatly benefits from the non-human domain. One sees the exploitative and consumptive nature of the anthropocene affirmed in the last two stanzas of the poem:

But oh the tide, rising, of expectant joy!

### III

Fish steaks exploded in the mouth of  
 fragrance  
 That resonated down the corridors of  
 taste  
 And rose, reached up the mouth-roof  
 and shot up to the head  
 Somewhat like wine does, directly up  
 to the dome, the sky  
 Opening in a flower, a dawn.

The treasures of the sea had been  
 dredged,  
 And now were raised, lifted up to  
 behold,

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And as the chambers of the body were  
filled,  
Newly enriched, the fullness buoyed  
us,  
We breathed surprisingly light,  
As though afloat on an enormous sea  
within (Macansantos 2016, 86).

As shown by the consumerist orientation of the human subjects in the poem, the anthropocentric context moves in relation with the idea of physiocentric ideology in which nature serves as an impetus for survival and a bringer of well-being as symbolized by the dying image of the fishes in the poem. These dynamics and politics of the two-fold relation in ecology are part and parcel of the “cultural project” (Bohme and Bohme 1996). If this “dredging” is taken on greater heights on the part of the anthropocentric subjects, the result is the culturalist diminution of nature and the environment and its attendant instrumentality deemed as vital for the anthropocene.

The poems *Fisberman’s Sonnet* and *Fish* avow the pragmatic approach of the worldview of the anthropocentric sphere. Such an anthropocentric take on humanism does not take into consideration the intrinsic value of nature and the environment which can be interpreted from a radical mindset. Put simply, the shallow shades of ecology in these two poems of Macansantos show the cultural decrement of nature taking its very cue from “physiocentric interests” of anthropocentric humanism. The shallow shades of these poems of Macansantos place man at the center of the

biosphere with him possessing a disposition that is not mindful of the intrinsic value of every element of nature or the environment.

## Displacing the Anthropocene: The Deep Shades of Ecology

In ecocritical discourse, the environment is also endowed with the power to decenter the human subject through the precepts of deep ecology. Deep ecology goes beyond the mere idea of treating nature as a kind of a bountiful banquet for the anthropocentric domain—one that is very much open for humanism’s exploitation. As a sort of a counter-discourse to the diminution and paralysis of nature, the poems *No Random Bird* and *Wild America* vividly project the reductionist practices of the civilization anthropocentric systems juxtaposed to the idea that such systems and schemes are very much immoderate and extravagant, reducing the very diversity of life.

The poem *No Random Bird* underscores the magnitude of the presence of the anthropocene’s excessive diminutive activities that devalues the environment. Opposing shallow ecology, this is concerned with an environmental ethic that upholds the intrinsic value of the environment. The titular *No Random Bird* avers this mandatory and profound regard for the environment. In the poem, one must not regard the image of the bird as mere “random” disclosing disregard for nature’s creatures. This bird being referred to in the poem also has its own intuitively clear and obvious value axiom (Naess 1973, 96). In the poem, nature is portrayed

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as already destroyed by anthropocentric undertakings and already decentered by its cultural-civilizational agendas. The presence of the “green thumb friend” in the poem is a powerful re-mark of the earmarks of deep ecology particularly that of protectionism and conservationism:

Two years since the guava tree,  
 Its trunk dead, its leaves sun-charred  
 And curled up into little beggared-  
 hands,  
 Was felled for mercy’s sake.

This year, a green thumb friend,  
 Knowing the tree was missed,  
 Came with a gift of sapling  
 Hardly shoulder-high,  
 Still too young to bear  
 Even the lightest perch (Macansantos  
 2016, 40).

In the light of the deep ecocomposition of this particular poem, it can be inferred that the notion of “sentience” will not suffice when it comes to establishing an affinity with nature. It must encompass as well the very assumption of “supernatural intimacy and holism” (Devall and Session 1985). This image of the “green thumb friend” is a potent means of unsettling the one-sided view of the anthropocentric discourse in ecological thought. The poem is remarkable for its high romanticism of the intrinsic value of nature. This is powerfully revealed by the speaker’s reflection and yearning to see the past which for him is now only an “apparition”. This

is the lamentation of the fated speaker in the poem upon seeing the bird patiently waiting to experience the familiar sensation of the tree providing shelter and rest to the bird's wearied body:

The pole is bamboo—  
Slim but season-dried-tough and  
sheeny.  
The bird, a veteran of flights,  
Back after a long time,  
Perhaps from way across  
The West Philippine Sea,  
Knows it is a mere pole,  
And sits on its tip, silently, head bent,  
Watching the apparition of a tree,  
Waiting for it to grow (Macansantos  
2016, 41).

From the poem's tone, the speaker recognizes that he is also responsible for the image of the tree now becoming an apparition resulting for the bird to be devoid of a home or resting place. This is the result of the anthropocene's consumptionist approach towards the environment. The lamentation is a strong earmark of deep ecology. The speaker has "returned to a kind of an ancient scenery" and as an anthropocentric element, he is part and parcel of this environmental conundrum. The epiphany and the identification of the speaker with the apparition of a beautiful nature is an indication that the speaker sees not merely the instrumentality of the environment but its value and sacredness. It is essential to note in this poem how the anthropocene and the

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environment link with each other recognizing their similarities when it comes to their valued stances regardless of being human or nonhuman:

All the same,  
We look quite like a picture,  
Bird, tree, and I—  
Bird and I equal in vigil,  
In the ache to protect  
Not just this seeming wraith,  
This curious resurgence,  
But also what it evokes:  
The ineffable presence of the former  
tree (Macansantos 2016, 42).

The excessive anthropocentric mindset of the speaker is the impetus for this reflection and identification with the devastated environment in the poem. As reflected in the lament of the speaker, the regard for the environment was not guided by the deep ecological hallmarks of cooperation, collective action and coexistence. Using the concepts of Arne Naess, it can be deduced that such a re-mark in the poem is the very repercussion of not advocating the ecological precept of “live and let live” (1973, 96). Leaning on the concepts from Arne Naess, the repercussions of this sense of nostalgia in the poem entails reorientation and the redirection of cultural and historical undertakings of the anthropocene. It is through this particular redirection in which “ecosophy” (harmony or equilibrium) can be achieved in the ecological perspective (Naess 1973, 99).

The poem *Wild America* provides support to this notion of equilibrium through the discourse on animals. It is essential to note here that animals are also considered part and parcel of the discourse of ecological literary criticism as supported by Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism* (2012). The principle of ecological egalitarianism is further expounded through the representation of the animals in the poem “Wild America.” The poem affirms what Peter Singer calls “speciesism” which is synonymous with the idea of thralldom (Singer 1983, qtd. in Garrard 2012, 146). In the poem, the workings of the anthropocene are once again conveyed to us as revealed by the situation of the animals in the zoo:

At the zoo the children stare  
 At stone-bored tigers.  
 In the late spring heat,  
 They pet the dusty lambs  
 That stink to high heaven.  
 Cats from various continents  
 Prowl in their own space,  
 Making their own orbits.  
 Lying on his back, half-asleep,  
 The king of beasts  
 Has all of his underbody exposed  
 (Macansantos 2016, 31)

The animals are considered as essential animated elements of nature. In ecocritical discourse, these animals contribute to the affluence and heterogeneity of the environment. The actions of the animals indicate that

they are incarcerated in a place not suitable for their peculiar natures. They are regarded as mere spectacles—symbols of entertainment for the children—”speciesism” at its finest. The plight of the animals in the poem affirms the violation of the edict of utilitarian equality as it states that every living being is eligible to moral consideration. The incarceration of the animals in the poem becomes similar with the thought of slavery—an asseveration of what Naess calls the “master-slave role” (1973, 96).

This is where the poem brings forth the notion of environmental ethics in connection with deep ecology. This is in connection with the idea of placing and emphasizing ethical consideration for all non-human elements. In accordance with the re-mark of the poem and its ethical stance, the poem’s notion of deep ecology underscores the importance of regaining the agency and essence of animals which is disregarded by the dominance of the culture over the nature element. Reflective of deep ecology, the presentation of the animals calls for the utmost revision of the anthropocentric worldview and the formulaic opposition of culture and nature.

### **The Rhetorics of Environmental Debasement**

According to Greg Garrard, the scrutiny of nature’s defilement is considered to be one of the major concerns of ecocritics (2012, 10). In ecocriticism, the cultural domain is considered to be a part of this picture of degradation. The anthropocene is regarded to be as a threshold and powerful concept as it is the bringer of environmental pollution and destruction. These are the issues that are summatively termed as “eco-injustice.”

Coming from the point of view of this environmental degradation, it is essential to note that the concepts of “ecosystemic balance and harmony” are to be rendered as problematic categories. The common trope that one can see in these selected poems is the notion of loss of biodiversity—or the narratives of grand environmental endism as mentioned by Carolyn Merchant in her examination of the ecocritical literatures produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (The Conversation 2013).

In the poem *Indian Fall*, we see the speaker faced with two scenarios in his mind. The first projects the forest in its glory typified by the images of the trees as “fair-haired boys” and “fair-haired girls” further animated by their “blazing blonde, deep-red, rust-brown” chromaticity of nature. Emblematic of the natural order, it affirms what Aldo Leopold calls as the “beauty of the biotic community” (1989, 162). This is the stability and symmetry of nature’s beauty and glory. However, this imagining and illusion of nature’s beauty is tentative as the speaker in the poem engages in intrapersonal communication regarding his role in unsettling this beauty of nature:

But what should I fear  
From faces that look like mine:  
Darkly luminous in the water?

Sometimes, shadows seem to move  
under my feet,  
And I feel awkward, worried by the  
notion

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That I am treading holy ground  
(Macansantos 2016, 25).

The anthropocene is again seen as a central force that brings in the debasement of the environment. The speaker is cognizant of his disposition as seen in his affirmation that he is “treading holy ground” symbolic of the environment’s sacredness. He is the conscious element that will bring in the destruction of his environment’s ecosystemic balance. The loss of the variability of life on Earth is represented to us by the degradation of the forest and its concomitant dynamic elements. The disturbance of the harmonistic views on the forest is clearly made manifest by the remarkable elements of “technological civilization” (Zapf 2016, 140):

Their hair, bones, blood, and flesh,  
Over time, and with the help of human hands,  
Have been kneaded into the basic loom.  
Over all, asphalt and concrete,  
And trimmed lawns form a seal, a tomb,  
With which to bury their memory (Macansantos  
2016, 26).

In these lines from the poem, the line “hair, bones, blood, and flesh” refers to the elements that comprise biodiversity, the variability and variety of life on Earth. With the consumerist and radical work of the “human hands”, this variety of life is slowly “kneaded into the basic loom”—the loom of anthropocentric civilization and advancement. This is a strong image of chaos in this poem. Such a chaos-oriented vision of ecology is the

radical reductionism and endism of the nature. The turbulent nature of man is projected as the driving force for instability and imbalance and for nature being thrown in a constant state of deterioration. The workings of anthropocentrism are clearly shown in these lines from the poem:

Only with a reconquering imagination  
 Can I pull the beams apart, dump the  
 bridges  
 Into the ocean, demolish the pretty  
 towns  
 So that the forests can reemerge, and  
 the call of birds  
 Rise with the chorus of the living tribes  
 (Macansantos 2016, 26).

These lines disclose the horrors of deforestation. The forest is destroyed for the purpose of urbanism, commercialism, and civilization as supported by the images of “pretty towns, “bridges” and interconnected “beams”. The image of nature as a proportionate and poised entity is nothing but a proactive projection of man and his decentering ideologies. This is the image of a “betrayed Eden” as posited by Lawrence Buell (1995, 37). The subversiveness is the result of civilizing hubris of the anthropocentric space. With the debasement achieved through the activity of deforestation, this depiction of chaos and defilement spews forth from the poem the concept of “kalliphobia” as mentioned by Arthur C. Danto in the article *Kalliphobia in Contemporary Art* (2003). This is the concept that deals with the abuse of beauty

and stability of nature (quoted in Zapf 2016, 140). In this regard, the poem functions as a kind of “sensorium” in projecting to us the very debasement of nature emanating from cultural radicalism and disregard of the principles espoused by deep ecology. The romantic discourse is part and parcel of this dirge concerning nature’s beauty and glory in the past. The elements of civilization, specifically that of the “anthropocentric socio-political order” (Zapf 2016, 147), have severely decentered the environment’s compelling semiosis. The speaker in the poem recognizes the consequences of his workings of debasement as seen in his personification of the voiceless and bygone land:

With nothing but an echo.  
 The land has lost its echo,  
 And no one but a fool  
 Would lie down now as they did then,  
 Pressing ear to sod  
 For what it had to say.  
 Brick, steel, and cement,  
 Are pure dead-weight,  
 Deader than the land they have killed  
 (Macansantos 2016, 26).

“Brick, steel, and cement” are symbolic of the debasing power of the citified and industrialized domain destroying nature—a retroactive exposition of man’s turbulent and chaotic world. The holistic view of environmental degradation is given to us by the poem *Yakal, The Goldenrod*. This poem discloses the noxious discourse that persistently destroys the environment. The anthropocentric elements notable in the poem show the

confluence of the horrors of devastation. We see a world with no refuge from the anthropocene's toxic penetration (Carson 2002, 38). In the poem, Papa, Uncle Kinny and the speaker are regarded as skilled loggers—destroyers of the “shorea astylosa”, or prominently known in the Philippines as native tree “yakal”. Coming from Jeremy Bentham’s “principle of utility”, the tree is known for its utility in providing high durability in high level of construction activities, useful in the construction of wharves and bridges in particular. The three destroy the yakal tree which is presented “like a convict calloused to beatings, tormenting them with suspicion”—a great simile for the activity of deforestation. In this poem, the concept of place is no longer deemed as a “mutualistic category” as shown by the debasement committed by the human subjects. The intrinsic value of the yakal sustains the inherent and persuasive worth of the anthropocene. The debasement in the poem is an affirmation of the alarming “conquest of space” (Garrard 2012, 15). The poem shows this particular kind of conquest:

Shaven smooth and rootless, it became, by itself,  
 The golden, secret pillar of a house of wood  
 I grew to early manhood in, the primary root  
 That never rusted, and rested so well under the  
 earth  
 You could forget it—it was always there,  
 anyway, earth-clenched.

The house is gone—where it once stood  
 Is a bank of commerce built of steel and  
 concrete (Macansantos 2016, 92-93).

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The convergence of the “anthropocentric utilitarianism” in the poem is the complete picture for the world slowly transitioning into a futurist and industrialized world—a result of what we can call as “civilizing pollution” leading to the transition from an Edenic world to a toxic and polluted landscape. In expounding the rhetoric of defilement, the poem *Cinema Verite* can be used as a springboard for exaggerating the debasement brought by pollution. From Morton’s concepts of “ambience” and “rendering”, *Cinema Verite*’s objective situation takes place in a movie house. The highly conscious speaker is observant of his surroundings leading him to disclose the undeniable “thoroughness of its reality”. This is the reality of unlawful pollution/littering. In ecological discourse, this is considered as a serious issue that plagues the environment affecting the quality and experience of life in general. The speaker vividly conveys the weight of this pollution as he reveals:

What makes the movie unique  
 Is the thoroughness of its reality.  
 How can you deny it?  
 You are in it with the whites  
 The very ones you had seen back home  
 From a broken-down, lackadaisical seat  
 In a stinking movie house  
 Littered with melon and peanut shells  
 (Macansantos 2016, 33).

Using the image of a movie house, these lines declare the pollution of the environment by the inhabitants of the Earth itself. As the speaker describes the place as “stinking”, it affirms the very dictum that pollution diminishes one’s experience and delectation of the public spheres of life. In accordance with ecological thought and consciousness, the ecomposition of this poem represents the notion of the “dark ecology” (Morton 2007, 16)—the ecological thought that emphasizes decadence and degeneration.

The speaker finds himself enveloped by this experience of pollution, an experience that defiles the pleasure of his existence. This is considered as a challenge on the part of the speaker as littering is considered as a serious environmental issue. If taken on greater heights, the re-mark of this poem powerfully projects environmental decay, degeneration and abjection. Such are the very earmarks of the toxic discourse in literature. The “ego” and the “eco” clash in this poem. A self-centered individual ushers in this eyesore. The defilement is not only confined to the pollution of the land. In connection with the notion of pollution, the poem *Early Morning* extends the ecological rhetoric of pollution to the body of water. The speaker in the poem finds himself perplexed by the screaming silence of nature. In this poem, nature is no longer dynamic and animated but already silenced by the anthropocene’s civilizing undertakings. In examining the image of the environment, the speaker is seen to be confounded between “the environment that was” and “the environment that is”:

Now the ocean and the sky, the coconut trees,

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No longer speak the language that they are,  
That they used to be. Now, everything is  
uncertain,  
Needing constant verification.  
The ancestors no longer live as light  
In the eyes of those that stare at the dull lagoon  
(Macansantos 2016, 51).

With nature depicted as persistently being threatened by the impacts of civilization, the debunking of the edenic mythography is clearly shown through the different forms of environmental degradation. This endism is the very offshoot of the anthropocentric mindset. The weight of the anthropocentric worldview provides the impetus for unsettling the “enhancive and painterly signifier of the natural world” (Adorno 1997; quoted in Zapf 2016, 140). The wild and unstable dynamical system resulting for the cessation of environment’s life and diversity points out the self-ascendance and conception of the anthropocentric inhabitants of the earth. The environmental debasement points out to this aforementioned “loss” supported by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*:

The chemicals to which life is asked to make its adjustment are no longer merely the calcium and silica and copper and all the rest of the minerals washed out of the rocks and carried in rivers to the sea; they are the synthetic creations of man’s inventive mind,

brewed in his laboratories, and having  
no counterpart in nature. (2002, 7)

The impact of the anthropocene is clearly disclosed and affirmed by Carson as she projects the image of man emplaced in a scientific world that no longer value the sacredness and value of his environment. From the perspective of cultural ecocriticism, the ecocomposition of Macansantos' selected poems in this section, specifically referring to the notions of environmental debasement, posits the very scrutiny of the term "human" or the "anthropocene" itself. It is a bifocal term that brings about the romantic notion of the "commune" where everyone is committed to uphold the value of nature resulting to the formation of mutualistic affinities in all aspects of life (Clark 1990, 9). It also shows the naturalistic disposition of man as a kind of a predator or a victim of environmental forces compelled by his environment and nature to work for his survival whereby life is derived by absorbing the glories and wonders of the environment. The lost of the land's voice and its incapacity of producing even a mere echo and the overwhelming redolence of the anthropocentric subject as aroused by the very spectre of his environment in *Indian Fall*, the lackadaisical atmosphere of the cinema created by the suffocating littering of man in *Cinema Verite*, the ocean, sky and trees no longer speaking the language that they used to know in *Early Morning in Samoa* and the land slowly transforming into a place created out of steel and concrete by the anthropocene's iron fist in *Yakal*, *The Goldenrod* are the images that avow a dialectical point of view or a means of re-imagining the dualism that

is given to the role and place of the anthropocene in the environment.

### Into the Blooming Realm: On Sustainable Thoughts

The poem *My Aunt's Garden* brings the reader to the “blooming realm” of sustainability, equality, diversity and connectivity—the realm where the anthropocentric desires and tendencies are not seen as destructive forces in the environment but a kind of space that espouses the sustainable notion of relationality. Such an image of relationality projects the image of world devoid of anthropocentric cataclysm—a kind of world free from debasement, pollution, and garbage. The poem is seen to be providing its own notion of sustainability through the espousing of an equilibrium with the other elements in the environment. The poem’s re-mark reveals the eco-friendly foreground of the poem as the speaker declares his heightened sensibility for the worth, value and place of every living being in the biosphere. Every element of nature finds their appropriate place in the environment. As the poem veers away from the anthropocentric stance, the image of the speaker, the poem becomes remarkably ecocentric as opposed to the anthropocentric as each element are observed to be harmoniously situated in their proper places in the ecology of relationalities:

Flowers, like birds, proclaim their  
territory, too,  
But silently. There is no troop of geese  
honking here,

## J. LEDESMA

But angel's trumpets, jolly yellow bells,  
 will do  
 Just as well. The star-like hibiscus  
 struts out  
 Its pollen-dusted flute. Bougainvillae  
 choirs,  
 En masse, quiver in the breeze silent  
 chorales (Macansantos 2016, 60).

The image being projected to us in this first stanza of the poem, as typified by the environmentally sensitive speaker, upholds the notion of order and the adherence to the ideology of the co-existence of the culture and nature dichotomy. The speaker situates the birds in their fitting territories in the vast expanse of the skies. The troop of geese does not make any obnoxious sounds that may affirm the hostility of the anthropocentric subject but they remain peaceful as an indication that nature and culture are moving in consonance with one another. The first stanza of this poem is dominated with images of a nature viewed from a romantic perspective where man is in strong affinity with his environment. Observing the interconnected wonders of his environment, the speaker directly points out the environment's "elegance" and "royal decorum" as he sees every creatures of the environment enjoying the positive atmosphere of interdependence and survival espoused by the principle of co-existence and sustainable development.

The poem is noteworthy for its powerful image of sustainability and responsibility as seen in the character of Aunt Flor. The aura of Aunt Flor, described by the speaker as "oozing goodwill" serves as the foundation of

the poem for effectively carrying out the thought of “cradle to cradle”. Aunt Flor is the element of ecological regeneration and harmony. In the context of the poem, she also reveals the re-oriented mindset of the anthropocentric subjects in ecological consciousness as she modifies the great difference between nature and culture and its concomitant ideologies. The good environmental life and ecological balance is upheld by Aunt Flor as the garden is noted for its gently peaceful atmosphere where the flowers beautifully bloom and the air imbued with fresh and regenerative power. The physical description of Aunt Flor serves the potent force of sustainability grounded on a heightened sensation and strong commitment to the principle of relationality. She is the resilient element of the anthropocentric actions translated into thoughts of positive environmental connection. The poem supports the agenda on sustainability based on the image projected of Aunt Flor. As seen in her disposition reflected in the poem, she remarkably and outstandingly becomes the symbol of biospherical cognizance:

My aunt Flor’s form, tall, stalk-like,  
moves among them  
With placid beak in the air and pleased  
demeanor,  
Not at all disdainful, oozing goodwill,  
almost.  
All is gently peaceful in the garden  
where flowers flaunt  
Richness in the air for passing bees and  
butterflies (Macansantos 2016, 60).

The vivid and detailed description of Aunt Flor is the poem's way of strongly flaunting the agenda of the translation of anthropocentric norms and worldviews to the undertakings of sustainability. It is also notable in the poem that the speaker recognizes ecology's tragic instances which can lead to the destruction of her garden, but Aunt Flor is the very emblem of control and "self-domestication of the dominating anthropocene" which effectively hinders the fruition of this ecological tragedy (O'Grady 2003, 9). With Aunt Flor sensitively placing the elements of nature in her garden where they really belong, it becomes evident that she makes herself a part of the world and the world a part of herself. This reciprocal notion is further underscored as she values equilibrium and the very precept of substantial interconnection with the sacred communicational environment:

The long spell of peace instilled by  
conquest  
And enslavement dissipates. In the  
misty past,  
She only had to say, her lips pursing,  
"Common!"  
And they were put to rout. A magical  
word!

The spell seems broke, but her steps  
Are straight and firm, her bones sleek.  
She will enforce the semantics of her  
blooming realm (Macansantos 2016,  
60).

Aunt Flor's magical word, the "common", is a strong testament to her commitment to uphold the balance between nature and culture. Put simply, "common" (harmony and equilibrium as ecocritically read in the poem) can be translated into what Braidotti calls "sustainable becoming" (2006, 393). The smile that can be seen in the face of Aunt Flor is the very reminder that she is emplaced in a world that is responsibly harmonious and poised. This is the courage of adhering and propagating the ethical takes on a life that is grounded on rational and responsible sustainability and motives and good patterns of association between nature and culture. With the poem acting as a kind of a "sensorium" to the pillars of sustainability namely society and ecology (Zapf 2016, 17), the poem's strength is the ecological rhetoric of sustain and ability, when joined together it becomes "sustainability", as shown by the lines "she will enforce the semantics of her blooming realm"—the former referring to the anthropocentric subject, symbolized by Aunt Flor, turning his thoughts to regeneration and conservation of the environment cognizant of the notion of "harmony among differences" (Gadotti 2009, 13) while the latter projecting the man ("Aunt Flor) as the principal instrument, mediator and negotiator of balance, efficiency and perspectival regrounding.

In this regard, the "background", "rendering" and "Aeolian" of the poem serve as the ground for the expansion of the discourses on sensibility and awareness—a way of avowing that the "common" pursuing from the lips of mother nature (Aunt Flor) is the edict that will usher in a space and future that is highly

sustained and protected. It is the “magical world” that can efficiently recover the overlooked and disremembered vestiges of nature in the overpowering culture of the industrialized world.

### **Conclusion: The Literary Perusal of the Biosphere**

The ecomposition of the selected poems of Macansantos is deployed as the literary perusal of the biosphere presented as a loquacious domain in literature. The depiction of the biosphere in his poems discloses and problematizes on the interconnections between nature and culture disclosing ecocriticism’s complexity and duality. This complexity supports the ecological potency of literature bringing literature beyond the social sphere as it can disclose the biosphere as a “reflexive space of language and aesthetics” (Zapf 2016, 29)—framing from a literary perspective the connections and tensions occurring between the spheres of nature and culture such as biophilia, the earmarks of deep and shallow ecology, cursory and revisionist ecocriticism, environmental devastation, pollution, the power and retaliatory movements of Mother Nature resulting to environmental disasters, and thoughts on sustainability.

Recognizing the significance of the aforementioned ecocritical tropes fleshed out in this paper, the discourse on ecomposition, one that underscores ethics and commitment, provides an understanding of the workings of the anthropocene in this present geological epoch. It reveals how their ideologies critically shape the ecology and environment, and how humans conduct themselves as active players in the biosphere in numerous ways

resulting for them to seek nature's power as a revitalizing force, to plan its destruction, and to draw from it the impetuses that will sustain the affairs, necessities and undertakings of the current anthropocentric age. Highlighting these forces in the ecopoetic foreground of the poems, they become poetic hollers of "sustainability" and how the anthropocentric elements must be cognizant of their significant impact to the environment—an avenue for examining dynamics of "ego" and "eco" consciousness through literature.

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