

Ecocriticism in Philippine Literature: Environmental Themes

Jicky B. Lingo¹, Leonor B. Bali-os², Eliza Mae E. Camacho³, and John Mark G. Sande⁴

^{1,2}Student, Tangub City Global College

³Instructor I, Tangub City Global College

⁴Instructor I, Tangub City Global College

Abstract— Environmental concerns such as climate change, pollution, and deforestation continue to impact communities around the world, including the Philippines. Literature, as a powerful form of expression, has become a tool for raising awareness and advocating for the protection of the natural world. This study titled “Ecocriticism in Philippine Literature: Environmental Themes” aimed to examine how the three selected Philippine poems: “It’s Changing, It’s Soaring: Climate Rhyme,” “From the Top of the Bridge,” and “As He Pleases” – present environmental themes and portray the relationship between humans and nature. Also, it explored how ecocriticism helps understand the role of literature in promoting environmental awareness. Utilizing qualitative content analysis, the study gathered data by closely reading and analyzing the poems based on language, imagery, and ecological content. Qualitative findings identified the key environmental themes such as pollution, climate change, human impact on nature, and the call for ecological preservation. The results show that the poems reflect strong environmental messages and clearly portray the close yet often damaging relationship between humans and the environment. They encourage readers to be more knowledgeable of their actions and role in protecting nature. Through the lens of ecocriticism, it became clear that these poems serve not just as creative expressions, but also as meaningful tools to promote environmental responsibility. The study implies that literature can play a very salient role in shaping public awareness and inspiring environmental action. The findings can be applied in classrooms, environmental advocacy campaigns, and future literary studies to support ecological education and develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between people and the planet.

Keywords— Ecocriticism, Ecological awareness, Environmental themes, Human-nature relationship, Philippine poetry.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issue is a global concern affecting various sectors across the globe. In a country surrounded by the body of water, Philippines is no exemption where climate change, deforestation, and pollution have become a pressing concern resulting to a more calamities that the country ever had experienced. This major concern inspires Filipino writers to use literature, a powerful medium of expression, in advocating environmental awareness. Writers are able to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature through poetry, portraying both the beauty of the environment and its connection to environmental destruction. With ecocriticism, a literary and cultural approach, poems were examined through an ecological lens instead of focusing on the author's perspectives, providing a lens through which the researchers analyzed how literary texts presented in the poems promote ecological awareness.

Ecocriticism originated in the late twentieth century as a response to growing concerns regarding environmental destruction and the consequences of human actions on the Earth by Glotfelty and Fromm. Recent bibliometric

studies confirm that ecocriticism remains a rapidly evolving field, reflecting ongoing interdisciplinary interest in ecological issues and the relationship between literature and the environment (Yadav & Sinha, 2024). This approach influenced researchers and writers for human behavior and the ecosystem are intertwined, and a thorough understanding of the human value system is important to change the relationship between humans and nature in order to protect the environment (Asenath & Santhanalakshmi, 2021). According to Nahdhiyah et al. (2023), with the scope of environmental criticism, it enables the researchers to draw the conclusion that studying literature using this method explains how a work of literature is inseparably linked to the environment, nature, and a number of related issues. In the Philippines, several studies had been conducted using ecocriticism. Dorias's (2024) study reveals various aspects of nature that carry the ability to either maintain or destroy human-nature relationships, revealing complex relationships that are crucial for recognizing humanity's role within the natural world. Additionally, the study of Purcia (2022) revealed how ecocritical semantics encourages the Warays in protecting, preserving, and conserving their natural

resources from the environment. Moreover, Pebria-Taga (2022) had explored environmental themes in selected Taalandig lyric poem by Saway Il, focusing on literary devices and creating a teaching guide for ecocriticism. These studies provide a foundation in examining how Philippine poetry contributes to environmental discourse through an ecocritical lens.

However, despite several studies conducted in the Philippine literature, there is a scarcity of academic research dedicated to analyzing Philippine poetry through an ecocritical lens, making it challenging to fully understand the environmental perspectives embedded in the texts. Also, there is a gap in analyzing contemporary Filipino literary poems in depicting the impacts of environmental issues such as climate change, global warming, and pollution on the Filipino communities and the natural environment. These gaps offer an opportunity for a deeper exploration of how Philippine poetry portrays nature that aligns with the current environmental issues.

Hence, this study explored the environmental themes in the selected Philippine poems 'It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme,' 'From the Top of the Bridge,' and 'As He Pleases'. Additionally, through an ecocritical perspective, each of the poem's relationship between humans and nature, reflecting on the natural world and connecting it to the pressing environmental issues of today were analyzed. By focusing on these poems, the study uncovered how contemporary Philippine poetry fosters ecological awareness and inspires action towards sustainability in the face of modern environmental challenges.

This research examined and analyzed the selected Philippine poems "It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme", "From the Top of the Bridge", and "As He Pleases" from an ecocritical perspective.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the environmental or ecological themes found in the poems?
2. How do the poems portray the relationship between humans and nature in the context of environmental awareness?
3. How does the ecocriticism approach help readers understand the poems' roles in promoting environmental awareness?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative content analysis research design, focusing on relational content analysis as the

main method of analysis. Close reading would allow for a detailed exploration of the selected poems—As He Pleases, It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme, and From the Top of the Bridge—focusing on their language, imagery, and environmental themes. The analysis was guided by an ecocritical perspective, examining how the poems portray the relationship between humans and nature and how they promote environmental awareness. Key themes like the impact of human actions on the environment, the connection between people and nature, and the need for ecological preservation were explored. This design was chosen because it helps understand and interpret the poems' deeper meaning which reveals on how they can raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage a greater understanding of human-nature relationships. The research used the three selected Philippine poems taken from the internet: "As He Pleases" by Rina Garcia Chua, "It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme" by Christine Marie Magpile and "From the Top of the Bridge" by Liane Carlo Suelan as research instrument through content analysis. These three selected Philippine poems were written by Filipino writers which focused on their subjects pertaining to the human-nature relationship, environmental themes, roles in promoting environmental awareness to humans and their contribution to understanding the human impact on the environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presented in this section are the analysis of data, interpretations and implications of the findings. All these were meant to answer the research questions: What are the environmental or ecological themes found in the poem? How do the poems portray the relationship between humans and nature in the context of environmental awareness? How does the ecocriticism approach help readers understand the poems' roles in promoting environmental awareness?

Problem 1: What are the environmental or ecological themes found in the poem?

In the qualitative phase, there were a total of six (6) environmental or ecological themes. These were the following:

- Climate Change
- Call for Global Action
- Nature's Power
- Human-Nature Relationship
- Resource Scarcity
- Pollution and Environmental Degradation

Theme 1: Climate Change

Climate change is a problem that leads to a global concern mainly caused by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, cutting down forests, and misusing land resources. These actions release greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. When these gases are released into the atmosphere and trap heat, it can lead to a rise in global temperatures, which results in long-term changes in weather patterns, rainfall, and sea levels.

One of the countries that is most affected by climate change is the Philippines. Coastal areas are increasingly exposed to rising sea levels, storm surges, and extreme weather. According to Borje (2024), the country is already experiencing ecological and

economic losses, particularly from the degradation of coral reefs. Coral reefs are important not only for marine life but also for the Filipinos. With coral reefs, there will be an abundant harvest of fish as well as the increasing growth of the tourism industry. With coral bleaching and unstable weather, risks of having a scarcity of food sources might arise, and it makes beach destinations less attractive, which affects both biodiversity and local livelihoods.

*Sometimes, Anna
Whispers, 'It's too
Hot,' and Bugoy
Answers, 'It's
El Niño.*

(Excerpt from As He Pleases)

When Anna says "It's too hot," it reflects a physical reaction to extreme heat. Bugoy responds by naming the cause as "El Niño," which is a real weather pattern linked to climate change. El Niño causes unusual heat, drought, and sometimes heavy rain, especially in countries like the Philippines. The short conversation between two characters shows how the effects of climate change are already being felt. The rising heat is not just a future problem, it is happening now, and people are noticing it. The mention of El Niño connects this experience to a larger environmental issue caused by changing climate patterns. These lines reflect how climate change is becoming part of daily life and conversation, especially in communities that are directly affected by it.

*El Niño tilts his burlap
Sack and there he*

releases

All his pent-up rage onto

The roofs until the land

Can take no more-

(Excerpt from As He Pleases)

The phrase "El Niño tilts his burlap sack" presents El Niño as a person carrying a heavy burden. In relational content analysis, this shows a connection between nature (El Niño) and human-like behavior (tilting a sack), symbolizing how natural systems are reacting to human-caused changes in the environment. The phrase "releases all his pent-up rage" suggest a buildup of extreme weather, which relates to Deep Ecology's belief that nature is not separate from humans—it responds to human actions. Lastly, "until the land can take no more" points to the Earth reaching its limit, aligning with Deep Ecology's idea that nature has its own value and balance, and when pushed too far, it breaks. These lines show that climate change is not just about rising temperatures, but about how nature suffers and reacts to human disruption.

It's warming, it's scorching.

*(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

The line "It's warming, it's scorching" means that the Earth is getting hotter. "Warming" shows that the temperature is rising slowly but steadily, while "scorching" means it is very hot, almost like burning. This describes climate change because the Earth's temperature is increasing more than usual.

The Earth is in trouble.

*(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

The next line means that the planet is facing big problems. It can because of the changes happening to it. It shows that the Earth is not healthy or safe anymore. The "trouble" can be compared to things like melting ice, stronger storms, droughts, and damage to plants and animals. It warns us that Earth's problems are serious and getting hotter based on the previous line.

The ice caps are melting,

The signs are compelling.

*(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

These lines talk about the clear and serious effects of climate change. "The ice caps are melting" means that the Earth is getting warmer, causing the ice in the polar

regions to melt. This can lead to rising sea levels and loss of habitats for animals like polar bears. "The signs are compelling" means that the proof of these changes is strong and convincing. It suggests that we can clearly see the damage happening to nature and that we should take these signs seriously.

Theme 2: Call for Global Action

A Call for Global Action is a theme that shows the urgent need for people, communities, organizations, and governments around the world to work together to solve a serious problem. This usually happens when an issue, such as climate change, pollution, or a health crisis, affects everyone, not just one place or group.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (2024) also explained that caring for nature is not the job of just one country. All nations must take part, whether big or small. People need to change the way they live and use natural resources to slow down climate change and protect the Earth (Whitehead, et al., 2021). This theme means that solving global problems needs help from everyone. Through teamwork and quick action, people from all parts of the world can help protect the planet for the future.

We must act now, no ignoring.

(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)

This line clearly shows a strong and urgent message that tells everyone to take action immediately to protect the environment. The phrase "we must" shows that it is not just a suggestion; it is a responsibility for all people. It includes everyone around the world. The phrase "act now" gives a sense of urgency, meaning that waiting or doing nothing will only make things worse. Finally, "no ignoring" reminds us that we can no longer pretend that the problem does not exist. Climate change, pollution, and environmental damage are real, and we must face them together.

*The planet needs our urgent care,
For it to thrive and not to despair.*

(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)

These lines highlight the planet's condition and our responsibility to respond quickly. These imply that the Earth is suffering and needs people to care for it right away. The phrase "urgent care" means we cannot wait any longer; we must take action now. The second line "For it to thrive and not to despair" shows the goal of

this action. If people care for the planet, it will stay healthy and full of life. If they do nothing, the Earth will continue to suffer. These lines send a clear message to all people: help the planet now so that it can recover and stay strong.

*Reduce, reuse, recycle, we must,
To avoid the Earth turning to dust.*

(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)

These lines clearly encourage people to do simple but important actions that help the environment. The phrase "reduce, reuse, recycle" are common steps that everyone can follow to protect the planet. These actions are easy to do and can make a big difference when practiced by many people. The second line, "To avoid the Earth turning to dust," gives a warning. It means that if people do not act now, the Earth could become dry, damaged, or even lifeless. This creates a strong reason for people to act quickly and responsibly. The use of the phrase "we must" shows that this is not just advice but something that people everywhere need to do together. The persona asks everyone to take part in caring for the Earth before it is too late.

*The clock is ticking, time is running out,
Humanity must act, there must be no doubt.*

(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)

The first line, "The clock is ticking, time is running out," shows that there is not much time left to fix the damage done to the environment. It creates a sense of urgency, meaning we cannot wait any longer. If the delay will continue, the problems will grow worse and harder to solve. The second line, "Humanity must act, there must be no doubt," calls on all people to take responsibility. It uses the word "humanity" to show that the whole world needs to join together. The phrase "there must be no doubt" tells reader that everyone should be sure and confident that action is needed now. Together, these lines send a powerful message that climate change and environmental problems require quick and united action from everyone.

A world reborn, unstoppable soaring.

(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)

This line shows the positive result of people working together to protect the environment. The phrase "a world

reborn” means the Earth has been renewed and healed, suggesting that change is possible when people take action. The phrase “unstoppable soaring” shows an image of the Earth rising with strength and hope, showing progress that cannot be stopped. This line encourages people to believe that if we act now, we can build a better, cleaner, and healthier world. It is a hopeful message that supports the need for action from everyone.

*We need to act fast,
Or we'll burst our bubble.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

The line “We need to act fast” is a direct appeal for immediate action, not just from one person or place, but from all people. It shows that waiting or doing nothing will lead to worse consequences. While the second line, “Or we’ll burst our bubble,” uses visual imagery, a simple image to explain a bigger idea. A “bubble” represents the world we live in—our safety, comfort, and way of life. If we do not act, that bubble will burst, meaning our environment and lifestyle could be destroyed. Together, these lines warn people that urgent and united action is necessary to avoid disaster, which is the main idea behind a call for global action.

*We can't keep on burning,
The fossil fuels we find.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

The phrase “the fossil fuels we find” shows that people continue to extract and use coal, oil, and gas despite the harm it causes. Burning these fuels releases gases that trap heat and warm the Earth, which leads to climate change. With its previous line “We can’t keep on burning” is serves as a strong warning that we must not keep on using the fossil fuels that humanity might find. These lines call for a change from using fossil fuels to protect the environment.

*We must use renewable energy,
And leave the coal behind.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

These lines urge people to switch from using coal and other fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydropower. Renewable energy comes from natural sources that will not run out and do not release harmful gases that warm the Earth. The phrase “leave

the coal behind” means to stop using coal because it is one of the most polluting fossil fuels. These lines encourage cleaner energy to help slow down climate change and protect the planet.

*We can't keep on cutting,
The forests that we need.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

Trees are important in our daily lives because they clean the air, provide homes for animals and humans, and help balance the climate. The speaker emphasized in the line “The forests that we need” how living things depend on trees. Furthermore, in the line “We can’t keep on cutting,” the speaker urges humanity to stop cutting trees. Cutting too many trees can harm the environment and makes climate change worse. These lines were used by the speaker not just to protect forests but to also call everyone’s attention by not letting greed destroy our planet. Forests are necessary for a healthy planet.

*We can't keep on dumping.
Reduce wastes, stop greed.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

The line “We can’t keep on dumping” shows how the speaker urges readers to stop throwing away too much trash and polluting the environment. Dumping waste carelessly can harm the environment. With the line “Reduce wastes, stop greed” it strongly calls for reducing selfish behaviour, greed, that causes overconsumption and produce tons of waste. These lines encourage human beings to be contented of what they have and to live more responsibly by reducing waste and caring for nature.

*We should all be cooperating,
And make a positive exchange.*
(Excerpt from *It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme*)

The persona encourages people, communities, and countries to work together to solve environmental problems. In the line “We should all be cooperating” sharing ideas, resources, and efforts are needed for the common good. Furthermore, “positive exchange” means making changes that will benefit both people and the planet. The persona reminds the reader that teamwork is needed to face climate change that will lead to a better Earth.

*We can't keep on ignoring,
The signs of climate change.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

The speaker uses these lines as a warning that we must pay attention to the clear evidence of climate change, like stronger storms, rising temperatures, and melting ice. Ignoring these signs means risking even worse damage in the future. The lines stress the importance of recognizing the problem and taking action before it's too late.

*Let's conserve, not delay.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

This line has a clear message urging people to act now to protect the environment. The word "let's" is a call to everyone—not just one person, but all people around the world. It invites collective action, showing that solving environmental problems like climate change needs teamwork and global effort. The phrase "not delay" adds urgency. It tells that action must happen immediately, not later, because waiting will only make the problem worse. Together, the line encourages people to start conserving natural resources, reduce waste, and make choices that protect the Earth without waiting for others to act first.

*Let's be eco-champions excelling.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

This line supports the theme Call for Global Action for it encourages everyone to take an active role in protecting the environment. The word "let's" is an invitation for collective action, meaning it calls on all people, not just individuals, to work together for a common goal: caring for the Earth. The phrase "eco-champions" means people who lead by example in doing what is right for nature, such as conserving energy, reducing waste, recycling, or spreading environmental awareness. Adding the word "excelling" shows that the goal is not just to participate, but to do our best and inspire others to follow. This line urges everyone to step up, act responsibly, and be leaders in the fight for a cleaner, greener world.

Theme 3: Nature's Power

Nature's Power is a theme not only shows nature's capabilities about helping people and animals to live.

Nature provides food, water, clean air, and shelter. However, nature also has the power to harm or even kill living things when it is damaged or not respected. For example, when forests are cut down, the land becomes weak. During strong rains, this can cause landslides that destroy homes and take lives. According to a study by Coley et al. (2021), removing trees and disturbing land near rivers and slopes increases the risk of dangerous floods and landslides, especially during storms. Forests are not just sources of wood or fruit. They also help keep people and other living things safe from natural disasters, someone's skin but does not guarantee that it will do so.

Another nature's power leads to climate change. When people burn too much fuel, the Earth becomes hotter. This leads to stronger storms. Menon (2023) reported that warmer oceans supply storms with more energy, which leads to stronger hurricanes and heavier rain. These conditions made typhoons like Yolanda in 2013 more powerful and devastating to the Philippines which killed thousands of people and destroyed many parts of the Philippines.

These examples show that nature is not just a landscape in our lives. It reacts to how people treat it. Floods, droughts, and stronger typhoons remind us that nature has limits. If people continue to pollute, destroy forests, and ignore environmental problems, nature will respond in harmful ways.

*El Niño is a god.
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

The line "El Niño is a god" is a metaphor that compares a natural event to a god—something very powerful and beyond human control. In simple words, it means that El Niño, which causes very hot weather, droughts, floods, or strong storms, is so strong that it feels like it controls everything around us, just like a god would. By calling El Niño a "god," the line tells us that nature can rule over people's lives. It can bring heavy rain that floods homes, or stop the rain and dry up farms, causing hunger. People cannot stop El Niño when it comes, which shows that nature is more powerful than humans. This line helps readers understand that nature is not weak or quiet—it can act in big and life-changing ways.

*Yet, at night,
El Niño is the diablo
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines also compare El Niño to a diablo (or devil). Aside from being compared as a god who can rule over people's lives, it can be also be a diablo who brings fear, danger, and destruction when people are most vulnerable—at night. In simple words, this line tells us that El Niño can become more harmful when it gets dark. At night, people usually rest, but El Niño brings strong rains, floods, or heat that cause damage and suffering. By calling El Niño a devil, the line shows that nature can turn scary and dangerous, especially when it is not treated with care. This helps readers understand that nature is not always calm or peaceful. It has the power to bring harm when it reacts to damage caused by humans. El Niño can act with force and cause fear when it strikes.

*He pours into cities,
Provinces, farmlands –
Angry, angry, angry
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines describe how El Niño spreads across wide areas—cities, provinces, and farmlands—bringing destruction. The word “pours” suggests a powerful force, like heavy rain or intense heat, flowing into all parts of the country. This shows that no place is safe, whether it's an urban area, a small town, or farmland. The repetition of the word “angry” shows how intense and dangerous El Niño's effect is, like nature is furious and lashing out. These lines connect to the theme of Nature's Power for the lines show how strong and far-reaching nature can be when it is upset. Nature, through El Niño, does not stay in one place—it moves and affects many areas at once. It damages homes, dries up farms, and makes life harder for people. This reminds us that when nature reacts, it can do so with great force, and humans cannot stop it. The lines clearly show that nature is not quiet or weak—it is powerful, emotional, and capable of great destruction when harmed or unbalanced.

*Until the rivers swell and
The ocean rebels—
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines describe how nature reacts strongly and forcefully when it is disturbed. The phrase “rivers swell” means the rivers rise too high, likely causing floods, while “the ocean rebels” suggests that the sea becomes violent—bringing storms, big waves, or rising tides. These are clear signs that nature is not staying calm. Instead, it is fighting back, like a person who is angry or

hurt. These show that nature is not just sitting still—it responds to damage, such as pollution, climate change, or too much human activity. When people harm the environment, nature can become dangerous. Rivers can overflow, and oceans can become wild, putting people and places at risk. This shows that nature has the power to act on its own—and when pushed too far, it can respond with great force. Additionally;

*You have no control over the world
or power to change it yet.
No power...
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

The lines express a deep feeling of helplessness in the face of environmental destruction. These words come from a father telling his child that they are too young to make a difference. The phrase “no power” is repeated, showing the child's powerlessness. Even though the child wants to act, like catching the plastic bag before it falls into the polluted river, they feel stopped by the belief that their actions are too small or that change is out of reach. It shows that while nature is suffering (the river is choking), it still holds power over people's lives. The river becomes a symbol of how powerful nature is, not only because of floods or storms, but because of how deeply it affects the people who live around it. Even though the child wants to protect nature, they feel powerless compared to both the strength of the river's suffering and the larger system of pollution, waste, and neglect caused by society.

Theme 4: Human-Nature Relationship

Human-Nature Relationship is another theme that shows how people and nature are closely connected in daily life. Nature provides everything people need to survive. Food comes from farms, water flows from rivers, clean air comes from trees, and many useful materials come from the land. This shows that humans depend on nature for their basic needs. However, nature is also affected by human actions. When people throw garbage into rivers, cut down too many trees, or pollute the air, the environment becomes damaged. These harmful actions can lead to dirty water, floods, droughts, and stronger typhoons. These problems not only harm nature but also put people at risk. For example, polluted rivers can cause illness in nearby communities. When forests are destroyed, animals lose their homes, and people may face more landslides and floods.

A study of Coley et al. (2021) also found that beliefs about the human-nature relationship influence how

people take care of land and water systems. When people feel responsible for nature, they are more willing to invest in protecting it and providing long-term care. In addition, a study published by Journalism University (2023) explains that although the way people relate to nature has changed over time, especially in the modern world, the importance of respecting and caring for the environment remains the same.

*He wakes children
Up by wiping their
Foreheads wet
With sticky sweat
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

The persona describes how children are woken not by alarm clocks, but by heat. These show how the heat from nature affects the children the moment they wake up. The phrase "wiping their foreheads wet with sticky sweat" uses tactile and visual imagery. The reader can almost feel the heat and imagine the sweat on their skin. This line presents nature as something that touches and disturbs human comfort. It shows that humans do not live separately from nature but are directly influenced by it in everyday life.

*He makes sure they
Run back home
Before their skins
Sizzle, blister and / Peel
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

This group of lines shows how dangerous the heat can be. The words "sizzle," "blister," and "peel" use strong sensory imagery, especially related to touch and sight. The reader can imagine the painful effect of too much heat on the skin. This creates a clear picture of how nature can cause harm if people do not protect themselves. It also shows that humans must change their actions, like running home quickly, because of the power of nature.

*the children play their tumba lata
and bathe in the old waterway fantasizing
clearer waters and calmer spirits.
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

These lines show how children still find ways to play in the polluted river. The "tumba lata" is a local game, and they bathe in dirty water. Despite this, they dream of clean waters and peaceful feelings. The line "fantasizing clearer waters and calmer spirits" uses visual imagery,

showing the children's hope for a better environment. This part of the poem reflects how the relationship between humans and nature includes both harm and hope. Even though the water is dirty, the children still engage with it and imagine a better version of it. It shows that people long for a cleaner world.

Another example is the loss of good land for farming. When trees are cut down and the soil is used again and again without proper care, the land becomes weak and cannot grow crops. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2024) said that nearly 40 percent of the world's land is already damaged, making it hard for people to grow food and earn a living.

Energy is also becoming scarce in some places. Families in faraway or poor areas often experience power cuts because electricity is not enough or fuel is too expensive. This affects schools, hospitals, and businesses. When important resources become limited, poor communities suffer the most. They may not have enough money to buy bottled water, food, or backup electricity. Some people move to cities in search of better living conditions, but this can cause new problems such as overcrowding. Resource scarcity is a serious issue that affects health, safety, and daily life. It is important for people to use natural resources wisely so that future generations can also live well.

*the river was drying
up from the mud –
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines clearly show resource scarcity. The drying river means there is less water available for people, animals, and plants. Rivers are important sources of fresh water, and when they dry up, communities can suffer from a lack of clean water for drinking, bathing, farming, and daily use. The image of the river turning to mud suggests that the water has become unusable. It reflects a situation where nature can no longer provide what people need because of too much heat, drought, or human activity. Additionally;

*Sustainable deeds,
Fulfilling our needs.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate
Rhyme)*

These lines talk about the solution to resource scarcity. "Sustainable deeds" means doing actions that protect and conserve natural resources, such as saving water, planting trees, and reducing waste. These actions help

make sure that resources are used wisely and are not wasted. The line “Fulfilling our needs” shows that people can still meet their needs without destroying nature. It gives a hopeful message: if we act responsibly, we can prevent resource scarcity and protect the environment for the future.

Pollution and environmental degradation are theme that happen when people harm the environment by throwing trash into rivers, burning fuels that pollute the air, cutting down trees without replacing them, or using land without proper care. Pollution includes plastic waste, smoke, and harmful chemicals in the soil. Environmental degradation means that nature becomes weaker, dirtier, and less able to support life.

Problem 2: How do the poems portray the relationship between humans and nature in the context of environmental awareness?

In the qualitative phase, there were a total of three (3) human and nature relationships themes. These were the following:

Physical
Emotional
Social

Theme 1: Physical

The physical relationship between humans and nature is the direct contact we have with nature. It can be through walking in forests, swimming in rivers, gardening, or simply spending time outdoors. This contact shapes our awareness of the environmental issues in two key ways. First, spending time in nature can boost our health and strengthen our bond with the environment. Numerous experimental studies included in the systematic review demonstrate the positive health effects and enhanced psychological bond with the nature of being physically connected to a natural setting (Barragan Jason et al., 2022). Second, this same relationship can also show us the harm caused by pollution and resource abuse. According to the Relationship Between Human and Nature Essay—Edurday (2023), human nature relationships can also have negative effects on human health, as exposure to pollution and other environmental hazards can lead to a variety of health problems.

*He wakes children
Up by wiping their
Foreheads wet
With sticky sweat
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines show how the hot temperature directly affects the children’s bodies. Their sweating foreheads suggest they are experiencing discomfort due to the extreme heat. This projects an image that helps the reader understand how climate change, especially the increasing temperatures, has real effects on people's health and comfort, especially for the young.

*Siesta is sleep spent
Swimming in beads
Of sweat and jerking
Awake from the
Burn of the lazy
Pm sun
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

The persona describes the intense heat during the afternoon. The person cannot sleep peacefully because of the uncomfortable feeling of sweating and the burning sunlight. It shows how the changes in weather patterns, such as stronger heat in the daytime, disturb daily routines physically. It also makes people realize that caring for the environment is important to prevent worsening climate problems humanity might experience in the future.

Theme 2: Emotional

Emotional relationships between humans and nature refers to the people who interact with the environment, such as peace, happiness, or concern. These emotions strengthen the connection between what people experience in nature and how they think about protecting it.

As emotions act as a psychological link between environmental experiences and cognitive assessments, enhancing people's sense of connection to nature, they indicate emotional engagement with the environment as essential in forming pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Nguyen-Dinh & Zhang, 2025).

When people are emotionally close to nature, they might care about it and take action to protect it. Therefore, the normative concept of nature may represent the idea that nature is a living system in balance that requires protection, and people who believe they have a stronger emotional connection to nature and act in ways that protect it may be more likely to hold this view (Hatty et al., 2022).

These emotional ties help raise environmental awareness by inspiring individuals to value, protect, and respect nature.

*Until children close
Their eyes and wish
For the wet to go away
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines show how the children respond with fear and helplessness during storms. This emotional reaction highlights how environmental disasters, like flooding or strong rains, can deeply affect people's mental and emotional health. The children's wish for the rain to stop reflects their desire for safety and peace.

*El Niño tilts his burlap
Sack and there he releases
All his pent-up rage
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

In this metaphor, El Niño is described like a person who is angry. This emotion projects an image that shows how nature can be experienced not just as a physical force, but as something powerful that causes people to feel overwhelmed or frightened. It tells the readers that nature's power can be emotionally intense, especially when people feel unprepared or powerless.

*The planet needs our urgent care,
For it to thrive and not to despair
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)*

These lines show human concern and emotional responsibility. When people feel emotionally attached to the Earth, they develop a personal sense of responsibility to protect it. This emotional bond creates a deeper motivation than rules or laws can. People do not act simply because they are told to, but because they are connected to nature and they care. This kind of emotional awareness often leads people to take action and become more involved in protecting nature.

*We'll take a stand,
With love for the land
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)*

The persona reveals the emotional connection people can have with the environment. Love and care are important emotions that push people to be more active in protecting natural spaces. When people value and love nature, they will have a motivation and cause to protect it and support environmental causes.

The jeers

*Of passers-by have not fazed us
For we grow more resilient, more angry
The more the river chokes.
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

The persona expresses emotions such as frustration and determination to the pollution of the river. These feelings serve as motivation to continue fighting for change. Rather than being discouraged by challenges, their feelings give them energy to keep protesting and speaking up.

*Clearer waters and calmer spirits
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

This line offers hope and emotional healing. When people imagine a cleaner river, they can also picture peace and emotional relief. This shows how human emotions are closely tied to the condition of the natural world. When nature suffers, people feel sadness, and when nature heals, people feel calm and happy.

Theme 3: Social

Social relationships between humans and nature are shaped by how people interact with the environment as part of their community and culture. This relationship is influenced by traditions, shared beliefs, and social values. According to Eversberg et al. (2022), the connection between humans and nature is always shaped by society, meaning that people treat nature based on the social situations they are in. With group activities such as clean-up drives or tree planting, the spirit of environmental awareness often grows. These activities can be an eye-opener for people to understand the importance of protecting nature and make them feel responsible for the environment. According to Mena-García et al. (2021), when there is a strong social support and shared values, these help people develop better attitudes and habits toward protecting nature. Thus, when communities work together to protect the environment, individuals will become more aware and active in taking care of nature.

*Armed with raincoats
And umbrellas printed
With a smiling red
Bumblebee, they all
Rush home...
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

The persona shows how people react together during natural events like heavy rain. Their actions are not done

alone, but as a group. They prepare together and move together, which shows that nature affects not just individuals but the whole community. Nature becomes part of their everyday life, and the way they respond becomes a shared experience.

*Lest he sees them;
Lest he strikes.
(Excerpt from As He Pleases)*

These lines point to the way people have developed beliefs or fears about nature. The use of the word “he” to refer to nature shows how people sometimes treat natural forces like a person who must be respected or feared. These shared beliefs lead to a common response. It shows that people do not only act on their own, but also follow cultural habits when facing environmental risks. This helps build environmental awareness within the community.

*We must act now, no ignoring.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)*

This line calls on everyone to act. The word “we” shows that solving environmental problems is not just a personal responsibility but something we must do together. It is a shared responsibility that everyone must cooperate in order to fight against any calamities from the nature that mostly caused by humanity. This builds the idea that society should work as one to take care of nature.

*We'll take a stand...
For a climate that's truly adoring.
(Excerpt from It's Changing, It's Soaring: Climate Rhyme)*

This line also shows a shared effort and responsibility. The word “stand” means they are ready to fight or defend nature. The line suggests that environmental protection is something people should care about together. It shows that the love for nature can bring people closer and make them work together as one.

*We have fought for this,
For hours, standing by the streets.
Raising placards and voices before the curtained
windows
Of city hall.
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

The poem presents an example of collective action and describes a protest where people unite to demand environmental change. This is a clear example of how social relationships play an important role in raising awareness about environmental issues. By coming together in protests and public demonstrations, individuals form a shared sense of purpose and strengthen their commitment to protecting nature. These social interactions help spread information, build solidarity, and influence others to become more aware and involved. It shows that social connections can lead to organized efforts that support environmental causes and encourage greater public awareness.

*The cars speed past me.
Their master's eyes set only on the road...
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

These lines show how many people are focused only on their busy lives. The driver does not notice the person protesting, which represents how society often ignores environmental issues. This points out a social problem where people lack attention or care for nature that gradually results in environmental destruction.

*Let destiny take its course, son.
You are too young to understand.
(Excerpt from From the Top of the Bridge)*

These lines reflect the way older people tell their younger ones not to get involved. This shows how someone's ideas being passed from one generation to the next can affect how the society perceives what should be done after what happened in the environment. It also reveals that sometimes, these ideas can discourage environmental action. Social relationships include these family beliefs, which can either help or stop efforts to protect the environment.

Problem 3: How does the ecocriticism approach help readers understand the poems' roles in promoting environmental awareness?

In the qualitative phase, there were a total of three (3) identified ways in which the ecocriticism approach helps readers understand the poem's role in promoting environmental awareness.

The three selected Philippine poems create awareness, promote reflection, and call people to care for the environment. This is where the poems reveal the real problems happening in the environment, such as dying river, pollution, and the extreme heat which can create an awareness to the readers. The problems that the

readers see in the poems can help them become more aware of the damage being done to nature. This awareness can ultimately lead to reflection where readers may start thinking about their own actions like how they use water, throw garbage or trash, or care for the Earth. With this, when a person reflects on the things they do and its effect towards nature then it can call people to care for the environment. These are the three ways in which poems contribute to promoting environmental awareness. According to Rishma & Gil (2024), literature has the potential and power to inspire change and influence readers' environmental consciousness by raising awareness that pertains to the environmental issues and encourage them to take action for the environment.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, the researchers conclude that ecocriticism is a valuable approach in understanding how literature can promote environmental awareness. By examining the selected Philippine poems, the research highlighted how poetry serves not just as art, but as a tool for environmental education and reflection. The findings suggest that poems can influence how readers view nature and inspire them to rethink their actions toward the environment. This shows the power of literature in shaping ecological values and encouraging responsibility. The study also emphasizes the need to include environmental themes in literary discussions to deepen public understanding of ecological issues. This proves that even creative works like poems can contribute meaningfully to the ongoing call for environmental care and sustainability.

The following recommendations were drawn after carefully analyzing the findings:

- **English Major Students.** They are encouraged to explore poems and other literary texts through different lenses, such as ecocriticism, to deepen their understanding of environmental issues reflected in literature. Reading and analysing nature-based poems can help develop critical thinking and environmental awareness, which they can apply in their future teaching or academic work.
- **Teachers.** Teachers should integrate environmental themes found in Philippine literature into their lessons to help students connect literature with real-life issues. They are encouraged to use the ecocritical approach in classroom discussions to promote not only literary appreciation but also environmental responsibility. Joining trainings, workshops, or seminars that focus on literature and

environmental education will also help improve teaching strategies.

- **Future Researchers.** Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies using other Philippine literary works to expand the understanding of how literature reflects environmental concerns. They may also explore other theories related to ecocriticism, such as ecofeminism or postcolonial ecology, or apply the same approach to short stories, novels, or songs. This study can also serve as a reference or starting point for those who are interested in combining literature and environmental advocacy.

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