

Are Humanities Heading for Extinction? Analysis of Anthropocene Ecocriticism, Geo-Ecocriticism, and Islamecocriticism

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Abstract

Serious concerns have been circulating in academia regarding humanities and how they have been relegated to the backbenches. Data reveal a remarkable decline in submissions for humanities if compared to non-humanities. The current paper proposes that despite this decline, humanities have always been and will continue to be a moving force in shaping intellectual attitudes worldwide. To prove this standpoint, the author employs ecocriticism and eco-poetry as influential sub-disciplines of humanities. With the rocket-speed changeability of the present time, ecocriticism and eco-poetry play a crucial role in judging, evaluating, or even changing the course of cultural advancements if they venture into destructive paths. In other words, ecocritical theory is concerned with monitoring and unveiling versatile anthropocentric activities, most of which are destructive to nature. Fortunately, with the help of authors writing under the influence of ecocriticism, the devastation of many natural spots came to an end. Thus, the study begins by introducing some important phases of the ecocritical project like Anthropocene ecocriticism, Geo-ecocriticism, and Islamecocriticism. Then, an Islamecocritical analysis of "Lake Selby" by Canadian poet I. Layton is presented. The lake suffered from multiple ecological problems. However, the poem along with other scientific warnings successfully alerted the Canadian government. Consequently, the lake's condition improved. Both sections of the study affirm that humanities shape human culture, and they are real and valid disciplines that complement the work of non-humanities. The argument is qualitative, being concerned with literary criticism. Therefore, the research methodology is primarily analytical and descriptive.

Keywords: *Humanities, Anthropocene ecocriticism, Geo-ecocriticism, Islamecocriticism, Canadian eco-poetry*

Abstrak

Kekhawatiran serius telah beredar di kalangan akademisi tentang humaniora dan bagaimana mereka telah diturunkan ke kursi belakang. Data mengungkapkan penurunan yang luar biasa dalam pengajuan untuk humaniora jika dibandingkan dengan non-humaniora. Artikel ini mengusulkan bahwa terlepas dari penurunan ini, humaniora selalu dan akan terus menjadi kekuatan penggerak dalam membentuk sikap intelektual di seluruh dunia. Untuk membuktikan sudut pandang ini, penulis menggunakan ekokritik dan eko-puisi sebagai sub-disiplin humaniora yang berpengaruh. Dengan perubahan kecepatan roket saat ini, ekokritik dan eko-puisi memainkan peran penting dalam menilai,

mengevaluasi, atau bahkan mengubah arah kemajuan budaya jika mereka menjelajah ke jalur yang merusak. Dengan kata lain, teori ekokritik berkaitan dengan pemantauan dan pengungkapan aktivitas antroposentris serbaguna, yang sebagian besar merusak alam. Untungnya, dengan bantuan penulis yang menulis di bawah pengaruh ekokritik, kehancuran banyak titik alam berakhir. Oleh karena itu, studi ini dimulai dengan memperkenalkan beberapa fase penting dari proyek ekokritik seperti Ekokritik Antroposen, Geo-ekokritik, dan Islamekokritik. Kemudian, sebuah analisis Islamecocritical dari "Danau Selby" oleh penyair Kanada I. Layton disajikan. Danau itu menderita berbagai masalah ekologis. Namun, puisi tersebut beserta peringatan ilmiah lainnya berhasil menyadarkan pemerintah Kanada. Akibatnya, kondisi danau membaik. Kedua bagian studi tersebut menegaskan bahwa humaniora membentuk budaya manusia, dan merupakan disiplin ilmu yang nyata dan valid yang melengkapi pekerjaan non-humaniora. Argumennya kualitatif, berkaitan dengan kritik sastra. Oleh karena itu, metodologi penelitian terutama bersifat analitis dan deskriptif.

Kata Kunci: *Humaniora, Ekokritik Antroposen, Geo-ekokritik, Ekokritik Islam, eko-puisi Kanada*

INTRODUCTION

"Are humanities heading for extinction?" is a crucial inquiry that begins to occupy the minds of scholars worldwide. In the period from 2007 to 2017, British high school students' enrolment in philosophy and language programs has been in decline (British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2018, p. 1). Detailed statistics have been reported with evidence of closures or downsizing of humanities departments, particularly modern languages but also in theology and religious studies. Another report from the United States demonstrates that the number of college students graduating with a humanities major has fallen for the eighth straight year. The drop in graduates is somewhere between 16 percent and 29 percent since 2012 (Barshay, 2021). American students turned away from humanities and opted to major in engineering, health, and other career-oriented fields (Barshay, 2021). Although these data raise serious concerns about the future of humanities, it should be admitted that humanities are indispensable academic disciplines. Their decline is unarguably attributed to the accelerating technological advancements that direct the workforce to non-humanities in search of better and more available job opportunities. Nevertheless, students and scholars should see the other face of the coin to realize the power of humanities in formulating culture.

The idea that humanities are heading for extinction begins to surface in academia due to the bleak quantitative analyses provided by reports like the ones

referred to earlier. Researchers focused attention on this emerging phenomenon and highlighted some of its causes. However, the issue of the declining interest in humanities has not been well-investigated in relation to appropriate solutions. The present study covers this research gap by emphasizing the crucial role of humanities as a moving force that shapes human behavior. The researcher argues that raising awareness of this matter is the first incentive to regain interest in humanities. The active involvement of ecocritical theory is employed throughout the study to prove key points of argument. Ecocriticism manages to reform many chaotic repercussions of the cultural advancements that have occurred since the beginning of the industrial revolution in the wake of the nineteenth century. Another important contribution of the study is shedding light on Canadian ecopoetry which has not received appropriate attention in literary circles despite its skill full poeticism and influential environmental content. In addition, Islamecocriticism is used in the critical appreciation of the poem to emphasize its effective significance in evaluating and solving environmental dilemmas.

To defend the cause of humanities, the study argues that the continuous developments taking place in ecocritical theory prove that humanities are still on stage and are shaping humankind's perceptions of matters. This is the first section of the study, and it is concerned with listing some of the most recent branches and approaches of the ecocritical project. Then, Layton's "Lake Selby" is presented as a case study that illuminates the engaging potentialities of ecocritical theory and its capability to aid in changing nature's degradation. Both the emerging branches of ecocriticism and the analytical reading of the poem involve the investigation of scientific data. This process is common in most ecocritical texts, being dedicated to re-settling culture with all its scientific and technological aspects in nature. Accordingly, it highlights an important phenomenon, namely the dissolution of the traditional distinctions between humanities and non-humanities. Therefore, the present view of non-humanities as being superior to humanities is quite faulty and needs rethinking. The coming discussion introduces a thorough argument of these issues.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is based on a qualitative research approach that entails the technique of documentation in collecting data. Data are based on literary and scientific studies. Both proved to be suitable for the core of the argument. Moreover, the inductive approach of thematic analysis is employed in the literary criticism of the poem under consideration. The descriptive methodology is,

likewise, used throughout the discussion. Ecocriticism is chosen as an effective literary theory that can best answer the study's central questions. In addition, Canadian ecopoetry is utilized as a case study that fossilizes the findings of the paper.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Theory in Constant Evolution

The constant evolution of ecocriticism is a clear clue that humanities are active disciplines of knowledge. Since its inception in the 1990s, ecocritical thought witnessed the coinage of varied approaches and branches, and the process does not seem to be coming to an end. Heise remarks that ecocriticism almost literally exploded into a much broader research area encompassing multiple historical periods (from the Middle Ages to postmodernism), genres (from poetry to the graphic novel and narrative film), and regions: the Caribbean, Latin America, East Asia, and Western Europe all emerged as new areas of ecocritical exploration (Heise, 2014, p. 19). The geographic expansion of ecocriticism is, similarly, spotted by Mishra who argues that ecocriticism which was synonymous with the American nature writings as well as the British Romantic literature has now gained its momentum with worldwide eco-literature (Mishra, 2016). He brings attention to the Indian philosophy which is rich in ecocritical thought and provides brief entries for ten Indian eco-authors (p. 169). In the following lines, some important phases in the development of ecocriticism are traced. These phases reveal a unique feature of the theory, i.e., merging many fields of non-humanities in the analysis of ecocritical texts such as physics, geology, chemistry, biology, and more.

Anthropocene Ecocriticism

In 2013, the atmospheric scientist Crutzen and the ecologist Stoermer introduced the Anthropocene as a new geological era in which humans become the physical force that, like asteroids and volcanoes before, abruptly redirected the context for life's evolution on Earth with their cultural activities (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2013, p. 449). Palaeobiologist Zalasiewicz argues that the Anthropocene demands the integration of varied disciplines for an adequate study of the phenomenon including philosophy, anthropology, human history, sociology, economics, law, literature, art, physical sciences, and many more disciplines (Zalasiewicz, 2019). Thus, earth system sciences and geology found

their way to literary studies with the birth of Anthropocene ecocriticism. Anthropocene ecocriticism investigates environmental calamities due to anthropogenic causes. Simultaneously, it proposes solutions by alerting humankind to ecological hazards so as to alter its destructive ideological strands.

Clark tackled the emerging approach with considerable depth in *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* in 2015. He explores the possibility of a new mood of critical practice, one fully engaged with the destructive planetary environmental crisis of the Anthropocene era. Anthropocene, ecocriticism, according to Clark, is mainly a loose, shorthand term for all the new contexts and demands cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale, notably climate change and the general and accelerating degradation of ecosystems (Clark, 2015, p. 2). Four years later, Clark came up with *The Value of Ecocriticism* which emphasizes that the intellectual, moral, and political complexity of environmental issues, especially at a global scale (the so-called 'Anthropocene'), forms a new challenge of inventiveness for both literature and criticism.

Subsequent scholarly responses to the phenomenon were explored by several ecocritics. For instance, in "Beasts in the Closet: Sinisalo's *Troll* and Krebitz's *Wild* as Feminist and Queer Rejoinders to Anthropocene Fiction" (Hoffmann, 2021), Hoffmann explores shared experiences of oppression and exploitation between humans and other animals in the context of neoliberal and capitalist patriarchy, post-feminism, and the Anthropocene. Oppermann, on the same lines, tackles the Anthropocene in "The Scale of the Anthropocene: Material Ecocritical Reflections". She "considers the messy intra-actions of the Anthropocene agencies using the lenses of material ecocriticism" (Oppermann, 2018). The list of works tackling the Anthropocene in nature writings continues to accumulate in canonical ecocritical circles.

Geo-ecocriticism

One of the early writings that remarked common ground between ecocriticism and Geocriticism is Wess' "Geocentric Ecocriticism" (Wess, 2003). Rooted thus in the earth, conceived broadly as encompassing the biospheric conditions of life, observes Wess, ecocriticism would be a geocentrism, for it would both interpret from the standpoint of the earth and conceive the earth as a privileged center (Wess, 2003). He explores this new understanding of ecocriticism in a tentative Geo-ecocritical reading of Jewett's short story *White Heron*. He employs Jewett's fictional details to clarify the emergent approach that

may initially have seemed too abstract. What Wess thought *too abstract* becomes a literary accepted branch of ecocriticism with the publication of *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spatial Literary Studies* edited by Tally, Battista, and Saville (Gladwin, 2016). The interdisciplinary collection of essays hosted in this book demonstrates how ecocriticism has crossed the borderline of Geocriticism with geography, architecture, and urban studies being incorporated into the ecocritical theory. Hence, Geo-ecocriticism interrogates the relationship between humans and nonhumans in culture and the environment through intimate and multidimensional examinations of place in literary studies (Gladwin, 2016, p. 39). Although once treated as two distinct schools of thought one tackling environmental literary studies; the other dedicated to spatial literary studies, it is argued that ecocriticism and Geocriticism have a mutual interest in issues like place, space, landscape, and nature to tackle the lived environment through social, cultural, or natural spaces (Prieto, 2016, p. 19).

Islamecocriticism

The crucial need for fresh ideological basics to furnish balanced relationships between humans and Earth in the Anthropocene has instigated the coinage of Islamecocriticism by Abolfotoh (2021). Islamecocriticism is believed to be a suitable medium for the discussion of nature texts on a global scale because of Islamic Universalism. Islamic jurisprudence is divided into two major branches: acts of worship (فقه العبادات) and dealings (فقه المعاملات). The first branch is related to religious practices; the second is devoted to all aspects of life and how to deal with them appropriately. Islamic Universalism is concerned with the jurisprudence of dealings that enjoys universal implications. In other words, Islam reveals a universal engagement with humans' earthly existence via comprehensive ethical, political, economic, and social agendas that guarantee the safety of Earth and humanity as well (I. samy Abolfotoh, 2021). Being rooted in the Islamic tradition, Islamecocriticism enjoys a parallel universalism. Islamecocriticism enriches ecocritical theory by divine knowledge which is unbiased and all-inclusive. In addition, it introduces crucial concepts to the literary analysis of nature texts like stewardship, animism, prohibition of corruption, harm prevention, and others (I. samy Abolfotoh, 2021). The investigation of these principles entails the representation of scientific data from all needed fields of knowledge for a comprehensive analysis of texts. Therefore, humanities and non-humanities collaborate for a correct understanding and evaluation of ecological hazards.

The new approach has been examined in a number of studies by the same author. For example, she reads material ecocriticism through the lens of Islamic thought in "Matter Really Matters: A Poetic Material Islamecocritical Reading of Inanimateness Animism". Material Islamecocriticism effectively deciphers the conceptual divide between animate and inanimate beings by emphasizing the literal animism of nature (I. S. Abolfotoh, 2021). "Forest Stewardship: Deforestation Analyzed Islamecocritically in Canadian Ecopoetry" is oriented on the Islamecocritical handling of forest cover loss and how Islam provides necessary moral basics for re-harmonizing the relationship between humans and forests through forest stewardship (I. S. Abolfotoh, 2022a). The most recent demonstration of the principles of Islamecocriticism appears in "Hunting *f* Factors: An Islamecocritical Analysis of Selected Canadian Hunting Poems." The article argues that the literary analysis of hunting factors is commonly non-religious being based on secular ecocriticism (I. S. Abolfotoh, 2022c). Therefore, the study bridges a gap in academia by illustrating the input of Islam concerning hunting through literary criticism.

Others

In his invaluable review of publications in the field of ecocriticism in 2020, Ryan refers to a significant number of approaches springing out of the womb of ecophilosophy. He refers to the year 2018 as marking the arrival of affective ecocriticism with the publication of Bladow and Ladino's edited collection *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment* (Ryan, 2020). The field is concerned with connecting the ecocritical analyses of literary texts, cultural objects, and social phenomena with studies of affect and its cognate areas of emotion, feeling, energy, and others. Then, Ryan spots the appearance of postcolonial ecocriticism in 1998 with a special issue of *SPAN*, the journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. The issue elucidates the vital function of ecology and more-than-human ontologies in postcolonial literary works. New encounters between postcolonial theory and ecocritical analysis, Heise maintains, proved particularly productive for both fields: linking historical exploration and political ecology with literary analysis, the emergent 'poco-eco' matrix opened new perspectives on the connections and disjunctures between imperialism, ecological crisis, and conservation (Heise, 2014).

Ryan draws attention to phytocriticism and zoocriticism as kindred sub-fields of and areas of specialization within ecocriticism for holding in common an

emphasis on otherness, agency, ethics, aesthetics, ontology, and narratology in the plant and animal worlds (Ryan, 2020). The two sub-fields have been coined in Huggan and Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015) and *Novel Cultivations* (Chang, 2019). The latter develops an eminently nuanced phytocentric reading of Victorian literary narratives and signals the ongoing influence of scientific studies of plant cognition and behaviour on the ecocritical analysis of botanical texts (Ryan, 2020).

An Islamecocritical Appreciation of "Selby Lake"

After introducing these dramatic developments of ecocriticism, the study moves to examine "Lake Selby," being another decisive indication of the essentiality of humanities to life. The poem is written by Cameron (2015) who was born near Bucharest, Romania, and immigrated with his parents to Montreal (Holmes, 2009). The prolific satirical poet, short-story writer, essayist, and professor was a winner of the Governor General's Award (Cameron, 2015). Moreover, he theorized that poetry should be 'vital, intense, subtle and dramatic,' and his work is ample proof of his description.

The poem is dedicated to Selby Lake which is a freshwater lake located entirely in Dunham, Quebec, Canada with a width of 2 km by 0.8 km and an average depth of 1 m to 10 m (Selby Lake). The lake was found to be approaching a state of eutrophication in the 1970s. Eutrophication is the over enrichment of aquatic ecosystems with nutrients (Carpenter, 2005). The process can occur slowly due to natural factors or rapidly because of anthropogenic causes. The latter is termed cultural or anthropogenic 'eutrophication and denotes organic pollution resulting from human activities (Priyadarshi, 2005). Eutrophication produces blooms of algae or thick growths of aquatic plants stimulated by elevated phosphorus levels in fresh waters. Lake Selby suffered from anthropogenic eutrophication because of untreated or partially treated sewage discharged into it. The serious decline in the lake's ecology was documented by Layton in 1971 when he published the poem under analysis.

"Lake Selby" is a free-verse poem. It comprises three stanzas of fifteen; sixteen; and twenty-three lines, respectively. Lines are short; however, ideas flow smoothly among them by enjambments. Enjambments make the reader rush from one line to the other until s/he reaches the period placed at the end of each stanza that halts the procession of the poem for contemplating the state of the lake and the townsmen. The poet employs the patterns and rhythms of common speech. Moreover, the poem is colored by notable linguistic simplicity and clarity

of expression. Poetic precision is manipulated by rigorous visual imagery and satirical portrayals.

The first stanza sounds like an advertisement to draw more visitors to Lake Selby. Nevertheless, each claim in this advertisement is falsified by the speaker who seems to be pushing people away from this place. The stanza begins with the statement: "Definitely it's not polluted" (Cameron, 2015). The speaker justifies this claim sarcastically by referring to the fact that "no germ would wish / to be found dead in it" (Holmes, 2009). The poet draws a paradox between the earlier false assertions mostly furnished by real estate agents against the actual reality of the lake. The Lake has become so polluted that even germs, disease causers, will not venture to exist in it for fear of their inevitable death due to the high concentration of pollutants.

The advertiser resumes his/her attempts to lure more people to the lake, particularly those who fear deep waters, by affirming that "it's absolutely / safe for you and the kids" (Holmes, 2009). The speaker affirms this statement by ironically referring to the drastic decline in its water level:

*for however far you walk
into its lukewarm wetness
wavelets sedulously suck-suck
at your hips and navel (Holmes, 2009)*

The lake has been drained because of the over-exploitation of its freshwater for domestic use by townsmen. The word *lukewarm* refers to the lake's long comfortable summers. This warm weather and the existence of freshwater reserves are believed to be the major attractions that lead to the density of population there. Despite the positive connotations of the word *lukewarm*, the reader is frustrated by the lake's *wetness*. In other words, the speaker attracts attention to the water's withdrawal to the lake's sediments which are depicted as being merely wet. The point is, further, emphasized by referring to its ripples that barely reach one's hips and navel.

Challenging those who fear drowning in deep waters, the speaker states that "it's hardly worth trying / to drown in it". If one attempts to do so,

*you'd only
be found sitting on your bottom
and the lake's, rope around
your neck or ankle,
stone heavy on your lap (Holmes, 2009)*

The ironic tone of the poem persists in these original metaphorical depictions. Firstly, the shallow water is compared to a rope. This rope strangles whoever sits in the lake, or it is tied to his/her ankle with a heavy stone on the other end to take him/her to the lakebed. As for the weight of the water column, it is likened to a stone in the sitter's lap. Despite the harsh implications of these images, they are tendered by the harmless fluidity of water and its actual shallowness. The origin of the preceding metaphors lies in the Bible. It is stated in King James Bible that "whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it was better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (1769/2008, 18:6, italics original). The biblical reading of the poetic image compares the residents' anthropocentric assaults against the lake to those who offend Christian children. Both are committing a sinful crime against innocent helpless beings. On this level, it is implied that the environmental degradation of Lake Selby is a crime deserving severe punishment. It is worth noting that the word *water* has been deliberately omitted from the phrase *the lake's* to indicate the absence of natural water levels which is the dominant notion of this stanza. Another indispensable idea that appears in this part is death which is understood from the strangulation and drowning images. Death is tightly linked to the thematic development of the poem which is oriented on the expected death of the lake.

The first stanza brings attention to two key Islamecocritical concepts: harm prevention and moderation. Both are essential for balancing the egocentric needs of the townsmen against the ecocentric requirements of the lake. Concerning harm prevention, Prophet Muhammad (Sunan ibn Majah, book 13, hadith 2340) said: "*There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm*" (SUNNAH.COM, n.d.). Through reading the lake's contamination and water loss in light of the Hadith, one finds that the residents had inflicted harm on the lake. Nevertheless, the second half of the Hadith indicates that harm should not be reciprocated to residents by depriving them from the lake's resourcefulness. An Islamecocritical interpretation of the situation proposes that priority should be given to saving the lake and restoring its ecological stability. Then, alternatives should be sought to get rid of sewage and to satisfy the townsmen's needs for water. Regarding moderation, the residents' awareness should have been raised to its value as an indispensable solution. Addressing humankind, the Almighty God states: "eat and drink but waste not by extravagance, certainly He (Allâh) likes not *Al-Musrifûn* (those who waste by extravagance)" (Qur'an, 1984, 7:31, italics original). Moderation should have been practiced on two levels: 1) through

the moderate domestic use of water; and 2) through laying regulations for a moderate number of inhabitants in the area.

The second stanza accompanies the reader on a journey to the polluted shallow lake with the speaker's son. "My son," the stanza begins, "who is six flatly/refuses to swim in it" (Holmes, 2009). His refusal to swim contradicts his father's statement that "wind and water / drive him crazy with joy, / especially water"(Holmes, 2009). The son's paradoxical reaction to the lake and his inner struggle between refusal and enthusiasm are caused by "the stuff squishing / through his toes"; he "wants none of its sliminess" (Holmes, 2009). A common visible effect of eutrophication is algal blooms. The lines refer to their spread in the lake. The poet employs onomatopoeia in the word *squishing* which points to the soft squelching sound of algae when walked on. Furthermore, imagery is appropriately employed in the word *sliminess*. Later in the same stanza, algae are depicted as being "clammily." Both words invoke their disagreeably moist, sticky, and cold texture. Moreover, they stimulate the reader's senses to feel the son's repulsive experience.

Algal blooms continue to bother the son in the remainder of this stanza. They are depicted as a despicable person grabbing him tightly in the following extended personification: "it's so many vile fingers / clutching clammily at his heels". The alliterative guttural plosive /k/ in "clutching clammily" suggests hardness and reinforces the authoritative action of the algae. Therefore, the son "has to kick furiously / before they will release him". Once free from their clutch, he starts "sputtering with rage" (Holmes, 2009). The onomatopoeia in *sputtering* allows the reader to hear the son's angry reaction to the algae's spread in the lake and how they are disturbing his joy of the water.

The average 6-year-old is about 42 to 49 inches tall. When the speaker states in the last two lines of the stanza that his son spitted "mouthfuls / of tepid lakewater and weeds," the reader deduces that the lake water level in the 1970s did not exceed the son's height (Holmes, 2009). This implicit message affirms the extreme water loss due to the residential overuse of the lake's freshwater. The phrase *tepid lakewater* is the speaker's second reference to the region's warm weather, a bliss which turned into a plight. "Virtually the only lake in the area during the summer," writes Farfan, "Selby Lake was a magnet for people from the nearby villages of Dunham and Frelighsburg (Farfan, 1909). People flocked to the shores of this little oasis, ever-anxious to escape the heat and dust of village life."

The poet's choice of the character of a child in the second stanza has been so clever. Childhood touches on the Islamecocritical notion of innateness. Innateness is molded by the instinctual impulses which the Almighty God has placed within humans like all other species. Making sound choices and judgments requires checking one's innateness. Innateness is in its purest form in children who are not spoilt by materialism, greed, or false perceptions of the meaning of progress. The reaction of the speaker's son to the algae indicates his innate ability to decode the lake's sickness. The paradoxical reaction of the townsmen to the same situation in the third stanza implies the corruption of their innateness. They are controlled by evil whims and greedy self-interests which are prohibited by the Word of the Almighty God in holy Qur'an:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنْ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ ٤٠ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ۖ ٤١

Meaning: *But as for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires and lusts. / Verily, Paradise will be his abode (The Qur'an, 79: 40-41).*

Attaining the abode in Paradise has two conditions: the first condition is the fear of accountability in the presence of Allah. The second condition is to restrain oneself from the evil desires. As a matter of fact, both conditions can play a vital role in evading many environmental evils, and they can help humans enjoy a kind worldly life.

The scope of the poem by the third stanza expands to include the Selby Lake community, the source of the ecological deterioration in the area. "Yet the townsmen," the speaker remarks, "summering it / in stolid painted cottages" (Cameron, 2015; Holmes, 2009). The use of the conjunction *yet* at the outset of this stanza indicates the residents' indifference to the outspread of pollutants and algae in the shallow waters of Selby. They should have been urged to find a cure for the dying lake or at least to give the place a break to self-heal in the long run. Instead, they ignored all apparent symptoms of decay to enjoy the summer in painted cottages. These cottages are depicted as being stolid. The personification implies that they show no excitement or emotion to the townsmen's enthusiasm about their exhilarating summer activities in the lake. This reaction on the part of the cottages displays their sympathy with the defenseless lake and their detestation of those inhabiting them.

The dwellers continue their anthropocentric violations by establishing more and more cottages "that each year tighten / around the lake like a noose" (Holmes, 2009; I. S. Abolfotoh, 2022b). The simile compares the cottages to a noose strangling the lake. This second strangulation image in the poem suggests

the inevitable future death of the lake with the continuance of humankind's interference in its once-balanced ecology. In the first stanza, the poet likened the lake's water to a rope around the neck of whoever sits in it. Re-reading this description with the preceding noose simile in mind indicates an interrelated effect between nature and humankind, in this case between the lake and the residents. The residents polluted the lake and overexploited its water reserves. The lake responded by turning into a dreary spot void of joyful sceneries and brimming with sickness that will be transferred in turn to who touches it. The message becomes clear to the reader: by conserving nature, human beings are rewarding themselves with a healthy environment that will reflect on their wellbeing. Damaging the ecosphere, on the other hand, has irredeemable repercussions that unavoidably will jeopardize them.

Having ignored the altered ecology of Selby, the townsmen spend their times merrily by the lake with their families. The speaker criticizes their carelessness using a series of sarcastic depictions of their activities.

*plunge into the shallow water
with cries of delight and gusto
ha-ha-ing to one another
and trying a hundred-and-one tricks
to amuse the less venturesome on shore;
for hours and hours I watch them
pretend they're bouncing porpoises
leviathans and comical octopi
or cruel-mouthed sharks
to make their beached wives and progeny
wave admiringly and praise* (Holmes, 2009)

The word *plunge* denotes jumping or diving energetically into deep waters. The paradoxical wording of the first line in which the swimmers plunge into shallow water refers to their irrational insistence on ignoring the current state of the lake. The earlier reaction of the speaker's son to the dying lake sounds saner than that of those mature men. He was sputtering with rage; they are crying delightfully and laughing enthusiastically. Despite the overall repulsive depiction of the place in the first two stanzas, the swimmers defy their logic and continue their phony amusement. The logic of the ones on shore is, similarly, criticized for being less venturesome in a place previously advertised as being absolutely safe, or perhaps they are aware of the pollutants accumulating in the water: consequently, they chose the shore's safety. As for the remaining lines of the above quotation, they frustrate the reader by the swimmers' varied

performances and their fake joy in the water just to gain the admiration and praise of their families on the beach.

By the end of the dull show, the swimmers "scrubbed clean of grime / and slime" (Holmes, 2009). *Grime* and *slime* are grouped by assonance to draw attention to their bodies that have become covered with dirt and to the slimy coating of algae that makes them adhere to the skin. Fun is gone, and they are seen "smoking their pipes / they will sit and stare at the lake". Alliterative /s/ in the lines produces a hissing sound that implies sinister evil and danger which have been threatening the lake from the very beginning of the poem. "Moon and silence," the speaker ponders, "have changed [the lake] / into a silvered apparition" (Holmes, 2009). The silvery reflection of moonlight on the water surface commonly stimulates gentle relieving emotions. Nevertheless, the jeremiad is depiction of sitting smokers staring silently at the silvered ghost "of some lost and perfect island" triggers nothing but anxiety and despair. The lake is lost because of the residents' silence and not displaying any active engagement to save it from its doomed end. Selby is ominously likened to an island to suggest that the water's still surface covered by green algae makes it closer in shape to an island than a lake. In the poem's finale, the lake decides to avenge itself from its destroyers for the loss of its unique identity as an aquatic biome by turning into an evil witch "rising slowly to enchant them / between the dark elms and pines" (Holmes, 2009).

The third stanza highlights three essential pillars of Islamecocriticism: stewardship, animism, and divine balance. Prophet Muhammad said, "*The world is sweet and green (alluring) and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerent in it so that He should see how you act...*" (Sahih Muslim, book 49, hadith 6606).

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمُوتُ الْأَسْبَغُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ
إِنَّهُ كَانَ خَلِيفًا عَفُورًا ٤٤

Meaning: *The seven heavens, the earth and everything in them glorify Allah. And there is nothing but glorify Him by praising Him, but you do not understand their tasbih. Indeed, He is Most Forbearing, Most Forgiving.* (Aqu'an, 17: 44).

The Hadith and the Quranic verse point to two entwined facts. The first is that humans are stewards responsible for the well-being of Earth. The second is that all sentient and non-sentient beings are inspirited, and they praise their Creator in utter subservience. Hence, humans are accountable in front of the Maker for keeping the divine balance of the living planet without corrupting its symmetry. The townsmen were not responsible stewards and did not treat Selby as a worthy animate being; consequently, they distorted its divine balance.

The poem ends with a dreary finale that fills the soul with sorrow for the lake that was a victim of humans' carelessness and overexploitation. Nevertheless, the poetic outcry of Layton to local authorities led to the reversal of eutrophication by treating the source of the problem:

The lake's sanitation was improved, following the installation of a sewer system in Dunham in 1986–87, which replaced the septic tanks used previously. Additionally, the lake's condition ameliorated following the re-vegetation of the lakeshore, restoration of ditches, and the installation of sediment sensors and catchment basins by the city of Dunham in collaboration with the Association pour la protection de l'environnement du lac Selby (APELS). ("Selby")

The dramatic changes that took place following the poem's publication transformed the lake's future. Furthermore, they emphasize the role of eco-poetry in fighting nature degradation. The case study of Selby Lake and the poetic handling of its deteriorated condition in the 1970s manifest for the potentialities of humanities as a crucial knowledge domain.

CONCLUSION

The study has been a defense of humanities. Real-life data affirm that humanities come in a second position to non-humanities. Science touches on the basic needs of humans like curing diseases, constructing cities, organizing water and food provisions, furnishing technological advancements, and so on. Humanities study the aspects of human society and culture such as language, literature, arts, history, religion, philosophy, along with others. Hence, it is mostly acknowledged worldwide that the career of a physician or a scientist is more prestigious than that of a literary critic or a teacher. Academically speaking, the world's most impactful journals in the Science Citation Index Expanded occupy the first quartile. By contrast, the Arts and Humanities Citation Index's prominent journals are placed in the second quartile.

The aforementioned classifications stem from an instinctual human impulse of categorization to set all life arenas in order with the accumulation of knowledge over ages. However, the branches that come in a second position mostly fall prey to underestimation. Humanities are one of the victims. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that categorization does not imply a superior or an inferior position to whatever is being classified. All fields of knowledge are invaluable and complement one another because all of them originally were one discipline if one considers a reversal process backwards in time. The subtle evidence is that varied disciplines of humanities and non-humanities intersect in

some areas of research; ecocriticism is a typical example. To illustrate, checking scientific data is indispensable for a rich analysis of many ecocritical writings and for reaching sound conclusions. These facts should be emphasized in academic gatherings and by scholars and teachers to invigorate interest in the study of humanities. Humanities constitute a critical aspect of the human cultural heritage and can check, enhance, and/or correct rapid cultural advancements. Consequently, humanities should be defended against any sort of underestimation.

To underline the cherished output of humanities, the study employs ecocriticism as one of the current dynamic literary theories. Its primary engagement is harmonizing the ongoing binary opposition between nature and culture. The continuous evolution of ecocriticism is traced in the first section of the argument as a visible indicator of the vitality of humanities and their significance in the human community. The ecocritical project that was first bordered by the American and British literary traditions expands to successive global waves. It manages to assimilate world literature and to encompass many scientific fields in its exploration of environmental chaos.

Among the many phases of ecocriticism, the study tackles Anthropocene ecocriticism in which earth system sciences and geology are integrated in the study of nature writings to explore global ecological dilemmas. In addition, spatial literary studies centered on geography, architecture, and urban studies blended in with ecocriticism by the coinage of Geo-ecocriticism. The emerging field embraces place, space, nature, and literature. Regarding Islamecocriticism, it appears in pursuit of reading ecocritical texts considering Islamic universal ethos oriented on shaping balanced inter-relationships between humankind and nature. Other remarkable approaches to ecophilosophy involve affective ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism, as well as phytocriticism and zoocriticism as sub-fields of ecocriticism. These have been a few stations of the ecocritical train that started its unstoppable journey a few decades ago in a noble endeavor to rescue the ecological degradation of Earth caused by scientific advances. In other words, humanities are cleaning up the mess of non-humanities. Thus, the two broad branches of human knowledge cannot do without each other. Integration rather than conflict should be the foundation in approaching human knowledge to gain collective green progress.

"Lake Selby" in the second part of the argument exemplifies the force of eco-poetry as a fundamental sub-discipline of humanities capable of effecting concrete changes. The poem addresses the pollution and drainage of Selby due to

the density of population in the area compared to the lake's limited aquatic capacity. Layton adopts an ironic voice to demonstrate the contamination of water that becomes repellent even to germs. Nevertheless, the townsmen ignored the lake's ecological deterioration, and the poem ends with depictions of Selby approaching death. The poetic petition reached the Canadian government which interfered with persistent efforts that rescued the lake. Approaching the poem from an Islamecocritical viewpoint illuminates crucial concepts in nature conservation including harm prevention, moderation, innateness, stewardship, animism, and divine balance. The dynamicity of ecocriticism and the correction of anthropogenic violations in Selby Lake confirm the viability of ecocriticism and eco-poetry and answer the study's central question: Are humanities heading for extinction?

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