Avian Poetics in Charles Olson's "Merce of Egypt" and Robert Creeley's "The Birds": Projective Experimentation as an Eco-Vision

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Abstract. Form and content in poetry are two interconnected elements. Black Mountain poets such as Charles Olson and Robert Creeley are two exemplary originators who orchestrate 'projective verse' and jazz prosody in their poems. Their works represent new poetics out of Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina as the experimental school of arts and literature in the 1950s. This article discusses Olson and Creeley's avian poetics since some of their poems depict the image of bird as well as trees. Despite the avant-garde poetic experimentation, the nature of interconnected elements in their poems evokes a biocentric view of the need for conserving nonhuman beings such as birds and vegetation since these natural agents have pivotal roles in sustaining an ecosystem resilience.

Keywords: form and content, Black Mountain poets, projective verse, jazz prosody, avian poetics, ecosystem resilience

1. INTRODUCTION

Animals are human's companions in this terrestrial world. God did not only position human but also nonhuman animals including various vegetation and other natural landscapes in the creation myth. Animals of various species and sizes from the mega fauna such as elephant to the small insect such as ant and even microorganisms have essential roles in shaping the natural world. They along with human beings and vegetative organisms constitute an ecological system (ecosystem) in their interdependent relation with each other and with the physical environment (Begon, et.al, 2006, xi-xii). Their interdependence makes what is called food webs in which creatures such as insects feed on plants; birds prey on the insects, while, the plants nourish the birds with seeds. The next trajectory is that the birds spread the seeds when they defecate, which promotes the growth of plants (Wilson 2016, 101-111; Sala 2020,

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29). This natural web also takes place among other species in the natural world that enables the biotic life to keep existing and sustaining (ibid., 2016, 101-111; 2020, 29). Compared to other animal creatures, birds especially of the domesticated species might be closer, more familiar and hospitable to human beings. In terms of species, birds also have more varieties compared to other animals. With their flying behavior, the birds can live freely in any habitat both in the natural world or in the wild and in human-made physical landscapes. Despite the very dense concrete and limestone skyscrapers in New York City, various small animal species such as coyotes, squirrels, skunks, opossums, white-tailed deer, including 200 species of birds can live there (Sala 2020, 30). The birds for instance will fly from one building to another or even make their nests there. They will also perch on several trees near the buildings and pollinate the plants they feed from (Tudge 2009, 177). Looking at the friendly and indispensable qualities of birds, it is not surprising if artists and writers frequently use birds as the inspiring images in their works. Their flying behavior expresses freedom and exploration, the two qualities that the artists and writers need to emulate in their creative process in producing their works. An American poet in the revolutionary era, Emily Dickinson for instance often uses the image 'bird' in her poems, such as in ""Hope" is the thing with feathers", in which she compared hope with a flying bird—

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops—at all—
(Miller 2016, 150)

In another poem, Dickinson depicts the birds as a flock of domesticated creatures that arise in their harmony with the Nature beauty—

The Happy Winds—their Timbrels took—
The Birds—in docile Rows
Arranged themselves around their Prince
The Wind—is Prince of Those—
(ibid., 2016, 261)

In some of her poems, Dickinson often used the image 'bobolinks' as "a North American songbird of the American blackbird family" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) as birds that are associated with cheerfulness and spirit of life. Here is another Dickinson's poem that uses some bird species as the images—

For every Bird a nest—
Wherefore in timid quest
Some little Wren goes seeking round—

Wherefore when boughs are free,
Households in every tree,

Pilgrim be found?

Perhaps a home too high—
Ah aristocracy!
The little Wren desires—
Perhaps of twig so fine—
Of twine e'en superfine,
Her pride aspires—

The Lark is not ashamed
To build upon the ground
Her modest house—

Yet who of all the throng
Dancing around the sun
Does so rejoice?
(Miller 2016, 65-66)

The images 'Wren', 'Lark' are two songbird species that in this poem also have some allegorical meaning since the poet wrote them in upper case letters. Whatever the allegorical meaning is, the use of the bird images shows how birds have a prominent place for the poet as suggesting her soaring imagination and search of freedom.

In modern American poetry, birds also become adorable images in poems by several poets. For instance, in Gary Snyder, a San Francisco Renaissance poet who was also affiliated with Beat poet from the West Coast (The Beat Generation) (Charters 1992, 306) in his poem "Migration of Birds" written in 1956, he used some birds such as 'white-crowned sparrows', 'rooster', 'crows', 'juncoes', 'robins' and 'seabirds' as the subjects in this poem (Snyder 1992, 15). Then in another poem entitled "this poem is for birds", Snyder depicts birds as human kins whose behavior human beings should learn from in the way they fly over the sky and flap their wings, the embodiment of freedom, strength, and beauty—

Birds in a whirl, drift to the rooftops

Kite dip, swing to the seabank fogroll
Form: dots in air changing line from line,
the future defined.
Brush back smoke from the eyes,
dust from the mind,
With the wing-feather fan of an eagle.
A hawk drifts into the far sky.
A marmot whistles across huge rocks.
Rain on the California hills.
Mussels clamp to sea-boulders
Sucking the Spring tides

(Snyder 1992, 46)

Other modern and contemporary American poets such as Robinson Jeffers in his poem "Hurt Hawks", Elizabeth Dodd in "House Sparrow at Skara Brae", Donald Revell in "Birds small enough...", Jonathan Skinner in "Birds of the Holy Lands", C.K. Williams in "Blackbird" (Fisher-Wirth & Street 2013) are some examples of poems that depict birds as the images and their ecological virtue as the biotic organism. Charles Olson and Robert Creeley as Black Mountain poets from Black Mountain College, an experimental school of arts and literature in Asheville, North Carolina in the 1950s (Duberman 1972, 352-356; Katz 2013, 15-18) also featured birds in some of their poems. Olson in his famous long poem "The Kingfisher" also describes the kind of bird and treats the avian creature as having moral and aesthetic overtones. Meanwhile, Creeley wrote his poems in relatively succinct lines in a kind of jazzy prosody. This article discusses the meaning of avian poetics in Olson's "Merce of Egypt" and Creeley's "The Birds" by especially focusing on two questions: **first**, how avian poetics in Olson and Creeley's poems serve as projective experimentation; **second**, how their avian poetics evokes ecological awareness in their readers especially in cherishing birds as co-existent members of the biotic life. In discussing these questions, I refer to some theories and knowledge especially about Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" (Creeley 1953) and birds (Tudge 2009). Since there are not any special sources about animal poetics as there are more about poetics of place and of vegetation (Ryan 2018), the discussion on birds as avian poetics in this article refers to the notion of poetic animals (Malamud 2003). Animal poetics is a part of Environmental Humanities or ecocriticism, so that the method I use in discussing these questions refers to some ecocritical principles (Rueckert 1996, 105-123).

2. METHODOLOGY

This analysis uses qualitative method that all the data are in words. The discussion is focused on bird images in Olson and Creeley's poems that the researcher called avian poetics. The procedure in collecting data is by doing a close reading and textual analysis of their poems. The instrument refers to the two poems "Merce of Egypt" by Charles Olson and "The Birds" by Robert Creeley by especially highlighting avian and vegetal imageries. Since discussing their poetic experimentation deals with some of their poetic theories that they practised and taught at a school called Black Mountain College, the analysis of their poems also considers the influence of the theories. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly introduce the school and their poetic theory. Furthermore, the analysis also briefly incorporates poetic animals of Randy Malamud, so that this part also presents this introduction.

2.1. Black Mountain College

This Black Mountain College (or BMC) is an experimental school for arts and literature that emerged in the U.S. in the 1950s. It was founded in 1933 on a green land

in Asheville, North Carolina in the area of the Blue Ridge Mountains. A figure who initiated the founding of the college was John Andrew Rice (Katz 2013, 15-16; Creasy 2019). It was officially opened on September 25, 1933. This school did not last for long since it was closed down in 1956 (ibid., 2019). The first years of the school took place in the Blue Ridge campus. In the next years the school was also located in the Swannanoa Valley where there is a scenic lake named Lake Eden (Katz 2013, 52; Creasy 2019). In its early years of the college formation, the school focused on doing fine arts, paintings, sculptures, carvings (Katz 2013, 15-18). But then in the early 1950s as Charles Olson and some of his friends who were poets came to Black Mountain College, Olson converted the school to a new school of arts center that not only visual arts but more especially literary school (Duberman 1972, 354-356). In one of BMC prospectus dated for Spring Semester, February 11 to June 7, 1952, there are about ten principles about the school and what each student and teacher should practise in living in the community. For instance, in principle I it says that "the student, rather than the curriculum, is the proper center off a general education, because it is he and she that a college exist for." Then another principle deals with how they should believe in the ecology of their cognition and material things in their surroundings, or the interconnection between ideas and things—

> One characteristic, from the beginning, has been the recognition that ideas are only such as they exist in things and in actions. Another worth emphasizing (it is still generally overlooked in those colleges where classification into fields, because of curriculum emphasis, remains the law) is that Black Mountain college carefully recognizes that, at this point in man's necessities, it is not things in themselves but what happens between things where the life of them is to be sought. (Katz 2013, 202)

In terms of learning and teaching process, the school rules emphasize on teaching method rather than content and on process. These rules also encouraged students to realize that "the way of handling facts and himself amid the facts is more important than facts themselves." Since when facts change, the method of handling the facts will remain the same. The teacher should also serve as 'a working artist' who was not merely 'a passive recipient and hander-out of mere information' but a 'productive, creative person' who made use of things that came within his orbit (ibid., 202). Then, the students should learn a technique, a grammar of the art of living and working in the world; logic; dialectic; hard, inscrutable facts of science; performing arts to revivify their nerves and cognizance of their surroundings—

> To learn to move, at least without fear, to hear, see, touch, also without fear or at least without denials of first hungers, to be aware of everything around us (again, including especially people)—this is to start to penetrate the past and to feel as well as mentally see our way into the future (ibid., 2013, 202).

Charles Olson and Robert Creeley who had written poems as well as essays long before they went to the school then became mentors and teachers at the school. They productively wrote essays and poems and published their works in their own printing press. They produced poetry broadsides and other small-run editions usually with artwork. They usually printed the essays and poems with drawings/illustrations by students at the BMC fine arts. For instance, *The Maximus Poems 1-10 & 11-22* by Charles Olson (1953, 1956); *The Immoral Proposition* by Robert Creeley (1953) with drawings by René Laubiès; *All that is Lovely in Men* by Robert Creeley (1955), with drawings by Dan Rice and cover photos by Jonathan Williams (ibid., 2013, 199). Several figures who were students of Olson and Creeley and then became major writers and artists include Fielding Dawson, Ed Dorn, Joel Oppenheimer, Michael Rumaker, John Wieners, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, John Cage (ibid., 2013, 201, 274).

In his essay entitled "Projective Verse", Charles Olson pointed out his theory of poetry. What he meant by 'projective verse' is a kind of new poetry in open form that he called 'composition by field' as being different from its previous 'non-projective' verse/poem written in close form. He pointed out at least three qualities in projective verse: (1) the *kinetics* of the thing, which means that "a poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it, by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader," therefore, the poem should be 'a high energy-construct' and 'an energy-discharge'; (2) the *principle*, or "the law which presides conspicuously over such composition, and the reason why a projective poem came into being." In this quality, he especially asserted that "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT"; (3) the *process* of the thing, which means to actualize the principle to channel the energies to accomplish the form. Then he further said that "ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION." This means that a poem 'means exactly what it says' and always 'keeps moving, keeps in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen" (Creeley 1959, 16-17). In his projective verse theory, Olson also emphasized on one's breathing along with listening to each syllable he/she orchestrates through lines in his/her poems. Each syllable means something and matters. For instance, the syllable 'is' comes from the Aryan root 'as' that means 'to breathe'. Then, the English 'not' equals the Sanskrit 'na', which may come from the root 'na' meaning 'to be lost' and 'to perish'; the syllable 'be' comes from 'bhu' or 'to grow' (ibid., 1959, 18). Then after the syllables come the line, both of these elements make a poem, what he called "Single Intelligence". The line likewise comes from one's breathing. Olson classified the interconnection of all syllables and lines into a term called 'field'. Then any word will denote 'objects' as things that exist inside a poem and things that the poet uses in his/her poetic discourse. These elements (the syllable, the line, the image, the sound, the sense) in open poems constitute "participants in the kinetic of the poem just as one is accustomed to take what he/she calls the objects of reality." These elements are those that create "the tensions of a poem just as those other objects create what one knows as the world" (ibid., 1959, 20). These objects "must be treated exactly as they do occur therein and not by any ideas or preconceptions from outside the poem; they must be handled as a series of objects in field in such a way that a series of tensions

(which they also are) are made to *hold*, and to hold exactly inside the content and the content of the poem which has forced itself, through the poet and them, into being" (ibid., 1959, 20). Olson also used the term 'objectism' to describe "the kind of relation of man to experience which a poet might state as the necessity of a line or a work to be as wood is, to be as clean as wood is as it issues from the hand of nature, to be shaped as wood can be when a man has had his hand to it." Further, he explained that 'objectism' also means "the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which with no derogation one calls objects" (ibid., 1959, 24). In some ways, Olson's emphasis on objects corresponds with what Ezra Pound, an American poet of the previous imagist era of the 1920s emphasized, the direct treatment of the 'thing' or 'image'. This presents "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time"; things are more important than idea itself (Allen & Tallman 1973, 36-37).

2.2. Animal Poetics vs Poetic Animals

In his chapter entitled "Poetic Animals", Randy Malamud, a professor in English and an ecocritic from Georgia State University discusses 'poetic animals' rather than 'animal poetics' by borrowing cultural anthropological studies of Mesoamerican beliefs about nonhuman animals. He preferred 'poetic animals' rather than 'animal poetics' since the former term privileges animals as creatures that have equal rights to human beings, while the latter term tends to objectify animals or to separate animals from human world. The Mesoamerican culture believes in "animal souls" or the interconnection between a person's soul with an external animal counterpart as an expansive paradigm for human-animal relationships (Malamud 2003, 51). The pan-Mesoamerican indigenous people believe in what they generally call *nagualismo* or *tonalismo*. The two terms are related; the first means "the transformation of a person into an animal; the second refers to "a person's companion animal or destiny, which everyone is believed to possess" (ibid., 2003, 54). Then, he referred to Rigoberta Menchu's notion about Guatemalan Quiche culture that "affirms animals' interdependence with people via a spiritual system closely resembling that of the Chamula." In the tribe belief, "every child is born with a *nahual* or a shadow, one's protective spirit who will go through life with him." They believe that the *nahual* is "the representative of the earth, the animal world, the sun and water, one's double personality." When one kills an animal, "that animal's human double will be very angry with him because he is killing his nahual" (ibid., 2003, 57). The animal soul illustrates 'the animal component, or complement, of a human soul, a shared existence, a symbiotic human-animal consciousness" (ibid., 2003, 61).The animal soul here refers to human's animal soul or "the part of the human spirit in an external animal." For the Mesoamericans, the animals really matter and "embody a spiritual and ecological potency on their own terms rather than simply figuring as supporting players in an anthropocentric fantasy" (ibid., 2003, 62). When animals become central figures in poetry so that they

are called animal poetics, the representation of animals tends to be objects rather than subjects aesthetically and sociologically.

In contrast, the Mesoamericans regard animal souls as being real and immediate. These souls "live out at the heart of their belief system, a valorization of animal life". These "reside at the very core of what might be called a native metaphysics of personhood in Mesoamerica." The language of animal souls has shaped "the Mesoamerican construction of self and social identity, destiny and power, as those which occured in Mexico and Central America for thousand years" (ibid., 2003, 66-67). The polemics about animal poetics for instance emerges in John Berger's article that discusses parallelism between humans and animals. But Berger's notion about this parallelism tends to privilege human beings and subordinate animals. In other words, there is a binary opposition between humans and animals. In contrast, parallelism for the Mesoamericans serves as a "permeable and mutually inclusive idea". This means that there are 'shared claims between humans and animals in the ecosphere.' This Mesoamerican parallelism resembles "a ladder: two straight lines" that represent "the lifecourses of human and nonhuman animals, with copious rungs connecting these two lines" (ibid., 2003, 67). Referring to Kowalsi's idea about the souls of animals, Malamud explained that "animals are human's spiritual colleagues and emotional companions." These animals have "the power to touch and transform" human beings; there is "an inwardness in these animals that awakens what is innermost in humans" (ibid., 2003, 68). Poems about animals will also have to contextualize them within the natural environment. This means to correlate them with ecopoetics. An American professor in English and an environmental humanist, John Felstiner in his essay entitled "Care in Such a World" as part of his essays in *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* discussed the pivotal roles poetry can take as a literary agent to evoke public understanding about the urgency to environmental issues (Felstiner 2009, 1-15). Furthermore, another ecocritic, William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" discusses ecological qualities in poems that one can further call ecopoems. For instance, he calls poems as 'stored energy' which sustains life as it is in contrast with fossil fuels as unrenewable energy sources (in Glotfelty & Fromm 1996, 108). By quoting from McHarg's idea about poems, Rueckert compares poems with green plants in their capacity to capture energy and to create 'a self-perpetuating and evolving system' (ibid., 1996, 111). Rueckert and McHarg's ideas about ecopoems in some ways correspond with Olson's statement about projective verse. The notions of 'stored energy', 'sustaining energy pathways', 'self-perpetuating and evolving system' correlate with Olson's 'the kinetics of the thing'; poems that should become 'a high energy-construct' and 'an energy-discharge' (Creeley 1959, 16-17).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this analysis are focused on the aforementioned two questions: first, avian poetics in Olson and Creeley's Poems as Projective Experimentation; second, Olson and Creeley's avian poetics as an evocation of one's ecological awareness.

3.1. Avian Poetics in Olson and Creeley's Poems as Projective Experimentation

Charles Olson's poem "Merce of Egypt" consists of stanzas with different number of lines, while Robert Creeley's "The Birds" has 10 stanzas of triplet and a single line as coda. Olson's stanzas are numbered from 1 to 5.

1
I sing the tree is a heron
I praise long grass.
I wear the lion skin
over the long skirt
to the ankle. The ankle
is a heron

I look straightly backward. Or I bend to the side straightly
to raise the sheaf
up the stick of the leg
as the bittern's leg, raised
as slow as
his neck grows
as the wheat. The presentation,
the representation,
is flat

I am followed by women and a small
Boy in white carrying a duck,
all have flat feet and, foot before foot,
The women with black wigs
And I intent
upon idlers,
and flowers
(Creeley 1959, 165)

Referring to Olson's projective verse theory, the form of the stanzas above is not regular, asymmetrical since the first stanza has six lines, while the second has nine lines. Then the third stanza has a more asymmetrical form since the lines also use indentation. This means that this asymmetrical form reveals an extension of poetic content. This does not refer to any certain subject the poem deals with but with imageries, the general sense, the kinetics of the images that all suggest a high-energy construct and an energy-discharge. The first line in the first stanza for instance uses an image 'the tree' as 'the image itself', 'the projective image' that functions to connect the first event 'I sing" with the second 'the tree is a heron'. This makes the lines reveal

another scene or what Olson called “one perception must immediately and directly lead to a further perception. This extended metaphor then exemplifies the kinetics of the object itself since the images keep moving and these transform one object into another. The image ‘heron’ then serves as a projective image that connects one image and another. This asymmetry then exemplifies dynamism, spontaneity, experimentation, and ecology of various things in the poem. The last line “the ankle is a heron” expresses a rather surrealistic scene that extraordinarily compares ‘the ankle’ with ‘a heron.” The scenes the poet depict do not only deal with one subject, but also with a variety of objects. Then these scenes tend to be mythic but at the same time to be bizarre or unusual such as in the lines “I praise long grass”, “I wear the lion skin”, and “the ankle is a heron” (ibid., 1959, 165).

In comparison, in terms of form, Creeley’s poem, “The Birds” makes use of regular and symmetrical typography. The ten stanzas consist of three lines each. And the coda is one line that has a coherence with the previous ten stanzas. The following are stanza 1 to 4, in which each stanza actually contains only one line (one main idea) and the other lines make phrases (long and short) as parts of the previous and following lines—

3.2. The Birds

for Jane and Stan Brakhage

I’ll miss the small birds that come
for the sugar you put out
and the bread crumbs. They’ve

made the edge of the sea domestic
and, as I am, I welcome that.
Nights my head seemed twisted

With dreams and the sea wash,
I let it all come quiet, waking,
counting familiar thoughts and objects.

Here to rest, like they say, I best
liked walking along the beach
past the town till one reached
(Friedlander 2008, 146)

Stanza 1 above has one complete line “I’ll miss the small birds that come for the sugar you put out and the bread crumbs”, while the next words ‘they’ve’ belong to the following line in stanza 2 “made the edge of the sea domestic and, as I am, I welcome that.” Looking stanzaic in its pattern, this poem in fact uses continuous form. In view of Olson’s projective verse, this poetic form then exemplifies a field composition or open form or a projective poem. Then, embodying one part of a line in one stanza

from a different stanza epitomizes the kinetics of the thing itself, the interconnection between objects from one stanza to another. These interlocking lines from stanza to stanza as an open form organize ‘an extension of content’. Since each stanza does not impart a complete perception of things and scenes, it leads to a further perception in the following stanza (Creeley 1959, 16-17). Thus, reading one line such as that in stanza 1 “I’ll miss the small birds that come for the sugar you put out and the bread crumbs” will not poetically be complete unless one reads the next line as remaining syllables in the stanza and in stanza 2 “They’ve made the edge of the sea domestic and, as I am, I welcome that.” This continuous and interlocking chain of lines as well as the more asymmetric typography of Olson’s emulate jazz improvisation as both Olson and Creeley were big fans of and relished modern jazz of American jazz musician such as Charlie Parker (Creasy 2019). In his essay “I’m Given to Write Poems”, Creeley illustrated several predecessors such as William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and his contemporary companion, Charles Olson and their theories in shaping his projective poems. From Williams’ statement, he noted that ‘what one makes rather than what one says is what matters in making a poem’ as long as he/she writes it ‘with such intensity of perception and with intrinsic movement of its own to assert its authenticity’ (Allen & Tallman 1973, 266). Thus, in the four stanzas above, the poet depicts one action as a kinetic trajectory and interlocking lines that keep them moving from one stanza to another.

3.3. Olson and Creeley’s Avian Poetics as an Evocation of One’s Ecological Awareness

Form and content in stanzas 2 & 3 in Olson’s poem exemplify an ecological mesh (Morton 2013). It is through the interconnection between the poet as human and the physical environment and animals as nonhuman beings. In these stanzas, the poet identified himself with plants and animals. This shows that the poet does not differentiate himself from these living creatures in terms of their difference in physique and personality—

2
the sedge
as tall as I am, the rushes
as I am

as far as I am animal, antelope
with such’s attendant carnivores
and row of beaters
drive the game to the hunter, or into nets,
where it is thick-wooded or there are open spaces
with low shrubs

3

I speak downfall, the ball of my foot
on the neck of the earth, the hardsong
of the rise of all trees, the jay
who uses the air. I am the recovered sickle
with the grass-stains still on the flint of its teeth.
I am the six-rowed barley
they cut down.

I am tree. The boy of the back of my legs
is roots. I am water fowl
when motion is the season of my river, and the wild boar
casts me. But my time
is hawkweed.
(Creeley 1959, 166)

In the first line in stanza 2, the poet identifies himself with 'the sedge' and 'the rushes' as 'grasslike plant' and 'tufted marsh, waterside plant', which shows organic aspects in human's psyche. Then in the next line, the poet equates himself with 'animal' and 'antelope' and 'attendant carnivores'. The change from the plant to the animal still exemplifies the projective experimentation and the poet's ecological awareness of the interconnection between himself and other life forms in the natural world. Referring to Malamud's notion about the animal souls of the Mesoamerican culture, the poet's identification with the animals exemplifies *nagualismo* and *tonalismo*. The blank spaces before and after phrases in the stanza while technically indicating pauses for breathing according to Olson, these likewise polemicize human's objectification of nonhuman beings (animal and vegetation). The blank spaces also suggest one's sense of crises about endangered habitats and species; they represent 'fragments' or damaged areas of wetlands and animal species. The lines in stanza 3 also have ecological qualities since each line epitomizes the 'mesh' or interconnectedness between the poet as human and various things in the natural environment. These include 'the neck of the earth', 'the hardsong of the rise of all trees', 'the jay', 'the air', 'the recovered sickle', 'the flint of its teeth', 'the six-rowed barley', 'water fowl', 'hawkweed'. So in this stanza, the poet not only redefines his identification and interconnection with animals but also with plants. The last line in stanza 3 "I am the six-rowed barley they cut down" suggests a critique of human excessive logging. Then in the first and second lines of the second part of this stanza "I am tree. The boy of the back of my legs is roots" and "I am water fowl when motion is the season of my river" reveal the poet's biocentric views of the parallelism between human and nonhuman beings. The poet's identification with the tree also means to emulate 'a self-perpetuating and evolving qualities' of the vegetation in one's psychic entity. Birds have very indispensable roles in this biotic life (Wilson 2016, 106). They co-exist with other life forms in their ecological interdependence (ibid., 2016, 101-102; Sala 2020, 29). Most birds have small sizes; therefore, people tend to neglect them in their natural habitats. Yet, because of their small size but cute and delicate physical anatomy, many people hunt them for

sale or domesticate them as pets. However, nobody realizes that as a matter of fact birds what we see them as small creatures originated from dinosaurs and winged reptiles that were called ‘archaeopteryx’ (ancient wing). It was through the branch of zoology called ornithology that deals with the study of birds and identified the origins of birds through existing fossils of the ancient creatures (lithographica) (Tudge 2009, 43-44). Considering the factual origin of birds, it is imperative that anyone has to cherish and preserve the birds to live freely in their own habitats. In Olson’s poem, the poet’s identification with the birds such as ‘heron’ (stanza 1), ‘the jay’, ‘water fowl’ (stanza 3) means to adopt bird souls such as search of freedom, soaring imagination, watchfulness, wide vision. As a symbol, birds stand for ‘spiritual states, angels, and higher forms of being’ (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996, 87).

In Creeley’s poem, the poet expresses ecological views through the interconnection between himself in his consciousness of the physical things and the things themselves in the natural environment. He describes this in stanza 5 to 10—

The other one, around the corner
of rock and small trees. It was
clear, and often empty, and

peaceful. Those lovely ungainly
pelicans fished there, dropping
like rocks, with grace, from the air,

headfirst, then sat on the water,
letting the pouch of their beaks
grow thin again, then swallowing

whatever they’d caught. The birds
no matter they’re not of our kind,
seem most like us here. I want

to go where they go, in a way, if
a small and common one. I want
to ride that air which makes the sea

seem down there, not the element
in which one thrashes to come up.
I love water, I *love* water—

but I also love air, and fire.
(Friedlander 2008, 146-147)

These stanzas just like the previous four stanzas consist of interlocking lines, one line belongs to the previous and following lines in different stanzas. For instance, the whole line of the first line in stanza 5 begins in stanza 4—

Here to rest, like they say, I best
liked walking along the beach
past the town till once reached

the other one, around the corner
of rock and small trees.

This long line decribes at least four places ‘along the beach’, ‘past the town’, ‘the other one’, ‘around the corner of rock and small trees’. The phrase ‘the other one’ suggests an extension of content that leads to a further perception of something. This way of exploring the place indicates a bird’s behavior as the bird flies over the sky to search for a secure place to nest and to live as the next line says—“it was clear, and often empty, and peaceful.” Stanzas 6 and 7 depict the behavior of pelicans in foraging for fish and aquating invertebrates and seeds. The poet seems to be impressed by the graceful behavior of the pelicans, in which this avian behavior serves as their animal souls that the poet wants to emulate. He asserts this in stanza 8 and 9, in which he wants to imitate the birds in terms of their freedom to go and to fly through the sky. This avian behavior metaphorically stands for human search of freedom in expressing himself, his feelings and thoughts such as those in poetry (Malamud 2003, 67-68); animals as well as birds are human ‘spiritual colleagues and emotional companions’ (ibid., 2003, 68). In stanza 8 for instance, the poet emphasizes the parallelism between human beings and birds—“The birds, no matter they’re not of our kind, seem most like us here.” Then in stanza 9, he asserts some reasons why he wants to be like the birds; what he means is sense of freedom of the birds. Then in stanza 10, the poet expresses his love for water, air, and fire, the tree elements and one element, the earth that any living creature depends upon to survive. The difference between Olson and Creeley’s avian poetics is that the former poem combines his avian identification with vegetal valorization. Meanwhile, the latter poem mostly expresses the poet’s admiration for the birds. While other natural objects such as ‘rock’ and ‘trees’ become backdrops for the birds to perch on. The similarity is that both poems venerate birds as animal souls within which they find wisdom and biocentric values that they should embody within themselves as human beings in daily life.

Olson and Creeley’s avian and vegetal poetics are not just experimental and projective praxis. Their poetics matters in evoking an ecological vision. In his projective poem, Olson has entreated his readers to respect any object and living being as a part of other entities. This idea means an ecological insight or one’s awareness of the interconnectedness of human, nonhuman beings, and things in the natural environment. At this recent global world one’s overconsumption of material things (Leonard 2011) such as the overuse of fossil fuels, deforestation, not only depletes biodiversity but also causes global warming and climate change (Wilson 2016, 65-69). Their avian poetics therefore helps to evoke any individual to care about their natural environment especially the existence of birds and their endangered population in the environment. A lot of bird species has been extinct from the earth. There are only 10,500 now out of 150.000 species before that are still living. Yet, the extinction took place over 140

million years, so each species has been lost every 1,000 years. Then modern records show that the world has lost "at least eighty species of birds in the past 400 years—one every five years, or 200 times called 'the background rate'" (Tudge 2009, 368). Several causes of the extinctions include 'habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution, population growth, overhunting (Wilson 2016, 53-63). Their avian poetics then also raises one's consciousness about the mutual symbiosis between the birds and other life forms in the biosphere that one has to conserve for the sake of ecosystem and future generation.

4. CONCLUSION

Any movement or school of poetry especially in Europe and the U.S. in the modern periods emerged as a dialogical rapport with any predecessors or previous poets from the prior eras. Like T.S. Eliot argued about the process that he named 'tradition and individual talent.' Olson and Creeley as two major figures in Black Mountain poetry likewise learn from their predecessors such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, T. S. Eliot from the imagist movement. Yet, they develop their respective poetic style that voiced some vision in their era. Their ecopoetics even still resonates until this present time. The jazzy elements in Olson's asymmetric typography and Creeley's succinct but continuous lines emulate organic qualities of plants and animals. The fast and frenetic rhythm of jazz corresponds with Olson's notion of 'the kinetics of the thing.' This freneticism signifies 'wild' naturalness and organicism of any natural life form. Thus, this evokes one's respect for natural beings such as plants and animals especially birds. This avian species epitomizes a sense of freedom and soaring imagination, some among other related qualities that humans need to have to live a fruitful life. Reading Olson and Creeley's poems in today's time gives one a perspective of the need for keeping the harmony between human and nonhuman animals which coexist in the natural environment.

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