REPRESENTATION OF ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
IN HENRY OLE KULET’S VANISHING HERDS AND THE
HUNTER

By

SAMSON MALEYA LUSINGA

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________________


Supervisors:

This thesis has been submitted for award with our approval as University supervisors.

Supervisor

Dr. Mugo Muhia

Department of Literature

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________________

Supervisor

Dr. J.K.S. Makokha

Department of Literature

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________________
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION...........................................................................................................i

DEDICATION...........................................................................................................iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..............................................................................................iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS.................................................................................................v

ABSTRACT..................................................................................................................viii

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study......................................................................................1

1.2 Statement of the Problem...................................................................................5

1.3 Objectives of the Study.....................................................................................5

1.4 Research Questions............................................................................................5

1.5 Research Assumptions.......................................................................................6

1.6 Justification of the Study....................................................................................6

1.7 Scope and Delimitations of the Study.................................................................7

1.8 Literature Review...............................................................................................7

1.8.1 Introduction....................................................................................................7

1.8.2 Critical Literature on Kulet’s Fiction.............................................................8

1.8.3 Ecological Consciousness in Contemporary African Literature..................13

1.9 Conceptual Framework.....................................................................................16
1.9.1 Postcolonial Theory.........................................................16

1.9.2 Ecocriticism .................................................................19

1.10 Research Methodology.....................................................22

CHAPTER TWO: REPRESENTATION OF MOTHER NATURE IN
VANISHING HERDS

2.1 Introduction .......................................................................24

2.2 Nature as a Self-Articulating Subject ....................................25

2.3 Nature as 'Malevolent' Force ...............................................30

2.4 Nature as Pharmacy ..........................................................39

2.5 Nature as Epitome of Beauty ...............................................41

2.6 Conclusion .......................................................................45

CHAPTER THREE: ECOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF MODERNITY
AND BRITISH COLONIALISM IN VANISHING HERDS AND THE HUNTER

3.1 Introduction .......................................................................46

3.2 Evolution of Hunting of Wild Animals in Colonial Kenya ........47

3.3 Illegal Trade in Wildlife in Post-colonial Kenya.....................51

3.4 The Culture of Land 'Grabbing' ..........................................60

3.5 Institutionalized Corruption.................................................67

3.6 Conclusion .......................................................................71

CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTERS' ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN
VANISHING HERDS AND THE HUNTER
4.1 Introduction ................................................................. 72
4.2 Norpisia and Kedoki ......................................................... 73
4.3 Masintet and Lembarta ..................................................... 81
4.4 Richard Sipaya and Leseiyo ............................................. 82
4.5 The White Hunters ......................................................... 92
4.6 Conclusion ...................................................................... 96

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS ............................................................... 97

REFERENCES ........................................................................ 104

Appendix: Pictures ............................................................... 111
ABSTRACT

This study endeavours to bring a fresh insight into the role of literature in the global campaign against environmental degradation. It examines how human culture impacts the natural environment in Henry Ole Kulet’s novels: Vanishing Herds and The Hunter. The study engaged the critical tools of postcolonial ecocriticism in the analysis of the author’s conceptualization of nature, the relationship between colonialism and ecology, and the impact of culture on how characters’ experience, perceive, and relate to nature. The study employs a qualitative research methodology based on close textual reading of the selected primary texts as the principal means of data collection and analysis. The collection of secondary data for the study involves a meticulous library research for relevant books, scholarly journals, dissertations, essays, and newspaper articles from both print and the internet. This study contains five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction that offers the study’s conceptual background. Chapter two is a critical analysis of the author’s representation of the natural world in Vanishing Herds. Chapter three attempts to investigate the ecological ramifications of modernity and British colonialism and relate it to the environmental challenges depicted in Vanishing Herds and The Hunter. In Chapter four, the study examines the representation of characters’ ecological consciousness in Vanishing Herds and The Hunter. The final chapter offers a summary of the study’s key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Findings from the study revealed a significant correlation between culture and the way people perceive and relate to the natural environment. The study also revealed a link between British colonialism and some of the environmental challenges experienced in the post-colonial Kenyan state. The study recommends the recovery and restoration of indigenous ecological ethics embedded in local cultural practices and beliefs that were debased and discouraged under colonialism.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study.

This study has examined the representation of nature in Henry Ole Kulet’s fiction. It sought to bring to the fore the role of literature in reconstructing the universal concerns over the wanton destruction of the natural environment exacerbated by human exploitation and neglect. It is a given that human civilization is currently faced with an apocalyptic environmental crisis that threatens its very existence. In Africa, the wounds inflicted on the physical environment pose a grave threat to the livelihoods of a vast majority of people who still rely on land for their survival. Moreover, climate change characterized by persistent droughts, unpredictable rainfall patterns, and severe storms and floods continue to impact the social and economic lives of millions of people in Africa and other third world countries.

According to the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Carlos Lopes, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel experienced severe droughts between 2011 and 2012 that wiped outcrops and livestock leaving 13 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance (13). Lopes’ bleak prognosis is an apt illustration of the regional dynamics of the current global environmental crisis. It exposes the folly of attempts to universalize the challenges encountered by victims of environmental disasters. However, this does not camouflage the fact that it is often the poor in both the affluent and the developing countries who are normally susceptible to environmental disasters.

In Kenya like elsewhere in the developing world, lack of disaster preparedness is an enduring challenge. The El Nino rains which flooded most parts of
the country between 1997 and 1998, and the prolonged drought in 2000 led to a massive displacement of populations, loss of lives, destruction of property, water and energy crisis, and the collapse of vital infrastructure. As is often the case, it is the rural and urban poor populations comprising small-scale farmers and pastoralist communities who are mostly affected.

It is instructive to note that ecological disequilibrium in postcolonial states has often been exacerbated by the activities of powerful multinational corporations from the North. Western ecological imperialism under the guise of modernity has often created deep environmental wounds in Africa as evidenced by the devastation of the Ogoni ancestral land in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria by multinational oil corporations and the destruction of the Congo Rain Forest by foreign logging companies. In East Africa, the introduction of water hyacinth, a plant native to the tropics of South America by Belgian colonists to Rwanda in the nineteenth century for purposes of beautifying their holdings is responsible for the massive ecological crisis presently threatening Lake Victoria (Saundry 1031). The plant dubbed the ‘weed from hell’ in environmental circles is said to have advanced by natural means to Lake Victoria where it was first sighted in 1988. The hyacinth is reportedly choking the lake’s shorelines in thick mats covering an estimated 77 square miles (Saundry1031). As a result, the lake region has witnessed a substantial decline in fishing output, a disruption in marine transport, and endangerment to a number of fish species. Suffice to say that it has often been assumed that the current environmental problems experienced in Africa and other parts of the developing world stem from a local origin, neglect or lack of civilization (Nhano 2). This assumption is simply untenable as demonstrated by the tragic events in the Niger Delta and the Congo Forest. These events cast aspersions on the sincerity of the current narrative of environmental
conservation emanating from Western metropolises. Arguably, the West has no moral
ground to lecture postcolonial states on environmental conservation as long as it
continues to cast a blind eye on its corporate greed. It is this greed that is fueling the
massive decimation of the African elephant to satiate exotic demand for ivory in
Western and Asian countries. The trade in ivory and other game products promotes
poaching in Africa and poses a huge threat to endangered species such as the White
Rhino.

Henry Ole Kulet is an acclaimed novelist in the Kenyan literary scene. His
first novel, *Is It Possible* was published in 1971. Since then, he has published a total
(2009), and *Vanishing Herds* (2011). Kulet has won the prestigious Jomo Kenyatta
Prize for Literature twice: in 2011 with *Blossoms of the Savannah* and in 2013 with
*Vanishing Herds*. He has also received a number of international accolades. In 1985
he was awarded the Third World Children’s Book award for his novel *To Become A
Man*. His works have also been translated into French, German, and Swedish
languages. Though Ole Kulet is not a ‘nature’ writer in the strict western literary
traditions, his literary oeuvre nonetheless exhibits a profound concern for the
conservation and preservation of Mother Nature. The representation of the natural
environment mirrored in the context of Maasai ecological consciousness is a
dominant recurrent theme in Kulet’s fiction.

As a literary artist, Kulet is deeply concerned about the erosion of indigenous
ecological ethics. His creative works celebrate the rich biodiversity of Maasai’s
natural environment. He has a knack for knitting powerful images of the community’s
flora and fauna in his fiction. Kulet’s portrayal of the natural environment as a living,
conscious organism in works such as Vanishing Herds, To Become A Man, and Moran No More speak volume about the author’s ecological consciousness. It should be borne in mind that as a people, indigenous Africans consider the physical environment as the abode of the spirits (Mbiti 80). Spirits therefore dwell everywhere; in the woods, bush, forest, rivers, mountains, or just around the villages. In this regard, the human animal, the spirits, and the natural world are intrinsically interwoven. It is this spiritual ecological consciousness that has enabled indigenous communities to sustainably utilize and conserve a vast diversity of plants, animals, and eco-systems since the beginning of time (Posey 7).

The term ‘natural environment’ in this study refers to the physical set which encompasses air, water, land, animals, rivers, flora, mountains, the seasons and all the original inhabitants of a given geographical locality. Central to the relationship between humans and the natural environment is the doctrine of anthropocentrism; an assumption embedded in Western epistemology that prioritizes human interests over those of nonhumans. It is this skewed assumption that is responsible for the objectification of nonhuman life forms as given (Glotfelty and Fromm 28). Equally important is the concept of modernity and its implications on the natural environment. ‘Modernity’ in this study designates “modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence” (Giddens 1). It basically refers to a historical period (modern era) characterized by the decline of the traditional social order, the prioritization of individualism, scientific and technological progress, the advent of capitalism and the market economy; industrialization, urbanization and secularization; the development of the nation-state and its constituent institutions (Foucault 170–77).
1.2. Statement of the Problem

Though scholarship on ecological discourse has gained traction in local universities and colleges, few studies have examined the representation of ecological ethics in literary texts. This study seeks to investigate how Henry Ole Kulet conceptualizes the natural environment, the effects of British colonialism and modernity on African natural environment, and the impact of ecology on characters and characterization in Vanishing Herds and The Hunter. The study is essentially motivated by the need to create awareness on the critical issue of anthropogenic environmental degradation.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study endeavoured to:

1. critically investigate the representation of the natural environment in Kulet’s selected novels.
2. investigate the effects of modernity and British colonialism on the natural environment as represented in the texts under study.
3. examine the representation of characters and characterization in relation to ecology in the selected primary texts.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. how does Kulet represent the natural environment in the novels under study?
2. what is the effect of modernity and British colonialism on the natural environment as represented in the texts under study?
3. how does Kulet represent characters and characterization in relation to ecology in the selected primary texts.

1.5 Research Assumptions

The study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Kulet represents the natural environment as a dominant self-conscious entity.
2. Local ecological challenges are presented as being historically linked to modernity and British colonialism.
3. Characters’ ecological consciousness is influenced by culture.

1.6 Justification of the Study

The relationship between art and the natural environment dates back to antiquity. Humans have throughout history sought inspiration from the beauty and tranquility of the natural environment for artistic expression (Buell 2). Sadly, the natural environment has over the decades been endangered by human activities. As a result, the world today is on the brink of an impending environmental apocalypse. There is need therefore for a change in the way people think and experience nature. More significantly, communities in postcolonial states need to be sensitized on the validity of indigenous ecological ethics in creating harmonious co-existence between humans and the nonhuman environment. In this respect, a suitable social vision needs to be instituted to address the needs and aspirations of communities struggling to come to terms with the negative effects of modernity. Literature can therefore play a significant role towards this end by inculcating new kinds of ecological sensibility. Though most of Kulet’s works explore ecological issues in the context of modernity, this study focused on two texts: *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. The selection of
these texts for the study from among the eight novels authored by Kulet was informed by the manner in which the texts highlight the catastrophic threat posed to nonhuman nature by human greed. Moreover, the selection was motivated by the need to account for Kulet’s evolving ecological consciousness in the intervening period marked by the publications of the two novels. The choice of Henry Ole Kulet from among other contemporary Kenyan writers was informed firstly, by his long standing commitment to the fight against environmental degradation, secondly, by his consistent campaign for the preservation of African cultural heritage, and thirdly, by his advocacy for harmonious co-existence between humans and nonhuman animals.

1.7 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study did not undertake a comprehensive examination of Kulet’s entire literary corpus. Such an engagement would have entailed a colossal investment in time and resources that were beyond the scope of this study. The study was therefore limited to the selected texts: *Vanishing Herd* and *The Hunter* because of the manner in which the texts interrogate ecological issues against the onslaught of modernity in the post-colonial Kenyan state.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Introduction

This section is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to the review of critical commentaries on Kulet’s creative works past and present that are relevant to the study. The second part is devoted to the review of literature related to the debate on the existence of ecological consciousness in contemporary African literature.
1.8.2 Critical Literature on Kulet’s Fiction

In an interview quoted in Francois Michel’s study, Henry Kulet reportedly summed up his artistic raison d’être as “… keeping alive the Maasai traditions and perpetuating customs that he would like to see … in this changing pattern of life” (97). Kulet’s words aptly underscore his artistic commitment – the preservation of the cultural heritage of his people which is presently on the verge of disappearance from the onslaught of modernity. Incidentally, this artistic crusade waged by a writer from a marginalized Kenyan community has been viewed by some critics as the reason for the perceived lack luster critical attention that the author has received from the local literary establishment.

Evan Mwangi is among the first critics to have sounded an alarm over the alleged marginalization of Kulet’s works in the Kenyan academy. He posits that “Henry Ole Kulet has been a victim of the ethnocentric literary establishment, which, with no concrete reason to vilify him, does not want to study the creative language that has gone into his novels” (29). He further opines that though Francis Imbuga whom he acknowledged as Kenya’s foremost critic had once described Ole Kulet as “one of Kenya’s leading novelists”, Kulet still remains one of the Kenyan artists who has not enjoyed “even academic dismissal after writing for almost three decades” (29). Mwangi’s indictment of the Kenyan literary establishment raises more questions than answers. Though Kulet has been writing for quite some time, curiously, none of his works has ever been selected for study in the Kenyan secondary school curriculum. Has the local literary establishment been dismissive of Kulet as alleged by Mwangi? Is Kulet a lesser writer than say; Meja Mwangi, Marjorie Oludhe, or Grace Ogot whose works have been studied in Kenyan secondary schools? If indeed, Kulet’s literary creativity is somehow wanting, how can the local literary
establishment account for the current study of his novel *Blossoms of the Savannah* by ‘A’ Level literature students in Uganda? It is such glaring inconsistencies that apparently give credence to Mwangi’s narrative of marginalized writers emanating from what he calls the “cultural and intellectual margins of Kenya” (29).

Egara Kabaji in an article in *Saturday Nation* expresses similar sentiments on the impracticality of the Kenyan literary establishment. He opines that Ole Kulet “is a victim of the overbearing lethargy for critical introspection that has become the bane of our [Kenyan] literary criticism” (20). Kabaji accuses local critics of being “trapped in the past”. Such critics according to him have a penchant for eulogizing works produced in the early 1960’s and 1970’s by the first generation of Kenyan writers while shunning works from emerging new talents. Kabaji equates Kulet to Chinua Achebe insofar as the fight for the preservation of African culture is concerned. He writes:

… if Chinua Achebe brought the Igbo culture to the world, then ole Kulet did the same to the Maasai culture. He started by experimenting on the biographical mode and slowly and steadily found his unique style. His subject is culture and he writes about it with the sensitivity of a surgeon. (22)

That Kulet began his writing career experimenting with the biographical mode is borne by the publication of his first five novels that are modeled on the bildungsroman tradition in the portrayal of characters’ development as they attempt to forge a new identity in a postcolonial society. This is evidenced by the portrayal of Lerionka in *Is it Possible*, Leshao in *To Become A Man*, and Roiman in *Moran No More*. It is probably in recognition of Kulet’s ability to romanticize the Maa’s universe by creating characters that are in idyllic harmony with their communal
pastoral lifestyle that saw Kabaji praise Kulet’s *Vanishing Herds* as a “compelling love story told within the context of the Maa culture” (22).

Kingwa Kamencu shares Kabaji’s enthusiastic reception of *Vanishing Herds*. In an article in the local press Kamencu examines the novel’s juxtaposition of culture and ecology. She hails the text for its “rendering of the Maasai cosmology, traditions, cultures and belief systems [that] saw it slated for a clean win in the English category” (19). She views the novel as crucial in its depiction of “man’s myopic exploitation of nature and the environment that causes nature to bite back through floods, rising temperatures, drought and other natural disasters” (20). Kamencu pertinently captures the apocalyptic environmental crisis that threatens not only the Maa community but the entire country. More importantly, the depiction of Mother Nature as a dynamic living organism is central to this study. Besides, Kamencu’s censure of the myopic agency of man in the destruction of the natural environment is of crucial importance in the advocacy for a radical rethink in the relationship between humans and the nonhuman environment.

Colomba Muriungi and Anne Muriiki examine the representation of gender based violence in Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savannah*. The two scholars describe Kulet as “a self-conscious modern writer who demonstrates that women who live in cultural backgrounds that cause them suffering shall be their own liberators” (118). The two scholars are deeply concerned by what they view as blatant marginalization of women in a patriarchal cultural setting. Their description of Kulet as “a self-conscious modern writer” is reflective of the author’s support for the liberation of women from the yoke of patriarchal traditions. This is a subject that is close to Kulet as epitomized by the portrayal of female characters in most of his works. Though Muriungi and Muriiki do not address the interplay between natural environment and the
marginalization of women, their postulations nonetheless offer critical insights on the place and space inhabited by women in African cultural setting. Moreover, the ‘othering’ of women and the natural environment is a subject of intense contestation in ecological scholarship.

In a related study to Muriungi and Muriiki, Everlyne Mengo in her MA thesis explores the changing images of women in Kulet’s *Is It Possible, To Become A Man*, *Daughter of the Maa*, and *Blossoms of the Savannah*. She notes that “Kulet’s novels explore ways through which Maasai women negotiate for power and autonomy within their society. Women have been relegated to the periphery in their pursuit of political, social and economic opportunities” (11). The issue of women empowerment as highlighted in the study is a major thematic concern in Kulet’s fiction. Though the study does not interrogate Kulet’s thematic concern through the critical lens of ecofeminism, it nonetheless offers crucial insights on the evolving consciousness of Maasai women in a rapidly changing society.

David Dorsey investigates the place of formal Western education in the context of Maasai cultural milieu in a paper on Kulet’s first novel *Is It Possible?* In the paper, Dorsey argues that though communion with nature is not a dominant motif in the novel, it nevertheless deserves attention as “it is a recurrent premise which will be elevated to a major emphasis in Kulet’s later works written when environmental concerns had become a preoccupation in national and international political discourse” (27). It is critical to note that though Dorsey’s paper was written in 1997, it prophetically heralds the publication of *Vanishing Herds*, a novel that undeniably marks the pinnacle of Kulet’s environmental consciousness. More significantly, though the paper interrogates Kulet’s novel from a formalistic perspective, the paper is important to this study as it highlights the genesis of the author’s ecological
sensibility shown by his perceptive observation, knowledge, and aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment in his first novel.

Kamande Mbugua in his MA dissertation explores issues of cultural identity in Kulet’s *Is It Possible? And To Become A Man*. Mbugua underscores the aim of his study as an investigation of how Ole Kulet “portrays the contradictions, the crisis, cultural coalition, and the ambivalences that ensue the interaction between the traditional Maasai customary ways and a Western lifestyle” (8). Though the study does not explicitly consider Kulet’s portrayal of Maasai’s indigenous ecological sensibility as an integral part of the community’s cultural heritage, it nevertheless offers valuable insights into the ambivalent relationship between Western cultural values and the conservatism of the Maa community.

Paul Baxter in a foreword in Mukhisa Kituyi’s *Becoming Kenyan* explores how formal education in Maasailand is progressively eroding the community’s cultural heritage. He contends:

Initiation into Moranhood with one’s age-mates has been the central event in every man’s life. No Maasai escapes the initiation but it is reported here that in many places the youth are increasingly reluctant to drop out of school to go through Moranhood. Indeed an instance is given of a local leader of a woman’s group who prevailed on a father to remove his son from the Moran camp and send him back to school. A school leaving certificate rather than circumcision may yet become the mark of Moranhood. (ix)

Baxter’s observation resonates well with Kulet’s position on the need to protect African traditions from the onslaught of modernity. Moranism is an age-long institution at the core of the Maa community. Though the institution is generally
viewed by ‘educated’ local people as an outdated cultural practice incompatible with the ideals of a modern society, its demise unfortunately signals the demise of a rich reservoir of indigenous knowledge that was normally imparted by elders during such ceremonies. The demise of moranism therefore offers invaluable lessons on the influence of modernity on the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. It illustrates how indigenous ecological knowledge embodied in cultural institutions such as moranism is on the verge of disappearance from the community’s collective memory.

1.8.3 Ecological Consciousness in Contemporary African Literature

William Slaymaker in his provocative essay of 2001, “Ecoing the other(s): The Call of Global Green and Black African Responses” argues that “the African echo of global green approaches to literature and literary criticism has been faint” (132). Slaymaker’s criticism of African literature is premised on what he views as the hesitation or refusal by African writers to explicitly use designations such as ‘environmentalism’, ‘ecology’ and ‘ecological degradation’ in addressing cultural challenges and ecological preoccupations in literature. (132-134). While it may sound true that Eurocentric nomenclatures such as ‘ecology’, ‘green studies’ and ‘environmentalism’ have not explicitly been embraced by African writers, it is erroneous to assume that the absence of such terms is symptomatic of a ‘faint’ ecological consciousness in African literary landscape. Perhaps what Slaymaker fails to acknowledge in his postulations is the existence of ecological consciousness in African oral art forms such as narratives, songs, proverbs, and riddles which are an integral part of African literature.
Ogaga Okuyade in his seminal text *Ecocritical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes* explores the representation of ecological consciousness in Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* and Tanure Ojaide’s *The Activist*. Zake’s text is particularly important in its portrayal of a marginalized indigenous community crusade against the threat of environmental apocalypse posed by a tourist development scheme. The novel discusses the possible impact of modernity on the community’s livelihoods and health, “a project of this magnitude cannot be built without cutting down the forest of indigenous trees, without disturbing the bird life, and without polluting the river, the sea, and its great lagoon” (119). Zake’s ecological consciousness as an African writer is therefore vindicated by his novel. Thus critics such as Slaymaker whose yardstick for measuring ecological consciousness in African literature appears to be premised on the use of lofty western terms ought to recast their positions. More pertinently, ecological consciousness cannot be pegged on mere nomenclatures but rather on ecological substance inherent in a work of art.

Anthony Vital takes the debate on African ecological consciousness from a different perspective. In an essay on J.M. Coetzee’s *Life and Times & Michael K*, he argues that Anglo-American ecocriticism:

… has tended to reflect the interests and concerns of countries in the North … there is no good reason not to develop an African ecocriticism, one which engages in debating what a society’s assigning of significance to nature (in varieties of cultural products) reveals about both its present and past. (87)

Vital’s views aptly echo the dynamics of ecological discourse in contemporary African literature. His call for the need to develop an African ecocriticism to engage ecological and environmental issues from an African perspective is in tandem with the
objectives of this study. It justifies the fairly recent drive in postcolonial scholarship for the marriage between postcolonial theory and ecocriticism. This is meant to provide a highly responsive literary methodology apt for the analysis of ecological particularities of postcolonial societies.

Byron Caminero-Santangelo concurs with Vital’s dismissal of Anglo-American ecocriticism. He opines that the westernized strand of ecocriticism needs to be decentered if it is to be relevant in the context of African literature and criticism. He argues that in terms of environmental representation African writers are basically concerned with live environments, the social implications of environmental change, and the relationships between representations of nature and power (689-707). Though Santangelo’s call on the need to domesticate Anglo-American ecocriticism to ensure that it coheres with the African ecological experience is legitimate, the claim that African writers are basically preoccupied with ‘live’ environments in their writings appears reductive as it tends to pigeonhole the ecological consciousness of African writers to a given aspect of the environment. As observed earlier in this study, the natural environment insofar as African ontology is concerned is holistically viewed as a living conscious organism. It would be erroneous therefore in the African context for one to attempt to compartmentalize the environment as ‘live’ or ‘inanimate’.

K.E. Senanu and T.Vincent trace the immanence of ecological consciousness in contemporary African literature back to Achebe’s Things Fall Apart where ecological depletion of African soil begins with the occupation and clearing of the evil forest to pave way for the construction of a church by Western missionaries. They uncover the ecological consciousness in Kofi Awoonor’s poem “The Cathedral” in its lamentation about the replacement of a tribal tree by a ‘huge senseless cathedral of doom’ (209). The scrutiny of creative works from the first generation of African
writers from an ecological perspective is a sound literary undertaking as it helps to foreground the existence of indigenous ecological consciousness in pre-colonial Africa.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The study engaged the postulations of postcolonial ecocriticism. It borrowed key concepts from postcolonial theory and ecocriticism to investigate the representation of the physical environment in the texts under study.

1.9.1 Postcolonial Theory

The conceptualization of the term ‘postcolonialism’ is an ongoing subject of contestation amongst critics (Loomba 7). The controversy is premised on how one views the ‘post’ prefix in the term. The term can be read from a temporal perspective to signify an aftermath, the time after the demise of colonialism (i.e. the ending of one era and the beginning of a new one). In this case, the term is normally hyphenated (post-colonialism). However, the chronological meaning of the hyphenated term has fiercely been contested by critics as it seems to suggest that the inequalities of the colonial rule ceased completely after the demise of colonialism (Loomba 7). Most critics have therefore argued that since the manifestations of colonialism upon formerly colonized societies continue to be experienced both overtly and subtly, the hyphenated term is narrow in its reference and scope. Consequently, the usage of the unhyphenated term ‘postcolonialism’ which has a broader spectrum in its inclusivity of the contestation of colonial domination and its legacies has gained currency in postcolonial studies. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, postcolonialism is basically concerned with the examination “of the processes and effects of, and reactions to, European colonialism from the 16th Century up to and including the neo-
colonialism of the present day” (169). As a critical theory therefore, postcolonialism essentially seeks to explore the political and cultural aftermath of colonization and to examine the profound changes wrought on colonized people. The study engaged Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of mimicry and hybridity and Alfred Cosby’s notion of ecological imperialism in the analysis of the selected novels.

Mimicry in postcolonial discourse describes “the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 124). It alludes to the adaptation of the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values by the colonized subject as a result of the hegemonic colonial discourse. Bhabha defines mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a result of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (86). The ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized stems from the split desire by the colonizer to see the colonized adopt his (the colonizer) cultural habits, assumptions, and values yet at the same time desires to limit the adaptation to a certain extent. Consequently, the ultimate end product of this process (the colonized subject) is a ‘blurred’ or distorted replica of the colonizer (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 125). On the other hand, the notion of hybridity which is closely related to mimicry refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 108). Bhabha calls this contradictory and ambivalent space where new cultural identities are forged the “Third Space of enunciation” (37). He further contends that the creation of hybridized subjectivity in the contact zones occasioned by colonialism demonstrates the impracticality of the colonial notion of cultural ‘purity’. This is because cultures are not fixed in time and space; they are in a constant flux as they mingle and co-mingle in the ‘in-betweeness’ of the contact zone to produce new transcultural identities.
In the context of this study, hybridity in conjunction with the notion of mimicry assisted in unraveling the ‘in-betweeness’ inherent in characters who have embraced western cultural values and practices and show how it impacted their relationship with their communities and the natural environment. It also assisted in explicating the ecological consequences of colonial attempts to Europeanize the local landscape.

The term ‘ecological imperialism’ was coined by Alfred Cosby in his foundational text Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900. Cosby argues that “imperialism not only altered the cultural, political and social structures of colonized societies, but also devastated ecologies and traditional subsistence patterns.” (Ashcroft et al 69). Essentially, the subjugation and occupation of new lands by European colonizers was not often accomplished through the use of arms. Oftentimes, the introduction of European diseases, crops and livestock would adversely affect the local population and radically altered the entire ecology of the conquered lands. Cosby cites the example of the conquest of the Gaunches, the natives of Canary Islands by Spanish conquistadors through what can be described in modern times as biological warfare. The Spanish managed to subdue the local population through the introduction of the various “plagues” and “sleeping sickness” (peste and modora in Spanish) that killed off and weakened the Gaunches, who had no natural immunity to such ailments common to their conquerors. Though Cosby’s investigation of what he calls in his book the “biological and ecological component”(7) of European imperialism is mainly in reference to South America, Australia, and New Zealand, the study found the concept useful in critiquing the impact of British colonialism on the local natural environment. Cosby’s notion of eco-imperialism has helped to unravel the devastating ecological abuses inflicted on
indigenous flora and fauna under British colonialism. Moreover, the concept has helped to interrogate British colonial laws and policies from an ecological perspective and to establish the genesis of the ecological challenges represented in the study’s primary texts.

1.9.2 Ecocriticism

Etymologically, the term ‘ecocriticism’ is derived from Greek oikos and kritis. Oikos means “household”, a nexus of humans, nature and the spirit. Kritis means judge, “the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order” (Glotfelty and Fromm 163). The centrality of the metaphor of home is important to understanding the concept and scope of ecocriticism. Home encompasses the entire planet inhabited by human and nonhuman entities. Thus ‘home’ signifies both a place and the entities in that place, and the relationship that binds them (Buell 13). Ecocriticism is a fairly recent phenomenon in Literature and Literary Studies. The term ecocriticism appeared for the first time in William Rueckert’s essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” in 1978. However, the term remained passive in critical vocabulary until the Western Literature Association meeting in Coeur d’ Alene in 1989 when Cheryll Glotfelty successfully advocated for the adaptation of the term in reference to the study of nature writing (Barry 240). From that point, ecocriticism emerged as a new and growing literary field in North America and entered rural universities in USA in the 1980s and reached Britain in the 1990s.

As noted above, ecocriticism is basically concerned with the interrogation of cultural texts from an ecocentric perspective. According to Peter Barry, the scope covered by ecocritics includes: read literature from an ecocentric point of view; apply ecological issues to the representation of the natural world; focus on nonfiction and environmental writing that feature “nature”; and show appreciation for ethical
positions towards nonhuman nature (254). Barry’s position is calcified by Lawrence Buell who offers an insightful commentary into the reading of cultural texts from an ecocentric perspective. He outlines four basic criteria for determining the ecological consciousness of a text: first “the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device”; second, “the human interest is not … the only legitimate interest”; third, “human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation”; and fourth, “there is some sense of the environment as a process” (9). In essence therefore, ecocriticism as a field of inquiry investigates literature in relation to the histories of ecological or environmentalist thought, ethics, and activism. One of ecocriticism’s basic premises is that literature both reflects and helps to shape human responses to the natural environment. Thus by studying the representation of the physical world in literary texts and in the social contexts of their production, ecocriticism attempts to account for attitudes and practices that have contributed to modern day ecological problems, while at the same time investigating alternative modes of thought and behaviour, including sustainable practices that would respect the perceived rights or values associated with the non human world and ecological processes.

Ecocriticism is a broad interdisciplinary literary paradigm that encompasses several related disciplines such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice. This study is grounded on concepts drawn from deep ecology. The term ‘Deep Ecology’ is a philosophical term invented by the Norwegian professor Arne Naess in his famous 1973 English article, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary.” Deep ecology faults European and North American civilization for the arrogance of its anthropocentric objectification of non human nature (Fox 91). Deep ecologists challenge the hierarchy established by
Enlightenment scientific notions that have polarized humans and nature. They advocate for a biocentric perspective which acknowledges the mutually reciprocal relationship required for a sustainable ecosystem. Deep ecology rejects the ‘shallow’ ecological consciousness typical of the mainstream environmentalism which is viewed as a mere extension of European and North American human-centered ecological world view. As Naess argues, “deep ecological thinking is not a slight reform of our present society, but a substantial reorientation of our whole civilization” (45). The study engaged deep ecological notions of interconnectedness and biocentric equality to investigate the conceptualization of nature in the novels under study.

Interconnectedness is a fundamental concept in environmental scholarship. The concept foregrounds the interplay between humans and their environment and the relationships that exist between them in literary texts. Within the context of this study, interrelatedness was used to analyze characters’ ecological sensibilities in the primary texts and to determine how Kulet represents the natural environment in his fiction. More importantly, the concept was useful in the exploration of the interconnectedness of nature and culture in the texts under study.

Biocentric equality is a deep ecology concept premised on the notion that nature and its diversity has intrinsic value irrespective of human uses and interests. It means that “no species, including human species, is regarded as more valuable or in any sense higher than any other species” (Dryzek 184). As ecocriticism is the application of ecology to literature, the concept of biocentric equality assisted the study in deconstructing the hierarchy established by Western philosophy that views the subjugation and dominion of the non-human nature by humans as given.
1.10 Methodology

This study was based on a qualitative research methodology using textual analysis as its primary approach. Primary data for the study was gathered through a close reading of the selected primary texts: *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. Related data drawn from the two texts was synthesized and categorized in accordance to the study’s envisioned chapters. In *Vanishing Herds* the study sought to investigate Kulet’s representation of the natural environment and how characters’ cultural background impact the way they experience and perceive the natural environment. In *The Hunter* the study mainly explored the ecological implications of illegal trade in wildlife, trophy hunting, and how corruption impedes efforts to conserve and preserve the country’s wildlife heritage. The selection of *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter* as the study’s primary texts from among the eight novels written by Kulet was primarily informed by the perceptive manner in which the two novels engage the issue of anthropogenic environmental abuse.

Secondary data for the study was sourced from relevant books, scholarly journals, essays, dissertations, and newspaper articles from both print and the internet. A comprehensive reading of critical materials furnished the study with valuable insights from other scholars’ commentaries on emerging issues related to the study. It further equipped the study with the necessary data and a sound critical perspective that helped to explicate key theoretical concepts and arguments relevant to the study. The study also undertook a comprehensive reading of the history of the Maasai community and their cultural norms and practices in order to enrich our understanding of how the author’s cultural and socio-economic realities have informed his literary creativity. To this end, the author’s entire literary oeuvre was also critically interrogated.
The analysis and interpretation of data was guided by selected concepts drawn from postcolonial ecocriticism. The combined conceptual approach enabled the study to effectively analyze data related to British colonialism from an ecological perspective. It has also helped to elucidate the relationship between culture and the natural environment as represented in the selected primary texts.
CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTATION OF MOTHER NATURE IN VANISHING HERDS

“I’ve been here for eons. I’ve fed species greater than you. And I’ve starved greater species than you. My oceans, my soil, my flowing streams, my forests: They all can take you – or leave you ... Your actions will determine your fate. Not mine”


2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the conceptualization of the natural environment in Kulet’s Vanishing Herds. It analyses the relationship between a writer’s cultural heritage and the construction of nature in a work of art. In this regard, the chapter endeavours to address critical questions relating to the representation of nature in literature. For instance, how is the natural environment represented in Kulet’s fiction? Is it represented as a mere topographic setting upon which the narrative is located or is it represented as a conscious living entity? Is the sacredness of nature represented as given or a mere cultural construct? Do humans belong to nature or does nature belong to humans? In answering these crucial questions, it is the hope of this study that the arguments advanced in this chapter will help explicate the nuanced representation of Mother Nature’s sovereignty from Maasai’s epistemological lens.

Published in 2011, Vanishing Herds is Henry Ole Kulet’s seventh novel and undeniably one of his most compelling creative works. Set in the East African Savannah, the novel grapples with the critical issue of anthropogenic environmental degradation. The novel is based on the tribulations of a young Maasai couple – Kedoki and Norpisia whose epic journey through the wilderness provides a window through which the destruction of the physical environmental can be viewed. Additionally, the
text catalogues the challenges faced by a pastoralist community’s attempt to come to terms with the socio-economic realities of a fast-evolving contemporary society.

2.2 Nature as a Self –articulating Subject

In *Vanishing Herds*, nature is represented as an active self-articulating subject; a conscious living organism that is highly sensitive and responsive to anthropocentric misuse and abuse. Kulet’s representation of nature as an active and speaking agent subverts the privileged human subjectivity reinforced by Western Enlightenment principle of scientific truth and rationality that repudiates religious beliefs, myths, and traditional social order as irrational and unscientific (Carey and Festa 8). This hegemonic epistemic perspective perceived as a sign of progress and modernity has upset the relationship between humans and nature through ecological degradation. Fundamentally, the natural order is an egalitarian one in which there is no hierarchy that puts humans on top of everything else (Dryzek 195). This basic deep ecological principle reverberates in the novel’s representation of the natural world. An appreciation of the spiritual underpinnings of the relationship between humans and the physical environment is central to understanding Maa’s communal reverence for nature. As such, the text celebrates the interconnectedness of the physical environment and the supernatural realm. This holistic perspective of human collective destiny with other living creatures on earth has a religious expression among indigenous communities (Tangwa 389). In the novel, the manifestation of nature’s consciousness is premised on two female characters – Norpisia who is the novel’s protagonist and her unnamed grandmother; a renowned enkoiboni (medicine woman) reputed to possess supernatural powers. Kulet uses Norpisia’s grandmother as nature’s ‘voice’ in the text. She is the link between the physical landscape and the supernatural realm. Her presence in the text therefore undergirds Maasai’s traditional
view that regards the natural and the supernatural realm as interwoven and interdependent domains. Throughout the text, the grandmother uses her supernatural powers to clairvoyantly prevail upon Norpisia to collude with nature to fight against anthropogenic ecological degradation. The fight against humans is a crucial motif in the novel. It foregrounds Mother Nature’s fury at human’s ecological transgressions. The novel makes several references to Norpisia’s dreams as a plot device to foreshadow nature’s grand scheme to unleash devastation to humans for defiling the earth. Norpisia grandmother’s spiritual voice finds expression through the medium of dreams. It is a voice that is representative of the ‘mind’ of Mother Nature in the novel. The centrality of nature’s voice in the text is demonstrated by Norpisia’s first dream in which Kedoki is pitted against a marauding lion in the wilderness:

Suddenly, she heard the voice of her grandmother urgently urging her to run fast and get out of the woodland and head to the forest in the highlands. She told her to go up the hills and team up with elephants, rhinos, lions and other animals, and courageously face a greedy multi-headed monster that was on its way to the forest, to destroy and devour it, leaving the whole land dry and bare. (48)

The passage underpins the urgency of the looming battle to stop the myopic activities of humans that threaten to disrupt nature’s ecological equilibrium. Unbridled capitalistic greed, viewed as responsible for the wanton destruction of the forest, is symbolized in the text by the ghastly image of a ‘multi-headed monster’. This monstrous image assails Norpisia throughout the text. It serves in the text as a constant reminder of the grave danger posed by the destructive activities of humans to nonhuman nature. Kulet is concerned about the pain and abuse inflicted on the natural world through human agency. Central to this violation is western materialistic values
that are repugnant to the cultural sensibility of the Maa people that has evolved from a tradition that cares for the landscape with respect and reciprocity. The text regards the arrogance and insensitivity exhibited by those who harm the physical environment as an offshoot of colonial denigration of indigenous cultural norms that recognizes the interconnectedness of humans and non-human life forms. The historian Lynn White views this anthropocentric shortsightedness as a manifestation of Judeo-Christian theological traditions. In an article titled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” White writes:

Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion that the world has seen … Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions … not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends. (25)

This anthropocentric notion is evident in the biblical Book of Gen.1:28 where God tells Adam and Eve “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over … all the wild beasts that move upon the earth”. Thus according to White’s thesis, western religious traditions have desacralized Mother Nature and encouraged her exploitation by humans who were seen as separate and superior. This dualistic thinking has therefore given humans a carte blanche to arrogantly subdue nonhuman nature to meet selfish ends. Interestingly, most ancient sacred texts as White alludes, proffer a counter- narrative to the Christian dogma of human dominion. For instance, the Popol Vuh, commonly known as the Mayan Bible views plants and animals as the first living beings to be created. They later helped in the creation of human beings. Humans were made of corn (plant life), and animals helped to collect the food which entered into the flesh and blood of the first men and women (Montejo176). The Mayan creation myth unlike the Judeo-Christian celebrates
the interconnectedness that subsists between humans, plants, and nonhuman animals. Kulet is critical of the abuse of this collective survival principle which appalls the ecological sensibilities of the Maa community as shown by Masintet’s discontent at the senseless destruction of the expansive Mau forest. He tells Kedoki:

During the period you were away, people invaded forests, cut down trees, cleared the undergrowth and turned thousands of acres into farmlands. The trees that were not suitable for timber were not spared either. They have been stripped of their barks and they now look like ghostly skeletons. Their only use before they are cut down for charcoal is to provide perching points for flocks of angry staring crows. (62)

It is instructive to note that the Maa community like most indigenous people around the world has a deep spiritual reverence for the physical environment. The text portrays the myopic invasion and destruction of the Mau forest complex; the most significant water tower in the country by the settler community as a manifestation of capitalistic greed. The sacrilegious ‘grabbing’ of the community’s ancestral land is therefore a source of immense discomfort. In an interview with Fitzhenry, Meitames Olol-Dapash; the founder of Maasai Environmental Resource Coalition, cogently captures the community’s valorization of the landscape:

… land is not just the foundation of our livelihood; it is also the foundation for our spirituality. Land is central to our spiritual beliefs because we believe that God dwells not only in and beyond the deep blue skies (Keperoror shumata) but also in the thick forests, rivers, and beneath the earth … it is from the forest that leaves and barks of holy trees such as the olorien and olrete are obtained and used in the process of offering sacrifices to God, the creator of
the forests, mountains, lowlands, and the people, their cattle, and wild animals.

(1)

Though the Maasai view the forest with great spiritual reverence, there are sites within the forest ecosystem that are venerated as special abode of ancestral spirits. Most of these sites are normally found on slopes, hills, and around natural springs. Mortal beings are strictly prohibited from entering or cutting down trees in such sacred sites epitomized in the text by the Medungi forest. According to legend, “if a tree was cut in this forest, it would bleed profusely and the rest of the tress would wail and scream like tormented human beings. The blood of the felled trees would flow to the rivers, turn them red and poison man and beast” (63). Such taboos anthropomorphized the physical environment as a conscious living entity with ability to experience pain, bleed, and retaliate when enraged. More importantly, they helped to deter human encroachments on forests thus making sacred groves important sanctuaries for plants, animals, birds, and insects. This probably explains why sacred groves are presently regarded as important sites of biodiversity conservation. The novel therefore depicts the desecration of the Medungi as the final straw that eventually sets nature on a catastrophic collision course with humans. Norpisia is deeply disturbed by the senseless dispossession of animals’ habitat. Once again her grandmother appears to her in a vision:

Her grandmother surfaced and pointed at her scolding, accusing her of not obeying her instructions to go to the forest in the highlands and join the animals to fight the forest invaders. Then, the human and animal conflict was replayed. She saw men with spears facing a combined force of angry elephants, rhinos, buffaloes, giraffes, wildebeest, zebras, elands, lions,
leopards, cheetahs and many other animals that stood their ground, declaring that they had much right to the forest, just like man did. (70)

This vision voices Mother Nature’s anger at the violation of the rights of wild animals manifested in the dream by Norpisia’s grandmother’s distressed spirit. In the dream, wild animals are represented as rational subjects endowed with the ability to reason and champion for their fundamental rights. This is essentially the ‘voicing’ of the nonhuman nature in the novel. This vision of nonhuman nature as a self-articulating subject in the text deconstructs the nature/culture dualism inherent in Western philosophic thought. The novel vehemently recants the nature/culture paradigm in favour of a biocentric consciousness that recognizes the equality and interconnectedness of humans and other nonhuman live forms. This deep ecological concept of the interconnectedness of all life forms on earth is presented in the text as a prerequisite for the restoration of a harmonious co-existence among all ecological citizens of mother earth.

2.3 Nature as a ‘Malevolent’ Force

Oftentimes, media coverage of the so-called ‘natural disasters’ such as floods, famines, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, and droughts is replete with ominous images. ‘Nature’s monstrous force ’, ‘Nature’s blind fury’ and ‘Dark angel of doom’ are some of the common eye-catching headlines that describe the devastation caused by nature. For instance, in its coverage of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, ‘The New York Times’, ominously reports, “The deadly wave was unimaginably big, stretching to the horizons, and it struck suddenly, looming up with a roar like a monster from the deep”. Similarly, ‘The Guardian’ in its headline depicts the tsunami as a highly unpredictably phenomenon “Out of the blue, a deadly wall of water”. This negative
representation of nature as a giant, extraordinarily powerful, violent, frightening and cruel creature tends to hide the real socio-economic factors responsible for such disasters. While it is may be true that some phenomena such as earth quakes and tsunamis may have a natural cause and humans’ ability to mitigate their impact is limited, not all ‘natural’ disasters are exclusively occasioned by nature’s ‘blind’ fury. In fact the term ‘natural disaster’ is a misnomer as it potentially depicts nature as the villain and mask humans’ agency in such calamities. In *Vanishing Herds*, Kulet is critical of the representation of nature as a ‘blind’ malevolent force which he views as an aspect of the nature/culture dualism that separates humans from nature. The novel regards ‘natural disasters’ as a manifestation of nature’s supremacy; a just punishment dispensed by Mother Nature for human’s ecological transgressions. This standpoint helps to calcify the fact that humans are mere servants and not masters of nature. Thus humans have no choice but to honour and respect the sacredness of the earth. This essentially entails upholding the deep ecological principle of interconnectedness of all life forms on earth. A violation of this cardinal ecological principle is bound to attract the wrath of nature. The truism of this ecological edict is echoed in the biblical book of *Isaiah* 24: 4-5:

The earth dries and withers,  
the world languishes and withers,  
the heavens languish together with the earth.  
The earth lies polluted  
under its inhabitants,  
for they have transgressed the laws,  
violated the statutes,  
broken the everlasting covenant.
Here prophet Isaiah laments the earth’s barrenness and sterility occasioned by mankind’s myopic abuse of the sanctity of nature. This prophetic indictment underscores the import of the interconnectedness of the material and the spiritual realms evidenced in the phrase ‘the heavens languish together with earth’.

Kulet makes extensive use of the apocalyptic trope in *Vanishing Herds* to portray the awesome force of nature. The novel makes frequent references to the impending catastrophic destruction of mankind for violating ecological laws. Interestingly, the build up to the imminent environmental apocalypse is analogously modeled on the biblical account of the great deluge recorded in Gen. 7:18 where God is reportedly enraged by mankind’s transgressions. However, unlike in the scriptures where God vows to destroy from the face of the earth all living things, Mother Nature’s anger in Kulet’s novel is specifically directed at humans for the violation of nonhuman animals’ rights. Thus like in the days of Noah, Norpisia is instructed by Mother Nature through her grandmother to “go to the forest in the highlands and join the animals to fight the forest invaders” (70). Norpisia is therefore the chosen one; an environmental priestess anointed by nature to spearhead the fight against environmental degradation. The geographical significance of the ‘highlands’ in the grandmother’s decree is analogous to Noah’s biblical ark. The elevated landscape is meant to cushion Norpisia and her companions from the perils of the imminent deluge. Thus on the eve of the deluge, Norpisia and her husband “ decided to set up their camp for that night on top of the ridge overlooking the vast cleared lands that used to be a dense forest” (105). The approaching deluge is preceded by thunder and lightning and ominous signs in the skyline:

The setting sun sent up giant red rays that streaked across the sky like the light silky thread which spiders leave on grass and between bushes. Norpisia
watched the luminous display for a while. The strange light in the sky worried her. At Olomuruti where she grew up, the sunset signified danger. She recalled that evening when bandits struck her father’s homestead. The setting sun thus had sent up giant red rays, like the one she was watching. The sight was unnerving and she wished she could discern its meaning. (106)

In Maa cosmology, powerful forces of nature such as floods, thunder, drought, and lightning manifest Enkai’s presence (God) in their midst. As Meitamer Olol-Dapash notes:

Enkai is defined by colourful dualities that animate nearly every aspect of the life of the forest. He has two qualities – Enkai Narok, which is associated with the Good, the Black, the Superior, and the North, and is embodied by thunder and rain, and Enkai Na-nyokie, which is associated with the Angry, the Red, the Minor, and the South, and is frequently embodied by lightning. (Fitzhenry 1)

Olol-Dapash description is illustrative of the mighty power of nature over humans. Enkai’s dualistic nature is symbolized in the novel by thunder, rain, and lightning. These elements are a constant reminder that nature is alive and capable of hitting back when provoked. Kulet demonstrates human frailty in Norpisia and Kedoki’s desperate struggle to save their souls in the wake of nature’s rage:

They staggered and fell when another burst of lightning flashed and a loud roar of thunder shook the ground violently. They skidded over the slippery ground and darted fast, past a tree that had been struck by lightning and was burning. Before the fire died out, they saw some trees leaning precariously. Then another rumble and the trees began to fall. (109)
Curiously, as Masintet and Lembarta were frantically fighting to save their souls and Kedoki’s cattle from the raging waters, wild animals as if on cue had comfortably sought refuge from higher grounds:

All species of animals had converged there. An agitated herd of elephants stood uneasily on one side, occasionally trumpeting noisily. Buffaloes, zebra, wildebeest and all kinds of gazelles and antelopes mingled with their cattle, sheep and goats, and quietly stood in the rain. Lions, leopards and hyenas hid in thickets, occasionally growling to assert their presence. However, none was aggressive to the other and none was fearful. The plateau was like the legendary Noah’s ark. Only human beings were resented by the animals …

(112)

The text’s representation of non-human animals as possessing an instinctive capacity to discern natural disasters in advance is a phenomenon that has been observed globally in regions that are prone to earthquakes and tsunamis. For instance, in Sri Lanka during the 2004 tsunami, nonhuman animals (domestic and wild) reportedly survived the disaster by instinctively moving to safer grounds prior to the onset of the deadly waves. The tsunami claimed tens of thousands of lives with an insignificant number of nonhuman animals among the victims. The unusual behaviour exhibited by nonhuman animals prior to the tsunami suggests that they are innately equipped with a sophisticated disaster warning mechanism. Whether we choose to call this mechanism instinct or by any other name, the bottom line is that this ability debunks the notion that humans are the only perceptive members of the universe. It is worth noting that apart from Norpisia and her companions who had been forewarned about the impending floods, the rest of the human population is literally caught off guard. This shows that nature is not blind in its wrath as commonly assumed. It is only the
offending human population that is destined for punishment for its arrogance and insensitivity towards the welfare of nonhuman animals. After the deluge, Mother Nature is presented as beaming with satisfaction. We are told “the sun shone radiantly over the landscape” (110). It is as if the sun is satisfied with the damage inflicted upon humans. The awesome power of nature over humans is aptly captured in the following passage:

When the mist that had hung over the area of devastation had cleared, the green farmlands that they had seen the previous day were no more. Even the shimmering corrugated rooftops that dotted the area were not visible. Either they had been swept away by the raging floods or they were submerged, as the entire valley was now a heaving, swirling stretch of water that moved round in strong circular movements. (110)

Interestingly, it is only the homes and farmlands belonging to the settler community responsible for the invasion of the forest that are inundated by the floods. The pastoralist community represented in the text by Norpisia and her companions survive the harrowing ordeal.

Soon after the floods, nature unleashes the second bout of retribution in the form of a biting drought. The landscape is relentlessly scorched by the blazing sun drying up streams, crops, and pasture for livestock. The ferocity of the drought is so acute that by the time Kedoki and his companion cross Enkipai river, the narrator says:

… the drought had become so severe, that whole plain across the river had become a sprawling limitless stretch of brown bare land, with patches of
desiccated brush that dotted the hillocks. On the distant hills, there appeared an occasional tree, beyond which lay a desolate wasteland. (124)

As readers, we are meant to understand that the deluge and drought are retributions from nature against the wanton destruction of the physical environment. Seemingly, human’s embroilment in activities that undermine and violate the sanctity of Mother Nature is analogous to the proverbial child that bites the hand that feeds it. Kulet underscores humans’ vulnerability in relation to Mother Nature’s wrath. By foregrounding humans’ precariousness, the novel aptly deconstructs the concept of human superiority embedded in western epistemology. Having abused nature’s sacredness, humans have no option but to seek atonement. It is at this critical moment that Eddah Sein, the renowned conservationist is introduced in the novel as an environmental prophetess sent by nature to lead humans in the restoration of the depleted forests and the resuscitation of the degraded environment. Her mission is to re-establish humans’ stewardship on earth. It is important to note that the notion of wise human stewardship and management of resources for sustainable development is advocated by most ecocritics as the panacea for the current global ecological crisis. As a concept, wise stewardship is a reaction against Judeo-Christian doctrine of humanity dominion over nonhuman nature. In Dwellings, Linda Hogan notes:

We are of the animal world. We are part of the cycle of growth and decay. Even having tried so hard to see ourselves apart, and so often without a love for even our own biology we are in relationship with the rest of the planet, and that connectedness tells us we must consider the way we see ourselves and the rest of nature. (114-115)
The reconceptualization of humanity’s relationship with nonhuman nature is critical to the restoration of the degraded environment. It is a message that is fundamental to the reading of *Vanishing Herds*. Thus as the novel draws to an end, Eddah Sein, the prophetess leads the local community in a reforestation campaign. In a speech delivered at the launch of a local tree planting campaign, she underscores “the urgent need for all people to immediately vacate forests and the need for a programme of reforestation. If trees were planted and nurtured to maturity, and human interference curbed the land would heal and the environment restored” (168). The villagers enthusiastically embrace Sein’s gospel of reconciliation with the physical environment. They embark on a massive tree planting campaign as exemplified by Norpisia’s *Sheep for Trees Initiative* scheme that rewarded villagers for every fifty tree-seedlings planted and protected from wild animals with a sheep. Thus within no time as the narrator observes “The Inkiito river that was drying up, now looked robust and rumbled on with cascading waters, its banks flourishing with deep, green undergrowth. Rising up beyond the tableland, was the breathtaking vista of Oldonyo-Orasha mountain” (199). The bubbling Inkiito river symbolizes the spirit of nature’s grandeur and splendour. More significantly, the novel uses the rainbow metaphor to mark the restoration of peace between humans and nonhuman nature:

> The sun behind them illuminated the colours and shapes of the mountain rocks, the vegetation around it and contrasted it with the now upcoming dense forest that the Eorr-Natasha people had planted and nurtured to maturity. While they watched, the sun and the cascading waters of Inkiito river created a glowing rainbow that straddled the mountain in a beautiful multi-coloured arc.

(199)
The rainbow therefore portends the end of the ecological apocalypse; in its biblical context, it epitomize the sealing of the covenant between God and mankind in which God promised never again to annihilate humans by means of a deluge. The novel therefore ends on a promising note; a bright future for the local community is assured as long as they learn to respect and uphold the sanctity of all life forms on earth. Destabilization of the eco-system by mankind as shown in the text is bound to trigger a backlash from Mother Nature. Thus the torrential rains that ensue immediately after the rejuvenation of the physical environment can be read as a demonstration of nature’s contentment with the local community. It is a necessary restorative gesture from the heavens. Though the torrential rains nearly kill Kedoki, Norpisia and their son and robbed them of their wealth; it is Kedoki’s hubris that is responsible for the loss of his livestock. He unwisely taunts nature by attempting to cross the flooded Ilkarian river. His dismissal of Norpisia’s sound advice to defer the crossing of the river for a later day seals his fate. Thus throwing caution to the wind, Kedoki drags his wife and domestic animals into the treacherous river. The ensuing catastrophic scene witnessed by Sein, Lembarta, and Masintet aptly illustrates human’s insignificance and frailty in the face of nature’s awesome might:

… they watched in horror, they saw the swift flooding water sweep away Kedoki’s cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. They witnessed the herd literally vanishing downstream. They could see Kedoki running up and down frantically, shunting wildly. His little boy, Kinyamal, was on his shoulders, howling and crying his heart out. Norpisia was nowhere to be seen. (214-215)

The passage underscores the amazing power of nature over humans. Indeed nature does not need humans; it is humans who need nature. Thus as Kedoki and his young family bitterly find out, it is their actions that determine their fate.
2.4 Nature as Pharmacy

In a preface to *Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany*, Balick and Cox contend that “… the very course of human culture has been deeply influenced by plants, particularly plants that have been used by indigenous peoples around the world” (vii). This observation resonates well in Kulet’s *Vanishing Herds*. The text represents nature as a healer and a trove of innumerable medicinal plant species. More significantly, the novel highlights the interconnectedness of the material and the spiritual realm as a fundamental facet of indigenous medicine. As pointed out earlier in our discussion, sacred groves such as the Medungi are venerated spaces within the forest ecosystem. These locations act as reservoirs of rare plant species considered holy by the local community. The forest is therefore the community’s pharmacy; a vast laboratory where trainees receive lessons through empirical observations. Norpisia learns from her grandmother a cocktail of mystical arts that include clairvoyance, divination, and incantation. The narrator describes the old woman as “an expert in mixing and preparation of herbal medicine [who] … took Norpisia with her into the forest where she exposed her to various types of roots, barks, berries and nuts from which she derived her medicinal preparations” (12).

Kulet is critical of the skepticism shown to indigenous medicine by modern medical practitioners. The lackluster reception of the efficacy of indigenous medicine in the modern medical field is probably a manifestation of colonial epistemic prejudice. David Arnold, a science historian at the University of Manchester opines that during the colonial era Western medicine “was taken as a prime exemplar of the constructive and beneficial effects of European rule … [it] was to the imperial mind … one of its most indisputable claims to legitimacy” (Balick and Cox 36). This epistemic assumption is contested in the text through the representation of traditional healers as
highly skilled persons with extensive specialized knowledge on the healing power of plants and herbs. The novel draws an important distinction between western and indigenous medicine. The success of western medicine is often credited on the rationality and precision of scientific knowledge that is often viewed as a status symbol of western civilization. This assumption stems from a dualistic mindset that polarizes humans from the spiritual realm. Indigenous medical practitioners unlike their western trained counterparts ascribe the success or failure of herbal medicine to a supreme being. As Norpisia recalls her grandmother, “always emphasized that, it was Enkai-Narak who healed while death was caused by Enkai-Nanyoike, and the two were doled out without any consideration” (182). The novel makes extensive references to a wide array of plants drawn from the local landscape that have been used for generations by the Maa community to effectively treat a number of ailments. The following long passage highlights Norpisia’s unique expertise as a traditional healer:

She searched for herbs that she would use to treat the swelling on Kedoki’s leg. She found *olmasiligi* with its thick large succulent leaves, uprooted several whole plants that she was to heat over the fire. She would place the hot, fleshy leaves on the swollen part of his leg. She would also boil the whole plant to make a wash, for it contained skin-healing and wound-separating curatives.

When she saw the tiny leaves of *olmagiro-giro*, she picked them to add to the solution. She knew they were excellent for healing anything from bites to boils, even severe ulcers and wounds. Further out of the forest where it was dryer, she dug out roots of *olkonyl* to add to his soup as a general antidote for
poisons and other toxic reactions. They already had olkitolosua roots that they often added to their soup to help boost energy and warm their bodies.

She was quite pleased to find the bright green leaves of olosesiate which she valued most for the antiseptic and quick-healing properties. They were also effective in keeping flies away from a wound. She would pound them and make a strong solution that she would often splash on Kedoki’s wound.

Growing at the sunny edges of the woods, she found olcani-lenskashe herb, which was not only a good fly-repellent when made into an infusion for an external wash, but an excellent addition to the soup that made a person sweat profusely and helped to open up pores on the skin. She then dug up tubers and collected twigs, berries and barks of trees and carried them all to their temporary camp. (85 – 86)

Here Kulet underpins the existence of a vibrant indigenous knowledge system based on an intimate communal kinship with the natural landscape. The use of indigenous names for uniquely native plant species foregrounds the community’s rich botanical knowledge gained through practical experience and transmitted orally from one generation to the other.

2.5 Nature as Epitome of Beauty.(See Fig. 7, 8, and 9)

Nature is undoubtedly endowed with awe-inspiring beauty. Humans have throughout history sought artistic inspiration from the splendour and tranquility of the natural environment (Buell 2). In Vanishing Herds, Kulet uses inspirational images to capture the supreme beauty of the Savannah. The text depicts objects of nature as representations of Enkai’s splendor and magnificence. In this regard, therefore, the
physical pleasure experienced by humans from direct contact with nature is viewed as a spiritual kinship with the Creator as shown in the following passage:

Outside the kraal, she walked through the damp grass that was dripping wet with dew, towards a small narrow stream that flowed between giant trees. As she walked, she sensed the rising of the sun in the east. She observed the eastern sky shade from glowing grey to soft blue, with a scattering of pink clouds, reflecting the glory of the morning sun. She watched the slowly changing patterns with wonder, held by the magnificence of the black side of the sunrise (85).

Here Norpisia is totally immersed in the spell cast by the solitude and the sublimity of the natural environment. One can sense a mystical connection between Norpisia’s inner calmness and the natural harmonization of colours enacted by the morning sun. The natural environment embodied by the sun, the stream, and the vegetation stands out in a symbiotic relationship with Norpisia. Norpisia’s mystical experience is echoed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the founding fathers of American transcendentalism. In his major work *Nature*, he writes:

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and vulgar things. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. (Bradley and Long 356)
Thus for Norpisia, her communion with nature in the woods is presented in the text as a spiritual experience that enables her to enjoy what Emerson calls nature’s ‘perpetual presence of the sublime’. In another passage, the novel weaves a picturesque description of the internationally acclaimed annual wildebeest migration across the Mara River:

What a spectacular scene! He [Kedoki] recalled with a reminiscent smile, how he stood there entranced at the breathtaking view before his eyes. The scene was still so fresh in his mind that he could still see the wildebeests with their compact sturdy bodies as they jumped into the water, as if pushed into it by a power they could not resist. They struggled against a strong tide, their heavily built chests and shoulders rippling, as they swam across the swiftly flowing river. They jostled in the water, pushing one another with their large heads that were protected by their massive short black horns. Some of them were killed by crocodiles that waited for them at the edge of the water. Those that managed to cross the river crowded together at the river bank, as they struggled to run uphill. As they scrambled, their small hooves raised red dust that covered them, making them look as if they were engulfed in a ball of fire.

(38)

The breathtaking drama enacted by tens of thousands of wildebeests, zebras and antelopes as they struggle to cross the treacherous Mara River is one of the magical wonders of Mother Nature (See Fig.10 and 11). It projects nature’s grandeur and supremacy manifest in the animal’s awe inspiring battle for self-preservation. The astounding display of the undulating rhythm of nature in the Savannah is undoubtedly a major manifestation of the perpetual sublimity of the natural world. It is equally important to note that the text also depicts the natural environment as a place of
refuge, a sacred temple where humans can seek solace and tranquility from the bustle and hustle of life. Seeking refuge in nature therefore helps in the restoration of inner equilibrium and peace in times of uncertainties and deepens the spiritual connection between humans and the landscape. Evidence of the therapeutic importance of nature to the human soul is illustrated in an earlier episode in the text in which Norpisia is urgently summoned by Messopirrr from her grandmother’s village. The narrator says “When they arrived, they were informed that the family was in the nearby forest, where her father often retreated when he was in need of privacy or when he wanted to slaughter a sheep exclusively for his family” (13). Messopirrr retreats to the forest to seek divine enlightenment regarding Kedoki’s proposition to marry his daughter. This eco-therapeutic perspective is a common element in Maasai epistemology since the forest is revered as an embodiment of Enkai. It is for this reason that special rituals such as the sacrifice of animals to appease the spirits of the family’s forebears are normally performed in the woods.
2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to establish the representation of nature in Kulet’s *Vanishing Herds*. In this regard, we have been able to show that Kulet’s conceptualization of nature is influenced by a culture that ascribes great reverence to nature as a conscious living entity. The chapter has further established that insofar as Maasai epistemology is concerned, the natural environment is an embodiment of *Enkai*’s sovereignty and as such, the spiritual and the material are of one and the same substance. Thus any violation of Mother Nature’s sanctity is bound to attract catastrophic retributions. It is therefore, within this context, that we conclude there is a compelling relationship between environmental degradation and the erosion of indigenous ecological ethics. In the next chapter, we shall attempt to examine the ecological ramifications of modernity and British colonialism as represented in *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. 
CHAPTER THREE

ECOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF MODERNITY AND BRITISH COLONIALISM IN VANISHING HERDS AND THE HUNTER

“We have in East Africa the rare experience of dealing with a tabula rasa, an almost untouched and sparsely inhabited country, where, we can do as we will, regulate immigration, and open or close the door as seems best”

– Sir Charles Elliot

(British Commissioner for the East African Protectorate 1900 - 1904)

3.1 Introduction

The opening epigraph alludes to the ‘othering’ of the local landscape as a primordial space devoid of any discernible signs of civilization. It essentializes indigenous communities as a horde of a primitive race lacking the necessary wherewithal to conquer and subdue the natural environment. In the previous chapter, the study examined the representation of characters’ consciousness from an ecological perspective. This chapter seeks to investigate the ecological ramifications of British colonial desire to re-order and re-structure the local landscape to meet its imperial interests. Within this framework, historical data related to ecological abuses inflicted on the local physical environment by British colonialism is of paramount importance. The chapter therefore endeavours to analyse the unprecedented colonial exploitation and destruction of the natural environment that was often carried out in the absence of any ecological sensibility or ethical consideration of the rights of local communities and nonhuman life forms. To this end, a historical examination of the colonial laws and policies, and the attendant socio-economic legacies that continue to impact the management and conservation of natural resources is central to the arguments raised in this chapter. More significantly, the chapter examines the new sense of ecological
subjectivity and individualism created by the intersection of colonialism and indigenous cultural sensibilities. Though the selected primary texts in this study are located in the post-colonial dispensation, nevertheless, they address critical ecological issues whose genesis can be traced back to the country’s colonial experience. In this regard, issues related to the introduction of private land tenure system, cash crop agriculture, the shamba system, trophy hunting, and institutionalized corruption are fundamental to unraveling some of the ecological underpinnings of British colonialism in post-colonial Kenya.

3.2 Evolution of Hunting of Wild Animals in Colonial Kenya

An examination of the historical trajectory of hunting of wild animals in Kenya from the colonial to post-colonial dispensation is essential in unraveling how British colonial enterprise profoundly reconfigured the Kenyan ecological landscape by upsetting the harmonious relationship that had existed for generations between indigenous communities and the natural environment. Fundamentally, an analysis of colonial attitudes, perceptions, and mode of governance is imperative in locating the genesis of the ecological challenges articulated in the novels under study. According to Steinhart, the history of European hunting during the colonial era can be segmented into three major phases (252-255). The first phase which lasted down to the First World War can be described as the primary exploitation of big game. This type of hunting featured large groups of unrestrained explorers, traders, and pioneer administrators who were mainly preoccupied with the quest for ivory and valuable trophies that was animated by both commercial and sporting motives. Among the most notable personalities involved in this type of hunting included men such as the revered hunter-naturalists Fredrick Selous and Captain C.H Stigand, and great ivory harvesters like Alfred Arkell-Hardwick, W.D.M Bell and Neumann (Steinhart 252).
The fist-hand account of these hunters’ exploits bears testimony to the massive slaughter of wild animals in the East African savannah reminiscent of the imperial plunder and conquest of the Congo immortalized in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

The second phase in the destruction of the local flora and fauna was mainly occasioned by the arrival of White settlers at the beginning of 1905. It was particularly triggered by the construction of a railroad from the coastal town of Mombasa to Uganda. The costly project was envisioned to open up the inland areas to farming, hunting, and tourism. In a bid to ensure a quick return on the railroad investment, the colonial administration encouraged an influx of Europeans settlers to Kenya to farm large tracts of lands that the railway had made accessible. Thus by the beginning of 1905 white settlers begun arriving in the colony to take up extensive tracts of land in the so-called ‘White Highlands’. The arrival of White settlers set in motion the beginning of the most extensive destruction of the physical environment in the history of Kenya (Waithaka 24). Large scale destruction of wild animals’ habitats became the White settlers’ preferred *modus operandi* for the establishment of extensive privately owned farmlands and grazing areas that were fenced and cleared of all but the smallest game animals and birds. Some settlers like Lord Delamere whom the colonial regime had corruptly allocated 100,000 acres of land at a cost of a penny per acre, viewed wild animals as competitors and a threat to his expansive livestock (Kibwana *et al* 140). As a prominent sportsman and ‘progressive’ White farmer, Lord Delamere actively campaigned for the total elimination of wildlife from his estates. The prevailing hostility harbourd by the White settler community against wild animals at the time and the need to imprint European civilization on a
supposedly exotic indigenous landscape is pertinently expressed by the colonial writer Elspeth Huxley in her book *The Settlers*:

Africa in those days was still the stamping-ground of wild animals existing in profusion unknown in any other quarter of the globe. It was, indeed, the wealth of wild life and wonderful sport that attracted many of the first settlers to East Africa and never has there been a clearer illustration of the saying that man must destroy the thing he loves. Game and farming, as everyone knows, do not go together. Today farming has won, but then it was the heyday of the game. The settler, with most difficulty, sowed his seed; the game regarded his resulting crop as a rations. Zebras came in vast herds to trample the corn, making short work of fences; bushbuck and reedbuck leapt over the highest Zareba into plant nursery or garden. Monkeys swarmed from the forest to uproot and steal. Hordes of birds tore at fruits or grain.

As for the stock farmer, lions pulled down his cattle, hyenas and buzzards set on his lambs, buffaloes spread rinderpest among his herds, and zebras and hartebeest devoured his grazing. (17-18)

Here Huxley justifies the ‘othering’ of nonhuman animals by an alien community that has dispossessed them of their natural habitat. The representation of nonhuman animals as enemies validates their wanton slaughter to protect crops and eliminate predation of livestock. Consequently, as more land was increasingly put under agriculture, there was a massive decline of wildlife habitats and populations. Moreover, the prospects of commercial profit from African wildlife lured trophy hunters from Europe and America for safari expeditions in a supposedly pristine East African savannah. The so-called Big Five – lion, elephant, rhino, leopard, and buffalo
were the main attraction. One of the most extensive and outrageous hunting safari ever witnessed in the East African region was the 1909 Smithsonian expedition led by the former President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt (Steinhart 253). Accompanied by a large contingent of professional hunters, taxidermists, and over 500 porters to carry loads of trophies, Roosevelt embarked on one of the most savage and brutal hunting safari ever documented. The unprecedented safari lasted for almost a year with Roosevelt and his party killing game to the extent of attracting controversy on account of the sheer number of animals shot. The Roosevelt expedition unfortunately gave Kenya a persistent allure and reputation as a new playground for Europe’s leading gentlemen and nobles and American millionaires wishing to experience the perverse thrill of shooting innocent animals for sport.

The third phase in the history of colonial hunting was marked by the establishment of a game department in 1907 for purposes of overseeing the clearing of animals from large tracts of land to permit settlement and agricultural development. It is important to note that the need to regulate hunting was mooted at the London convention of 1900 that was attended by representatives from European colonial powers (Steinhart 256). The convention called for the establishment of game reserves in Africa within 18 months of the signing of a treaty prohibiting the killing of wild animals. Strangely enough, the prohibition did not include animals such as lions, leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, otters, baboons, some monkeys, large birds of prey, crocodiles, poisonous snakes and pythons which were categorized as “vermin” and were therefore to be eradicated both inside and outside protected areas (Sorrenson 65). The “vermin” policy had a huge devastating impact on wildlife populations in Kenya as the colonial Game Department zealously ensured that the blacklisted animals were eliminated. Thus by the mid-1930s, thousands of the so-called vermin
had been slaughtered by farmers and government officers as illustrated by the Makueni case where between 1944 and 1946 an estimated 996 rhinos were killed to open up an area of 200 square kilometers for settlement (Hunter 19). There were also massive killings of game to feed troops, prisoners, and labourers during World Wars I and II, incidents that went unreported though they may have been “the most intense legal game use of the twentieth century” (Parker and Bleazard 37). These efforts created the odd situation of having a Game Department that spent more of its time and money killing wildlife than protecting it. The situation was further compounded by the fact that most settlers possessed a licence which permitted the killing of animals on Crown Land. Moreover, any animal found on private land (settlers’ estates) was deemed fair game that could be killed with impunity and without a game licence by the landowner or his agent. It is apparent from the foregoing historical account that the wanton slaughter and destruction of the local wildlife habitat and the expropriation of indigenous land was unfortunately viewed as a desirable ecological project by the British colonial administration whose declared mission was to civilize not only the natives but also their exotic flora and fauna.

3.3 Illegal Trade in Wildlife in Post-colonial Kenya

Having looked at the historical trajectory of hunting in Kenya under British colonialism, let us now focus on Kulet’s representation of hunting and the need to uphold the ecological integrity of Mother Nature in post-colonial Kenya. The Hunter can essentially be read as an indictment of the illegal wildlife trade that is threatening the survival of wildlife in Kenya. Kulet views the scourge of poaching in post-colonial Kenya as intrinsically connected to the country’s colonial experience. The novel condemns the wanton slaughter of wild animals that is presently fueled by the global demand for ivory, rhino horns, and other animals’ products. As revealed in our
discussion on the history of hunting in colonial Kenya, under British colonialism the quest for ivory and other animal’s products was considered a ‘noble’ profession. However, underneath the thick veneer of nobility, lurked a robust commercial impulse that was the key motivation for White hunters in Africa. Arguably, seeds of illegal trade in wildlife that would subsequently sprout in the post-colonial dispensation as the poaching menace were sowed in the African soil by imperial hunters under British colonialism. Today, as Kulet reveals in *The Hunter*, trade in wildlife products is a lucrative enterprise involving both local and international actors. It is a phenomenon that is progressively robbing the country of its iconic wildlife heritage. It is significant to note that species such as the elephant and the rhino are precariously on the edge of extinction as their tusks and horns are highly sought by poachers. The text depicts local poachers just like their white predecessors under British colonialism as a bunch of bloodthirsty merchants of death. Sipaya, whom the narrator describes as “the bloodiest, richest poacher of our time” (93) together with his rag tag gang of poachers encapsulates the ugly realities of poaching as shown in the following episode:

Since the last time he was with them, they had killed fourteen elephants, ten of them were hundred-pounders, while the rest were not bad at all. They had also slain two hundred zebras, whose hides had not been badly mutilated by bullet holes …

They all walked over to a bushy place a few yards from the fire. There, spread on old gunny bags, were all sizes of elephant tusks, rhino horns, zebra skins, warthog teeth, lion claws and buffalo heads. Sipaya rubbed his hands together in satisfaction as he turned a buffalo head with his shoe. They walked back to the fireplace. Sipaya called for the cash boxes, opened one and distributed cash according to the type and number of animals each killed. (71)
The gang is proud for having successfully accomplished its bloody mission. The slaughter of fourteen elephants and twelve rhinos points to the high commercial premium placed on the two species (See Fig. 5 and 6). Sipaya and his men undergird the commercialization of nonhuman animals with the elephant and the rhino tipping the list as the most highly prized items. As payments for services rendered is pegged on ‘the type and number of animals’ each individual poacher had killed, the motivation for the slaughter of commercially viable species such as the elephant and the rhino is ever high. It is sad to note that the loss of elephants due to over poaching is likely to have negative consequences for the ecological trajectories of some plants. This is because elephants are known to habitually cover huge distances in the open plains of Savannah in search of food and in the process play a significant role in seed dispersal via their dung thus helping in the ecological trajectory of some plants from one area to another. Moreover, there is a commensalism relationship between the elephant and small birds in the savannah that feed on parasitic organism harboured by elephants. The demise of elephants through over-poaching will therefore have negative ecological implications in the Savannah ecosystem.

*The Hunter* can also be read as a scathing critique of the re-branding of trophy hunting as the panacea for the ecological ‘imbalance’ in the savannah supposedly caused by animals’ overpopulation. The representation of trophy hunting as a viable conservational policy is amplified in the text by Caughlen, the American tourist cum ‘environmentalist’. He says:

Licenced hunting is a healthy sport and it has more advantages than disadvantages. One is cropping. The land is not expanding, while animals are multiplying. They have therefore to be cropped, of course reasonably. What I
strongly detest and I would finance any move against it, is poaching. Poaching is a disease. (81)

Here Caughlen exhibits the customary hypocrisy of western intervention in developing countries. Oftentimes, the west’s prescribed conservationist solutions tend to legitimize western cultural values with no considerations whatsoever for the ecological sensibilities of indigenous communities. While it is indisputable that poaching is indeed a ‘disease’ that needs to be eliminated at all cost, it should however be borne in mind that both poaching and the so-called licenced killing of wild animals are essentially two sides of the same coin. There is absolutely no difference between a trophy hunter and a poacher in terms of motivation and indifference to the rights of innocent nonhuman animals. In fact the West needs to learn a few lessons from Maasai’s ecological knowledge that has enabled the community to co-exist harmoniously with wild animals. As Kulet illustrates in Vanishing Herds, nature has its own mechanism of ensuring an ecological equilibrium in the savannah:

Lions, hyenas, leopards, wild dogs and foxes had to adapt to the environment in which their prey lived so as to ensure a constant supply of their food. They, therefore, hunted the sick, the young, the old and the wounded ensuring that only the fittest of them survived. In so doing, nature ensured that there was a sustainable number of every species in the savannah and in the forest. (68)

Therefore there has never been a time when wild life population has ever outstripped its habitat to warrant the intervention of self-appointed nature prefects like Caughlen to rid the Savannah of ‘excess’ animal population. In fact the poaching ‘disease’ that appears to deeply incense Caughlen as explained earlier in this chapter is a novel phenomenon that was introduced to Africa via Europeans’ quest for ivory and other
animals products. As Leseiyo muses in *The Hunter*, the local Maasai community cannot comprehend the justification for shooting innocent wild animals in the name of sport:

… he would have asked the hunters what joy they derived from shooting an animal. To him aiming and shooting at an animal were not different from aiming and shooting through a tin at the same distance. The skills required were the same … Wasn’t a sport supposed to be a challenge to the sportsman? … If the hunter was pitted against an enemy such as a lion, wasn’t it better if the hunter had a spear and sword, like a Maasai moran, so that the animal was given a chance to prove its prowess? Animals were never a match for a hunter’s binoculars and rifle. The poor animals had nothing but their noses, ears, eyes and a profound sense of fear. (85)

Here the novel deconstructs the notion of trophy hunting which is often presented by western conservationists as a noble ‘sport’. As Leseiyo postulates, there is no nobility in murdering innocent animals in cold blood and then have the moral temerity to whitewash the criminal act as a noble sport. It ought to be noted that though British colonialism is historically credited with introducing commercial hunting in Kenya, this should not however be construed to mean that indigenous communities in pre-colonial Kenya did not engage in hunting. Indeed some communities such as Akamba, Ameru, and some coastal communities such as the Digo and Duruma are known to have engaged in hunting as an important economic, social, and cultural activity (Steinhart 247). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that hunting in pre-colonial Kenya primarily entailed the killing of small game for the pot (Mackenzie 65). More importantly, unlike the White settlers, most indigenous communities had taboos that strictly prohibited the wanton killing of wild animals. Notably, hunting for the pot
was characterized by the use of rudimentary technology in the form of spears, traps and snares. In essence, this means that hunting for the pot had a considerably minimal ecological impact in the Savannah. Conversely, the use of automatic firearms and assault rifles by contemporary poachers and trophy hunters who normally target commercially viable species such as elephants, rhinos, and lions has a devastating impact on wildlife populations. The awful carnage caused in the Savannah by the use of modern weapons is graphically highlighted in the text:

It was like watching a film. The three men had joined a number of others, possibly twenty or so. In the background, several dead animals lay scattered. The majority of them were zebras, their bellies taut and distended with gas. Two men were roasting the meat of an impala on an open fire. Five rotting rhino carcasses and four elephants lay near a waterhole. It was obvious that the group of men had killed creatures coming to the waterhole to drink. The hidden group could hear the buzz of hundreds of flies and the awful stench from the rotting carcasses turned their stomachs. But the men did not seem bothered by the smell. Some were busy skinning the dead zebras while two or three were stretching out other skins to dry. (86-87)

It is highly unlikely that the massacre of a considerable number of zebras, elephants, and rhinos can be accomplished by means of rudimentary weapons such as spears, arrows, and the use of simple snares and traps. As in the days of white hunting under British colonialism, poaching in Africa is presently defined by the use of the rifle. It is also significant to note that the Maasai as a people are culturally known to profess distaste for game meat. They considered the consumption of game meat a taboo since wild animals were culturally valorized as second cattle. Thus the advent of large scale poaching completely distorted Maasai’s cultural sensitivity towards the consumption
of game meat as exemplified by Sipay’s men who though Maasai enjoyed ‘roasting the meat of an impala on an open fire’.

As a postcolonial text, *The Hunter* is highly critical of the exploitative and asymmetrical nature of the global tourism sector. Kulet views the dominance of overseas firms represented in the text by Hearthill International as playing a critical role in entrenching hegemonic economic and cultural relationships. The local tourism industry is represented as totally dependent on the benevolence of overseas tour operators for survival. As Sipaya, the CEO of Elube Safaris admits:

> He had heard of Caughlen’s fame and mishandling him was like writing on the door ‘Business Closed’. Word would go round like a bush-fire, right to the international booking offices which directed clients to firms they knew were capable and had the means to satisfy the clients’ wishes. Instead of a surge of indignation, Sipaya was once more overcome by his sense of business and he had decided to apologize. (33)

Sipaya’s meekness in the face of Caughlen’s larger than life’s fame encapsulates the marginal status of local tour operators in the global market. The international booking offices are the dominant actors in the industry as they are the ones who determine the flow of clients to local firms. Though Sipaya had earlier been taunted by Mr. Anderson about his firm’s incompetence to handle a guest of Mr. Caughlen’s stature, he still had to apologize as a good business sense. The dependency syndrome epitomized by Elube Safaris arguably reinforces unfair business practice skewed in favour of economic and political interests of the West. The imbalance in tourism industry is further aggravated by the introduction of the concept of ‘all-inclusive tour package’. Essentially, the concept entails an advance payment by prospective tourists destined for third world destinations for flights, hotel accommodation, food and
beverages, entertainments, and other amenities to tour operators based in their home countries (Mutisya 3). This arrangement is economically skewed in favour of rich countries as it ensures that a bigger chunk of the proceeds generated through tourism is retained in the tourists’ home countries. Moreover, as all expenses have already been paid for in advance in the tourists’ countries of origin, all-inclusive tourists are normally less inclined to spend extra money in their host countries (Freitag 45). In the text, Caughlen and his entourage exemplify the economic imbalance created by the all-inclusive concept. As safari tourists from North America destined to Kenya, their entire three days holiday in the country is handled by an overseas firm – Hearthill International. Local firms represented by Elube Safaris benefit marginally through the provision of ancillary services such as transport from the airport to the park. More significantly, such tourists as exemplified by Caughlen and his companions often spent their entire holidays in enclaves that are mainly located in isolated environments. This effectively minimizes their chances of interacting with the locals and spending in the local economy. This probably accounts for why only between 2% and 5% of Kenya’s total tourism receipts trickle down to the grassroots level, primarily in the form of low paying, servile jobs, souvenir sales and agricultural produce (Bachmann 78).

It would perhaps be inappropriate to conclude our discussion on the representation of wildlife tourism without interrogating the promotional and marketing strategies often employed by overseas tour operators to brand the country’s image. Under British colonialism, the image of Kenya as an ideal destination for both settlers and tourists seeking a break from their European homelands and other colonies was predicated on the notion of a sparsely populated pristine environment teeming with a large number of prehistoric animals. This brand image created by the
colonial regime continues to be projected by contemporary local and overseas tour operators as a marketing strategy. As the narrator notes in *The Hunter*, the Americans “were looking for one of the big five: elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion or leopard. The hunters had a licence for each” (75). Elizabeth Garland views this marketing strategy as a product of what she calls “the dialectical history of European exploration and colonization of the continent” (51) She further suggests:

In the Euro-American West, the continent of Africa has long been associated with iconic wild animals. China may have its pandas, India its tigers, the Amazon its jaguars and anacondas, North America its bison, wolves, and bears. But Africa has lions and leopards, gorillas and chimpanzees, elephants, rhinos, hippos, ostrich, zebra, giraffe, and more! Not only is the continent home to more large, charismatic species than other regions of the globe, but its animals are also highly familiar to Western people, who are exposed to them in the form of toys, visual media, and the display of live creatures in zoological parks, often from early childhood on. (58)

Thus images of wild Africa complete with roaring lions, trumpeting elephants and semi-naked natives are a common theme in promotional brochures. As noted earlier, these images tend to sustain one of the most widespread and seductive myths of the non-European ‘other’ in relation to the East African landscape. They buttress the colonial narrative of a quintessential East African *tabula rasa* in which indigenous communities exist merely as part and parcel of its extensive flora and fauna. It is therefore not surprising that following a minor road mishap on the way back to the camp after their first hunting session, Caughlen angrily asserts:

When such an accident nearly takes place, one should take stock of himself. If the car had actually overturned and all of us had been spilled out and badly
injured, how could we have got to the hospital? Damn it, I would hate to come
the whole way from the United States just to die in a jungle. I do not fear
dead, but I think one should have a decent death. (78)
Caughlen considers death in the African jungle an abomination for an American
national. He condescendingly views the local landscape as an empty space devoid of
any signs of modern civilization except the wild animals that he had come to shoot.
Caughlen’s mindset is probably informed by the wildlife safari brochures issued by
overseas marketing firms that often project the Maa people as primitive, unchanging,
and frozen in time and space. As Tucker and Akama rightly observe such publications
have a penchant for juxtaposing images of the Maasai in traditional regalia with their
livestock grazing in complete harmony with other savannah herbivores such as
antelopes, zebra, wildebeest, and buffalo and the “Big Five” (102). This romantic
representation is undoubtedly what has attracted the white American hunters to
Maasailand.

3.4 The Culture of Land ‘Grabbing’.

Land is undoubtedly the most important natural resource. It is the medium that
supports most life forms. As such, “the way in which land is used affects the integrity
of biological systems upon which human life depends” (Mbote 72). Indeed, whatever
affects land is likely to have impact on the entire spectrum of life, as it provides the
habitat within which living and non-living organisms exist and interact in the
ecosystem. As Rachel Carson cogently notes, it is the soil that controls all forms of
life on earth and without soil, terrestrial plants could not grow, and without plants no
animals could survive (53). As intimated in our discussion in chapter one, the
ownership and use of land among indigenous communities in pre-colonial Kenya was
predicated on collective communal rules based on cultural norms and practices.
Cultural norms and practices therefore played a significant ecological role in ensuring sustainable utilization and conservation of land for future generations. Conversely, colonial land laws were effectively anchored on an economic impulse informed by the desire to control and exploit indigenous land for the sustenance of industries in the metropolis. This mechanistic conceptualization of land is grossly incompatible with the cultural sensibilities of indigenous communities. It should be recalled that the Maa people like other indigenous communities in Africa and in other parts of the world exhibit a strong kinship with the landscape. The landscape was basically regarded with spiritual reverence as the abode of ancestral spirits. Thus in an attempt to reorder and re-define the purportedly ‘empty’ local landscape, “Europeans concepts on property rights were imported into Africa to foster progress along paths previously taken by most European countries during the industrial revolution” (Mbote and Cullet 23). The general assumption was that what has worked in Europe would certainly work in Africa. It is therefore against this backdrop that British colonialism superimposed the concept of private property rights upon existing indigenous customary laws. The imposition of private property rights radically disrupted the hitherto mutually nourishing relationship between indigenous communities and the physical environment. It ushered in a new ecological consciousness premised on individualization and commoditization of the physical environment. In Vanishing Herds, Kulet is particularly critical of the dawn of this alien ecological sensibility that threatens to erode Maasai’s spiritual kinship with the physical environment. The text views the massive ‘grabbing’ of Maasai ancestral land by crop farmers from neighbouring communities in post-colonial Kenya as a re-enactment of the dispossession of the community’s land by White settlers under British colonialism. As the text reveals, the grabbing of Maasailand has not only caused huge ecological
problems but also a profound sense of loss, hopelessness, and despair to the Maa community:

Kedoki, Masintet, Lembarta and Norpisia climbed onto a crest and stood in awestruck silence as they looked down on thousands of acres of devastated forest stretching to unimaginable limits. Corrugated iron-sheet roofs that shimmered in the bright sunshine dotted an area that was dominated by bamboo-fenced shambas, now green with waist-high maize plants, purple and white-flowered potato plants and patches of maturing yellow-green millet. On the opposite side were cleared lands stretching for miles and vanishing into the horizon, a deep green immensity of tea plantations on one side and a tawny undulation of ridges of ripening wheat and barley on the other. Randomly, smoke everywhere while sacks of the black stuff that was in high demand in towns were in sight, vultures perched, staring unblinkingly at nothing in particular, hoping to locate the carcasses of the latest victims of the humans and animals conflict. (101)

Kedoki and his companions are at a crossroad. The desecration of the Mau forest occasioned by the ‘land grabbing’ mania exemplified by the proliferation of ‘bamboo-fenced shambas’ and the dominant tea plantations causes despair and misery to the pastoralists. The felling of tress for charcoal burning undergirds the massive loss of biodiversity caused by the disregard for the sanctity of nature (See Fig 1 and 2). Unfortunately, the local settler community as ‘civilized’ post-colonial subjects exhibit a similar disregard for Mother Nature as their colonial predecessors. The tea plantations and the shambas represent the indelible imprints of British colonialism in the country’s ecological landscape. It is instructive to note that the shamba system was initially introduced to Kenya as an agro-forest strategy by the colonial regime in
1910 (Kagombe and Gitonga 6). It was meant to fast-track the supply of raw material for the colonial timber industry and to reduce pressure on natural forests. The system encouraged local farmers to grow exotic trees and food crops on small plots. Once the trees mature, farmers had to shift to a fresh plot by clearing indigenous trees to pave way for the planting of exotic trees which were noted to grow faster than the indigenous species. The system has come under heavy criticism from the late Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Wangari Maathai. In a keynote address during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} World Congress of Agro forestry held in Nairobi, Kenya, She notes:

[The system] destroys biodiversity and reduces the capacity of the forests to harvest rain water, retain it and releases it gradually through rivers and streams. It causes forests to lose the capacity to control rainfall patterns and climate as forests are turned into commercial farms and grazing grounds. (1)

The loss of biodiversity aggravated by the shamba system is simply beyond debate. As a colonial relic, the system can be viewed as a precursor to the contemporary land ‘grabbing’ malaise that is responsible for the rapid loss of forest cover in the country. It should also be noted that the grabbing of Maasai ancestral land is at the core of the animosity between the community and the neighbouring crop farmers. As a pastoralist community, the Maasai have for generations optimized utilization of their vast land for herding their livestock. However, encroachment by neighbouring communities has drastically reduced Maasai’s communal rangeland forcing them to graze their livestock on a limited space. Ultimately, it leads to overgrazing; a practice that leads ecological disequilibrium as it encourages desertification. The animosity between the two communities is cogently revealed by Masintet:

The catch is that farmers are usually unhappy when pastoralists cross through their territory. The last time we passed through the settled area with my
siblings, they warned us to stay clear of their crops. When our cattle strayed into one of their farms, they hacked off their tails, and two had serious cuts on their hind legs. (97)

The Maa community is therefore doubly marginalized insofar as their land is concerned; firstly by white settlers under British colonialism and secondly; by black settlers in post-colonial Kenya. The antagonism between pastoralist and agriculturalist communities in post-colonial Kenya is arguably an offshoot of modernity. Modern medical services, education, food security *inter alia* has triggered a tremendous growth in human population hence exerting immense pressure upon land.

Kulet is also critical of the ecological viability of the privatization of rights to resources that were previously owned and sustainably managed by local communities to a few individuals. The author views the alienation of communities from the collective control of primary resources such as water as a potential recipe for conflicts and a likely source of ecological crisis. In the text, the pastoralist community is incensed by the appropriation of a river by one of the local landowners. On learning that one of the new landowners had diverted a whole river for personal use, Norpisia is overwhelmed with anger. She laments:

How could anybody in his right mind divert a whole river for his own selfish interests? How could he do that at the expense of the poor herders who had lost most of their livestock on account of the severe drought? How could he make them work on his farm for two days in exchange of water for their animals? (121).

Norpisia’s consternation encapsulates the conflict between communal property rights and the colonial private property laws that are still anchored in the local legal system. In Maasai cosmology, rivers, forests, mountains, and other geographical features
manifest the essence of Enkai. No mortal being in his right mind could ever claim ownership to communally owned resources. Besides, the diversion of a river is not only going to impact the aquatic eco-system, but also deprive the local pastoralist community of access to water for their livestock.

As mentioned earlier in our discussion, the colonial government is credited with the introduction of exotic crops such as tea for purposes of propping up a cash-crop based economy in the country (Kihika and Opole 53). Thus at the dawn of the country’s political independence, the extensive white owned farms were acquired by the local nouveau riche represented in the text by Olmakarr Lemeissori who had reportedly acquired his farm from “the colonial settler, Munroe” (132). Thus Mzee Lemeissori, his son Barnotti, and the unnamed owner of Olkarsiss farm represent the new face of internal colonizers. The owner of Olkarsiss farm in particular is portrayed as exhibiting an ecological sensibility modeled on extreme materialism akin to that of the white settlers under British colonialism. The narrator notes:

While Barnoti appeared to have become a coveted environmentalist, his neighbours, including his immediate neighbour, the owner of Olkarsiss farm, continued to destroy the forests and water catchment areas. The owner of Olkarsiss farm in particular, was … on an expansion mission. He was in the process of clearing ten thousand acres of forest land to give way to a tea plantation. When Barnoti persuaded him to desist from destroying the forest, he argued that tea bushes were environmentally friendly and that contrary to what Barnoti and others thought, tea plantations were part of environmental conservation measures. The owner of Olkarsiss farm argued that rain came from the blue-bellied god called Empus-oshoke. Armed with that argument, the expansionist of Olkarsiss cleared the forest with such vindictiveness that
one would have thought he harboured a grudge against the trees. Day and night bulldozers boomed and roared in the forest. (150)

Here the owner of Olkarsiss farm is replicating the ecocide committed by White settlers upon their arrival in Kenya in 1905 to pave way for plantation farming. He displays the same colonial mindset that regarded the local landscape as a *tabula rasa* in urgent need of re-configuration to yield maximum economic returns. His ignorance is revealed by his insistence that trees have absolutely no connection with the rain. As a ‘progressive’ farmer, he considers the exotic ‘tea bushes’ of greater ecological value than the ‘useless’ indigenous trees he is destroying.

Aldo Leopold, the American conservationist and philosopher in his seminal text *A Sand County Almanac* calls for the establishment of a new personal land ethics that recognizes human beings as members of a community of interdependent parts that includes “soils, water, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land” (19). Leopold’s land ethics is a significant departure from the Euro-American mercantile view of land as an economic resource. It coheres with the Maasai’s cultural view of land as the soul of the world. The text views the violation of this cardinal ecological tenet by the white settlers as the source of the current human/wild life conflict witnessed in post-colonial Kenya. As the narrator notes, the farming community is angered by the behaviour of nonhuman animals:

… they were suddenly accosted by a large group of men, young and old, who emerged from the bushes behind them, heavily armed with assorted weapons: spears, bows, arrows, axes and pangas … They were pursuing a herd of elephants which had caused massive destruction the previous night and killed a man. (102)
The animosity leveled against nonhuman animals depicted in the text conjures up images of the white settlers/wildlife conflict chronicled in Huxley’s *The Settlers*. As is often the case, nonhuman animals are deemed the aggressors in any conflict pitting them against humans. Humans’ arrogance and insensitivity for the interests of nonhuman animals is aptly voiced by an exasperated Norpisia, “How daring and arrogant have humans become, … to invade the forest, destroy the animal habitat, strip the river banks of the vital undergrowth, and still turn around and accuse the animals of invading their farms! What cheek!” (103). The dispossession of wildlife habitat is a phenomenon that has become the hallmark of modern civilization. The construction of mega infrastructural facilities such as the current Standard Gauge Railway in the country coupled with a rapid growth in human population is progressing threatening the very survival of wild animals. Thus as long as habitat degradation that historically began under British colonialism and subsequently spilled over to the contemporary Kenyan state due to greed and ecological insensitivity continues, the conservation of wildlife in the country shall always remain a fleeting illusion.

### 3.5 Institutionalized Corruption

*The Hunter* can substantively be read as a critique of institutionalized corruption in the context of environmental degradation. Admittedly, corruption “exists in all human societies and is as ancient as the history of the human species (Kibwana 138). As a social malady, corruption has progressively filtered through every nook and cranny of our contemporary society. Fundamentally, the foundations of the prevailing socio-economic system in the country can be traced back to the beginning of formal colonial intervention in the late nineteenth century. Notably, British colonialism is credited with fashioning a social environment of disequilibrium
that encouraged the emergence of corruption in the colonial state that eventually spilled over to the post-colonial state (Kibwana 139). Corruption in the colonial state essentially involved the appropriation of the native’s ancestral land. The annexation of indigenous communities’ ancestral land as pointed earlier in our discussion had a disastrous ecological impact as it was accompanied by unprecedented clearance of indigenous forests and massive slaughter of wild animals to accommodate white settlers. A startling illustration of colonial corruption is the case of Lord Delamere who as mentioned earlier in this study was allocated over 100,000 acres of land at the cost of a penny per acre! Kulet is critical of the socio-economic structures that make it possible for corruption to take root in the management of the country’s natural resources. He yearns for a social dispensation premised on sound ecological ethics that celebrate the interconnectedness of all life-forms on earth. The author uses Setia as his mouthpiece in the crusade against corruption. As the chief game warden, Setia exhibits a robust commitment to wildlife protection. He refuses to trade his soul to the god of corruption. He tells Sipaya:

I am not the sort of man who receives money corruptly to erase evils committed by others. I am sorry I don’t. If I had wanted to be corrupt, I would have done it long ago and I would not be staying in a leaking house. I would have built myself a mansion.

… I respect you as a person who has struggled very hard to reach the respectable position you hold in society today. I also respect you for what you have achieved in terms of riches, but I regret to say that at our age and with all this modernization floating around us, many of us have assimilated subconsciously, although we may think we have not, a notion that, with
money, you just have to dangle it in the face of those without it and they will salivate, dying to have it at whatever cost. Count me out of those. (131)

The passage encapsulates the novel’s critique of the society’s assimilation of a materialistic culture grounded on individualistic, rationalist, and instrumental impulses. It is these desires that have made the likes of Sipaya a mortal enemy to the physical environment. The novel is also critical of corruption in the police force as personified by Mr. Mento, the criminal investigation boss. The battle against the abuse of nonhuman nature can only be won if those mandated to enforce the law are not tainted by corruption. Mento uses his office to shield Sipaya; the merchant of death from justice. The 350,000/- bribe he solicits from him is an inconsequential prize that Sipaya has to pay to clear his name. After settling the bribe, Sipaya bounces back with renewed vigor to the bush. He throws all caution to the wind in his bid to fulfill his part of the bargain in a lucrative deal involving the delivery of sixty large elephant tusks to an Arab businessman. He tells Mirandu, “Do you know that I have spent over three hundred and sixty thousand shillings and that money must somehow find its way back into the bank?” (164). Sipaya’s rhetorical question underscores the spiral effect of corruption. The need to recover what has been lost corruptly breeds more corruption. Sipaya has absolutely no qualms sacrificing a sizeable number of elephants to balance his accounts.

Kulet is also concerned about the corrupt abuse of the official quotas stipulated in hunting permits granted to trophy hunters by the state. Ideally, the law requires trophy hunters to strictly adhere to the provisions of the licence that often stipulates the number of animals to be shot, the type, age, and gender. However, as the text reveals, the reality in the bush is quite different. Oftentimes, the white hunters in
collaboration with local cohorts blatantly violate the quotas imposed by their licence as revealed by Sipaya’s confession to Setia:

…it started like this; the hunters that I take out on safari would, say, have a licence to kill one or two elephants. They would naturally want to kill a big elephant with biggest tusks. But during the shooting, they kill the smallest and they would then plead with us for a repeat. Occasionally during the second shooting, they would again inadvertently shoot a small one. A repeat request and eventually, the third or fourth time they would shoot the elephant of their liking. In the process, we would end up having four or six tusks on our hands.

(130)

The passage reveals the dark side of trophy hunting. It is sad to note that as a continent, Africa is losing its wildlife heritage at the hands of corrupt local tour operators and trigger-happy foreign trophy hunters who would stop at nothing to experience the perverse thrill of shooting innocent animals. This practice has resulted to some species such as the white rhino to face eminent extinction. It should be borne in mind that as a ‘conservationist’ strategy trophy hunting depends on effective state regulations and extensive scientific monitoring of animals populations. Sadly, this is not feasible in most African states where institutionalized corruption is endemic. Thus corruption within the tourism industry is adversely upsetting ecological balance in the Savannah as overzealous trophy hunters hiding behind state sanctioned hunting licences continued to cause havoc in the bush.
3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we sought to examine the ecological legacy of the 70 years of British colonial rule in Kenya. We have been able to establish that some of the ecological challenges facing the post-colonial Kenyan state manifest in the rapid depletion of the country’s forest cover, the alarming loss of the country’s game heritage accentuated by the poaching menace and human/wildlife conflict are historically linked to the country’s colonial experience. Central to the ecological challenges facing the country is the colonial expropriation of land belonging to indigenous communities that effectively distorted and alienated communities from their indigenous ecological ethics. Thus in line with our analysis, we conclude that as the country grapples with the sensitive issue of environmental degradation, there is need to institute sound ecological policies that would recognize the validity of indigenous ecological ethics that was debased under British colonialism. In the next chapter, the study examines the representation of characters and characterization in relation to ecology in *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. 
CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERS’ ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN VANISHING HERDS

AND THE HUNTER

Question: ‘What are your spiritual beliefs?’

Answer: ‘Well, I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. Look at the sun. If there is no sun, then we cannot exist. So nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals’

- Mikhail Gorbachev (1997)

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at the correlation between modernity and British colonialism in relation to the ecological challenges represented in the selected primary texts. This chapter seeks to examine the relationship between culture and the representation of characters’ ecological consciousness in Vanishing Herds and The Hunter. More pertinently, the chapter endeavours to analyze how the physical environment shapes and determines characters’ ecological sensibilities. It is imperative therefore before proceeding with our discussion to first adopt a working definition of the term ‘culture’ which is a key concept in this chapter. For purposes of this chapter, culture is defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (New Encyclopedia Britannica 874). Kulet’s representation of ecological degradation is basically viewed through characters’ ecological consciousness. More significantly, the physical environment is described with remarkable precision and profundity thus bestowing upon it greater literary importance than a mere setting device upon which the narrative unfolds. There is therefore a reciprocal relationship between characters and the physical environment;
an integration that validates the deep ecological concept of interconnectedness of life on earth. This chapter compartmentalizes characters in the two novels in three major groups; in the first category are the traditionalists. These are characters who show a deep spiritual connection with the natural world. Their worldview is fashioned by a cultural sensibility that exhibits a spiritual ecological consciousness. In *Vanishing Herds*, these characters are personified by Norpisia, Kedoki, Masintet, and his brother Lembarta. In *The Hunter*, the most notable are Leseiyo and Ole Seki. Essentially, most of these characters have not imbibed western education hence they reveal very little influence of western cultural values in their relationship with nature. In the second category, we have characters whose ecological consciousness is at a crossroad; these characters exhibit a sensibility that is dislocated from their cultural roots. Kulet represent these culturally dislocated characters as a threat to the physical environment. They embody an anthropocentric mindset shown in the novels as morally responsible for the wanton destruction of the landscape. The most notable character in this group is Richmond Sipaya, the chief executive of Elube Safaris and his ruthless band of poachers. Lastly, we have the Caucasian characters dubbed White hunters in *The Hunters*. These characters exhibit a conflicting ecological consciousness borne of a culture that prioritizes the exploitation of the physical environment to satisfy human ends.

4.2 Norpisia and Kedoki

The story of *Vanishing Herds* is chiefly relayed from the perspective of a semi-nomadic pastoralist community represented in the text by Norpisia and Kedoki. Norpisia and Kedoki is a young Maasai couple through whom Kulet explores the Maa’s spiritual ecological consciousness. Early in the novel, Norpisia is introduced as a “heroine and celebrity” (1) in recognition of her exemplary work in environmental
conservation. She is cheered wildly by members of the public who had thronged Nakuru stadium to see “the famous woman pastoralist” who had “miraculously changed an arid and desolate wasteland into a garden of Eden” (7). It is instructive to note that even though Norpisia is not schooled in Western mode of education, the novel celebrates the construction of her highly developed ecological consciousness. Seemingly, Kulet uses Norpisia’s character to deconstruct Western epistemic assumptions that are responsible for the ‘othering’ and denigration of non-western knowledge systems as unscientific and inimical to modern civilization (Fox 91). Norpisia is portrayed as a proactive indigenous conservationist whose ecological sensibility is founded on her cultural heritage. This is manifested by her grass root tree planting scheme named Sheep for Trees Initiative; a concept that infuses ecological concerns with the community’s cultural esteem for domestic animals. The initiative rewards villagers with a sheep for “every fifty tree-seedlings planted and protected from animals” (199). Besides this initiative, Norpisia had “established a beautiful botanical garden, within the growing forest, with all kinds of herbs which villagers would later use to treat their ailments” (198). As a granddaughter of enkoiboni (medicine woman), Norpisia’s ecological consciousness is nurtured and shaped under the auspices of her grandmother who had introduced her from a tender age to the intricate world of indigenous medicine. According to the narrator, the grandmother often “…took Norpisia with her into the forest where she exposed her to various types of roots, barks, berries from which she derived her medicinal preparations” (12). This early apprenticeship instills in Norpisia an enduring love and respect for the natural world. It cultivates in her an appreciation of the inseparable bond between humans and nonhuman nature. Norpisia’s faith in indigenous medicine is put to a daunting test in an episode involving Masintet’s mother – Ngoto Resiato.
The old woman has been nursing a life-threatening wound inflicted on her arm by a crocodile. The village folks considered her condition irreversible. When Norpisia opts to handle the old woman’s case, an exasperated Lenjirr warns her of dire consequences:

You have been honest with all of us … Now it is my turn to be honest with you. I will not hold it against you if your concoctions do not work. But I must warn you that if my mother dies, I don’t care what your husband will do to me: I’ll make sure that my spear goes through your rib-cage! (183)

With a determination borne out of absolute faith in indigenous medicine, Norpisia defiantly declares, “I’ll do it … And bear whatever consequences!” (183). Though Kedoki is deeply disappointed by his wife’s decision, it is important to note that Norpisia’s declaration is made after having conducted a thorough examination of the patient. As the narrator notes:

Norpisia asked Kedoki and Masintet to leave the room as she embarked on examining the old woman more closely. Her thoughts were drawn back to the time she lived with her grandmother. She recalled the intensive training she received from her. She remembered how she thoroughly examined her patients several times before deciding the mode of treatment or herbs she would use. Her grandmother cautioned relatives not to expect miracles, reminding them to accept that anything could happen in the course of treatment. She always emphasized that, it was Enkai-Narok who healed while death was caused by Enkai-Nanyoike, and the two were doled out without any consultation. (182)

The passage affirms the spiritual grounding of herbal medicine. It should be noted that among the Maasai individuals with specialized knowledge such as Norpisia’s
grandmother are highly valorized in the community due to the sacredness associated with their knowledge. However, the healing process is always subject to the whims of Enkai whose presence is manifested by the physical environment. Thus the interplay between the physical environment and human health underlines the immutable fact that spiritual ecological consciousness is an integral aspect of the Maa culture.

Kulet’s depiction of Norpisia deconstructs the privileged human subjectivity reinforced by Enlightenment notions that separate humans from nature. Her worldviews on the natural environment exhibit a yearning for mankind’s reintegration with the natural world. This deep ecological worldview as the ecocritic Donelle Dreese observes “challenges the hierarchy that has polarized humans and nature and advocates a biocentric perspective, which acknowledges the mutually reciprocal relationship required for a sustainable ecosystem” (5). Norpisia personifies this deep ecological perspective as epitomized by her sense of disillusionment with human myopic activities. We are told by the narrator that “She pondered why man would want to destroy the animals’ habitat and in so doing destroy human life as well. She knew God had given humans and animals a chance to co-exist, every species minding its own business” (67). Norpisia’s thoughts underscore her biocentric sensibilities. She views human existence on earth as a part of the interconnected web of life. Thus within this framework, no species including the human race has the prerogative to undermine or destroy the natural habitat. Her highly developed ecological consciousness is as an affirmation of her community’s profound respect for Mother Nature. She emerges in the text as a pragmatic advocate for harmonious co-existence between humans and nonhuman nature. She is therefore extremely “saddened by the fact that humans, by cutting down trees in the forest and clearing the undergrowth, were on the verge of dispossessing animals of their habitat” (69). It is this
dispossession of animals’ habitat that angers the community’s ancestral spirits. This
spiritual consternation with habitat degradation is interwoven with Norpisia’s
ecological consciousness. It is foregrounded in the novel by the mysterious
appearance of four wildebeest calves among Kedoki’s livestock during their brief stay
at Olmakarr farm. Kedoki and Masintet are surprised by Norpisia’s interpretation of
this extraordinary event. We are told:

… when Norpisia appeared at the scene, she did not look surprised. She told
her husband what she had told him before: that she once dreamed of being
asked to go to the highlands and join wild animals to fight human beings who
were destroying the animals’ habitat. Maybe, she said, the forces that
destroyed the animals’ habitat were now finally defeated, and the four young
wildebeests were symbolically sent by the gods to accompany their cattle and
victoriously match [sic] into their liberated habitat. (144)

Norpisia views the adoption of the four wildebeest as a spiritual fulfillment in her
crusade against the destruction of animals’ habitat. She is irked by the instrumental
categorization of nonhuman animals. She thus reacts with uncharacteristic anger at
Kedoki’s “good-for-nothing” description of the four calves:

What a thing to say! … It is not the worth of wildebeests we should be looking
at when we consider protecting them. We should know that all creatures, from
the tiny dung-beetle to the giant elephant are our entire cherished heritage
bequeathed to us by Empus-oshoke, the blue-bellied god. (160)

Norpisia’s reaction to Kedoki’s hierarchization of nonhuman animals speaks volumes
about her fervent belief in the equality of all creatures on the planet regardless of their
perceived instrumental value to humans. This is essentially what defines Norpisia’s ecological consciousness in the novel.

The characterization of Kedoki in *Vanishing Herds* epitomizes the centrality of cattle in the Maa universe. According to Maa mythology, *Enkai* created three groups of people; the first were the Torrobo (Okiek pygmies), hunting and gathering people of small stature to whom he gave honey and wild animals as a food source. The second were the neighbouring Kikuyu, a farming community to whom he gave seed and grains. The third were the Maasai, to whom Enkai gave cattle, which came to Earth sliding down a long rope linking heaven and Earth. While the Torrobo were destined to endure bee stings, and the Kikuyu famines and floods, the Maasai received the noble gift of raising cattle (Bentsen 67). Cattle ownership among the Maasai has therefore a deep spiritual dimension. It is a cultural prerequisite sanctioned by *Enkai* who granted the Maa people exclusive rights and dominion over all the cattle on Earth. A man’s social status is therefore measured in proportion to the number of cattle owned. Herder in *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* postulates that individuals and the character of nations do not only develop in relation to the local climate but also in intimate connection to the land and the specific popular traditions that develop out of it. He poses:

> What is the principal law that we have observed in all the occurrences of history? In my opinion it is this: that everywhere on our Earth whatever could be has been, according to the situation of the *place*, the circumstances and occasion of the *times*, and the nature or generated character of the people. (qtd. in Young 348)
Thus as an individual whose personhood has been fashioned by the realities of his physical environment, and the circumstances of the times, Kedoki’s life revolves round his livestock. He is the proud owner of “more than a thousand heads of cattle, a flock of three hundred sheep, three hundred goats and tens of donkeys” (15). His close affinity to his livestock is a manifestation of his ecological consciousness since domestic animals are part of the natural environment. Commenting on the strong bond between Kedoki, Norpisia, and their livestock, the narrator says:

Despite the number of animals they owned, they knew each of them individually. They loved each one of them as they would love a child. They had reared them, treating them when they were sick and protecting them from predators and rustlers. They had shared the isolation in the wilderness and had grown close as any creatures that could be dissimilar could ever be. The cattle knew, understood and trusted them. Humans and animals lived a symbiotic life. (32)

To a westerner, this deep attachment to livestock may be interpreted as borne out of economic considerations the same way a stock broker may value his bonds in the stock market. To the Maasai, the value of cattle transcends commercial considerations. Cattle define their cultural identity as they furnish the community with food, clothing, and shelter. Kedoki’s ecological consciousness is manifested in his impressive knowledge of the local flora and fauna. Even though he is not formally educated, he is intelligent, observant, and very analytical. He accurately analyses to Norpisia the symbiotic relationship that binds plants and animals in the natural world. He tells her:
The elephants may appear ruinous to the environment ... but what I’ve observed over the years is that for all the grass ripped and barks stripped from trees, there is a benefit. By clearing the old, tall grass stunted trees, fresh seed are sown and grow to feed our cattle and other animals ... You see, elephants spend most of the day and night eating ... They eat shreds of bark torn off with their tusks. They gather tree branches with their seeds and devour them. The roughage consumed every day is extracted through dung within a day. And with it, the grass, tree seeds and other plants are dropped undigested ... This is where oobel-kik, the dung-beetle comes in ... Our little friend turns the dung upside down, digs up the soil underneath and buries seeds that germinate merrily when it rains. (36-37)

The passage reveals an impressive grasp of the intricate balance of nature. It highlights the existence of ecological knowledge among indigenous communities that was acquired through close observation of animals’ behaviour in their natural habitat. It is the existence of such knowledge that enabled indigenous communities to live in harmony with their natural environment for generations.

Kedoki is incensed by the loss of biodiversity occasioned by the invasion of the forest by the settler community. On learning that even the Medungi; the sacred abode of ancestral spirits had been violated by the invaders, Kedoki reportedly “retreated into a contemplative mood” (63). The violation of the sacred forest assails his spiritual ecological consciousness. We are told “He felt sad and angry when he thought that the evergreen Shapa -Itarakwa trees that preferred the south-facing slopes, rich with loamy soils and sufficient rains were no more” (64). Kedoki’s botanical knowledge is matched by a deep respect for the natural cycle of life. He is
aware of the interplay between climatic conditions and the migratory patterns of wild
animals in the savannah. He thus warns Norpisia:

… one does not go against the rhythm of nature and expect to be successful in
his endeavours. When it is time to cross the river to the southern pasturelands,
nature creates favourable climatic conditions that lure domestic as well as wild
animals to the rich pastures across the river. Forcing them to go against the
natural rhythm would immediately result in the deterioration of their health.

(98)

The passage depicts Kedoki as an excellent student of nature whose ecological
consciousness is grounded on a keen observation of Mother Nature.

4.3 Masintet and Lembarta

Masintet and Lembarta are young courageous herdsmen. We encounter the
two brothers at a critical moment in the novel when the newlywed Kedoki and
Norpisia are engaged in a tortuous homeward bound journey across the wilderness.
They assist the young couple navigate their huge flock of livestock across a landscape
fraught with dangerous wild animals and bandits. Masintet whom the text describes as
“a traditional weatherman” (122) exhibits a spiritual ecological sensibility akin to that
of Norpisia. His worldview, attitudes, values, and behaviour is determined by
indigenous Maasai religion. He attributes the cause of the deluge that had swept the
entire landscape to “the anger of Enkai-Nanyoikie, [who] … was particularly enraged
by those who invaded and desecrated Medungi forest, a sacred shrine” (112). Kulet
juxtaposes Masintet’s indigenous worldview with the modern ‘scientific’ view
advanced by Lembarta, the university graduate, to highlight the interrelatedness of the
theoretical groundings of the two knowledge systems. Lembarta argues that:
…the cause of the torrential pour was climate change occasioned by the destruction of the forests…it all began when cold winds blew from Oldonyokeri mountain in the east, and with atmospheric depressions over the lands whose forest cover had been destroyed, warm moisture-laden air swirled upward and condensed into huge billowing clouds…when the air collided with the cold air from the mountains, the resulting combination brought about the turbulence that created the type of thunderstorm witnessed that night”. (113)

Though founded on meticulous meteorological calculations and analysis, there is a critical point of convergence between Lembarta’s scientific account and Masintet’s indigenous viewpoint. Both knowledge systems acknowledge the centrality of forests in climatic regulation. However, unlike modern science, indigenous knowledge system ascribes spirituality to the natural environment. Forests are therefore not merely regarded as a collection of trees but special sacred locations for worship and communion with ancestral spirits. The sacredness of the forest ecosystem is therefore at the core of Masintet’s ecological consciousness; a consciousness rooted on the interconnectedness of the spiritual realm, the forest ecosystem, and human community.

4.4 Richmond Sipaya and Leseiyo

In The Hunter, Kulet voices his concerns about the wanton decimation of wild life fueled by human greed. Kulet is highly critical of the socio-economic structures epitomized in the text by wildlife tourism that promotes the degradation of the natural world. The novel’s protagonists Richmond Sipaya; the Chief Executive of Elube Safaris and his employee Leseiyo exhibit the ambivalence experienced by
postcolonial subjects as they attempt to come to terms with the realities of a fast evolving cultural milieu.

Sipaya is a pivotal character in the text through whom Kulet portrays the ambivalence that characterizes the state of dislocation and alienation from one’s cultural heritage. The ambivalent position of Sipaya, the hybrid subject who is arguably neither White nor Maasai, is encapsulated in the name ‘Richard Sipaya’ which is a juxtaposition of Anglo-Saxon and Maasai cultural nomenclatures. It is worth noting that Sipaya is the only dominant Maasai character in the text with a non-Maasai first name. The in-betweeness of Sipaya’s subjectivity is given credence by his rejection of Christian virtues epitomized by his devout parents. In a rare moment of self-revelation, he tells Mirandu “I am ashamed of them and their virtues. I never want to be like them” (96). Though he eschews both Christian and Maasai traditional values that he views as impediments to his grand match to material success, he fervently embraces western secular values. The novel is cynical of Sipaya’s adaptation of a western lifestyle. His wholesale adaptation of Western lifestyle underscores the success of the local education system in fostering colonial values in learners. His transformation interestingly echoes Macaulay’s famous words in relation to British colonial education in India whose object was to create “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (Loomba 173). Sipaya’s alienation is therefore underlined by a neo-colonial education curriculum that fosters the mimicry of western cultural values. He is essentially a mimic man who unfortunately will never be able to perfectly reproduce English cultural values. His condition therefore underlies the tension and sense of estrangement experienced by persons who have lost their cultural identities and live in a perpetual state of exile in their own communities.
As the Chief Executive Officer of Elube Safaris and the leader of a ruthless gang of poachers, Sipaya embodies unbridled capitalism that is responsible for the brutal decimation of wild animals. Earlier in his life, Sipaya betrays his community’s ecological sensibilities by associating with Elube; a firm notoriously linked with poaching activities. The community’s disenchantment with Sipaya is brought to the fore by his mother’s reaction “I have always known that one day you will bring shame to our home … Go – go to your bloodthirsty companions. Go swearing with them, go drinking with them and continue torturing your father and mother. Twist your hunting knife in them” (97). This effectively marks the beginning of Sipaya’s dislocation from his community and the physical environment. He effectively loses his cultural identity as he embraces an alien lifestyle defined by individualism and materialism. The adaptation of a western lifestyle perverts his ecological sensibilities. He thus loses the deep spiritual reverence normally associated with indigenous communities. In a moment of deep reflection, he recalls with nostalgia his childhood affinity to nature:

… he had been taught from childhood not to harm any creature that did not threaten him or their cattle. Waterbuck, impala, oribi, eland, zebras and any other animal which did not disturb the peaceful co-existence of man and animals was never in danger and they grazed right to the gate of their village.

That afternoon, Sipaya recalled, he had accompanied the hunters and they had walked along a river bank just as the light was fading. Then they had seen a big waterbuck standing with its head raised and its fringed ears erect. Its curving, powerful horns black against the sky. He had been able to make out the creamy markings of the animal’s muzzle and the curious white rims around its eyes. He had admired its beauty as it stood there alone and proud.
In the whisper of the river rippling over sand-banks, in the evening call of doves, he had thought, only one shot and the magic and mystery surrounding the life of this animal is gone, destroyed forever and all that will remain is a kicking carcass on the bloodstained grass.

So when the *mzungu* hunter had aimed, Sipaya had found himself involuntarily shouting to the animal to take cover. His voice had been as sharp as a rifle shot. The waterbuck had thrown back its splendid horns and in a single motion, had turned and sprung, leaping over shrubs and within a second, its dark shape had dissolved into the looming shadows. (79)

The passage captures Sipaya’s unadulterated ecological sensibilities courtesy of his community’s cultural veneration of nonhuman nature. However, as he grows up, he morphs into a ruthless killer of the very wild animals he had passionately loved in his boyhood. He acquires a capitalistic outlook that prizes nonhuman animals as a resource that can be used to amass wealth. It dawns on him that he has all along been stupid in his love for wild animals as “Other people were enriching themselves by selling trophies obtained without buying” (80). He is arguably an embodiment of an ecological consciousness premised on what the ecocritic John Dryzek calls instrumental rationality. According to Dryzek, instrumental rationality is an anthropocentric paradigm that:

calls up a dichotomy between subject and object: only the human mind is subject. Everything else, including the natural world and disadvantaged humans, consists of objects to be manipulated and dominated for the sake of whatever the mind desires. Thus instrumental rationality estranges us from nature and each other. (195)
Sipaya’s adherence to this worldview completely distorts his ecological consciousness. As the text reveals, Sipaya objectifies nonhuman animals and his gang of poachers in equal measures. He apparently subscribes to the Aristotelian notion that “nature is essentially a hierarchy in which those with less reasoning ability exist for the sake of those with more” (Singer 189). Insofar as he is concerned, his employees and nonhuman animals are mere pawns in his scheme to amass wealth. His relationship with his poor workers is a classic example of master/slave relationship that is built on a culture of fear and silence. This probably accounts for why whenever “a subject touching on the activities of either Sipaya or that of Elube Safaris came up for discussion, the employees would keep an embarrassing silence” (65).

As the undisputed king of the poaching ‘empire’ Sipaya is to all intents and purposes a cultural renegade. As the text discloses, everything about his persona from the expensive attire, personal cars, and a stately home bespeaks wealth and power. The narrator says he “detested simplicity and imported all his furniture from England” (42). His disdain for the ‘simplicity’ of his kinsmen and the craze for imports symptomize a deep seated yearning for fame and recognition. This misguided quest for social recognition compromises his ecological conscience as revealed by the adornments gracing his office:

… life-size mummified heads of animals, lined up on the cream wall. First was a big buffalo, the mighty horns poised as if ready to gore its victim … Next to it was a leopard in a pensive mood, eyes half-closed, a giraffe positioned as if arching its neck to nibble at some green leaves on the tree-top came next, then a red lyre-horned impala, zebra and … . (16)
The passage depicts Sipaya’s domination and possession of nature. The ‘mummified heads’ of animals in his office are a celebration of his hunting prowess, masculinity, and power. The passage also underscores the triumph of human culture over nonhuman nature. Arguably, the use of nonhuman animals as objects of art is an alien cultural concept among the Maasai. Even though the Maasai are known to culturally adorn themselves with Lions’ skins and mane as a status symbol, olamaiyo or the ritual killings of lions is a practice that was strictly sanctioned by elders. It did not entail the wanton slaughter of all sorts of wild animals to meet ostentatious ends. In most instances, lions were mainly killed in retaliation for livestock attacks.

Kulet uses Sipaya’s characterization to demonstrate that persons who pose a threat to the natural environmental are a threat onto themselves and the society. Sipaya inhabits a dangerous universe fraught with tension, danger, and uncertainties. As a poacher, he constantly risks being obliterated by the very animals he seeks to destroy. As the novel draws to an end, Sipaya’s insatiable greed once again sends him to the bush. In a dramatic turn of events, the notorious hunter becomes the hunted:

Suddenly, he noticed that he was the only one firing. He glanced aside and saw all his men had climbed into trees and were shouting at him to do likewise. When he glanced back he saw an elephant run towards him hardly ten yards from where he stood. It trumpeted. He fired and it tumbled. He was not doing badly…then suddenly there seemed to be elephants all around him. With a great crushing and thundering, two elephants charged him. Frightened, Sipaya dropped the gun and started running, scrambling and leaping. He ran to a tree, but it had no branches on the lower trunk. He leaped forward and managed to get hold of a branch high up and arched his back trying to swing
himself up. But not before an elephant took a swing at his left leg, breaking his thigh bone. (167)

Here the natural world is portrayed as colluding in orchestrating Sipaya’s downfall. The tree from which he desperately seeks protection from the charging elephant has ‘no branches on its lower trunk’. He narrowly survives the harrowing ordeal with a broken thigh bone. His ultimate death in a hospital bed in the hands of Leseiyo can therefore be read as a victory of good over evil.

Leseiyo is one of the protagonists in the text. He is the antithesis of Sipaya. Though he has been exposed to some form of western mode of education, Leseiyo does not renounce his cultural identity. More significantly, unlike Sipaya, Kulet does not assign Leseiyo an Anglo-Saxon name. This is probably an indication of Leseiyo’s unadulterated Maasai identity. We get a glimpse of Leseiyo’s deep love and concern for the natural environment at the novel’s opening page as he bemoans the landscape’s dreadful condition:

…he watched a long line of emaciated cows, goats and sheep raising a cloud of black dust. Across the valley on the hillsides, amid billowing smoke, stood black skeletons of trees with bare branches raised, pointing to the sky as if pleading for mercy.

He thought how helpless he was, watching yesterday’s beautiful forest perishing and the grazing land reduced to ashes. (1)

Leseiyo exemplifies the state of anxiety and confusion experienced by persons trying to come to terms with the loss of traditional values in a rapidly changing society. No wonder he feels “at a crossroad” (1). He is disillusioned by the decline of his
community’s cultural values at the onslaught of modernity symbolized in the text by
town life:

The innumerable threads of their customs that left little room for manoeuvre at
the manyatta and within which the individual’s personality was cabined and
confined, were broken and shattered in town, leaving each individual to grope
for his own way, much like bees blinded by honey-collector’s smoke.

The much cherished interdependence, person-to-person relationships,
collective defence of property and the fear of elder’s disapproval, let alone the
malevolent, cantankerous powers of the spirits, were all unheard of in towns.

Here the text undergirds the erosion of cultural values that has ushered in western
individualism and secularism. Sadly, the natural environment is also endangered by
the emasculation of indigenous cultural values. The disregard for the ‘malevolent …
powers of the spirits’ among town dwellers represented in the text by Sipaya
encapsulates the banishment of spiritualism from the natural environment. This is the
genesis of the commoditization of the natural environment as revealed in the text.

Kulet portrays Leseiyo as the spokesman for his community. He is a confident,
strong, and articulate young man. In his first encounter with Sipaya in the bush, he
gallantly tells him, “We are warning you not to shoot wild animals around this area as
you will endanger the lives of our people and their cattle” (11). When Sipaya protests
that he is a licenced hunter, Leseiyo sarcastically quips, “It must be good sport for
those who do not eat the meat of wild animals” (11). The import of this statement lies
in its mockery of Sipaya’s loss of cultural sensibilities. He has lost the respect for the
sanctity of nonhuman life. His participation in the slaughter of defenseless wild
animals demeans his stature as a Maasai; a proud people whom Enkai has blessed with possession and dominion of cattle in the universe. Hunting is indeed a ‘good sport’ for the likes of Sipaya who have lost their cultural identity.

Leseiyo is disgusted by the myopic destruction of wild animals to satisfy human aesthetics (deep appreciation of beauty). His reacts with consternation at Sipaya’s hubristic display of animals’ body parts in his grand office, “Leseiyo …observed, with a mixture of excitement and utter astonishment, the life-size mummified heads of animals, lined up on the cream wall” (16). He cannot reconcile his cultural reverence for all forms of life forms with Sipaya’s display of death and destruction in the name of aesthetics. Later in the novel, Leseiyo emerges as an astute guide whose ecological consciousness confounds the White hunters. In a witty rejoinder to Mrs. Duffin’s remarks touching on Nature’s ecological equilibrium in the Savannah, Leseiyo interjects in flawless English, “But man wishes to break nature’s monotony… he wishes to be the one controlling the numbers and choose the worthiness of each species” (84). He further tells the astounded party:

Ever since I was young, I have lived with these wild animals. They have become so common to me that I see them the same way I see these bushes. But I have always had a sort of sad, lonely liking for their struggle to live against so many odds. When I was a young boy, I enjoyed watching the zebras, the giraffes, the antelopes and other animals co-existing on the plains. It was all harmony as they searched for food and as the heat intensified in the afternoon, I could see them drowsing under the branches of big trees. Then as the heat lessened, there was a gradual renewal of life as a breeze awakened the leaves and the grazing and nibbling started again. (84)
This passage affirms Leseiyo’s intelligent observation of the natural rhythm of life in the Savannah. His ecological consciousness is manifest in his knowledge and farsightedness. Kulet uses Leseiyo’s deep love and respect for nature to highlight Maasai’s kinship with the nonhuman nature. Moreover, it is the community’s ecological knowledge that has made it possible for the Maasai to preserve and conserve wild animals long before the advent of colonialism and the demarcation of national parks and game reserves in their ancestral land.

Leseiyo is essentially a victim of circumstance. Though he works for Elube Safaris as a guide, he has no inkling whatsoever about the firm’s clandestine activities. As the narrator notes, “One thing which had surprised Leseiyo since he joined Elube Safaris was the secrecy which shrouded its activities and which seemed to bind its staff” (65). The secrecy shrouding the firm’s activities morally absolves Leseiyo from the inhumane killings of innocent animals. It is against this backdrop that his inadvertent identification of the “…tall man …in green tunic” (87) among poachers as a bona fide employee of Elube Safari to the White hunters ought to be understood. The identification of Sipaya’s poachers fundamentally cast Leseiyo as a defender of nonhuman animals’ right to life. It encapsulates his sense of revulsion with anthropocentric greed that is central to the wanton slaughter of nonhuman animals. The unmasking of Elube Safaris’ link to poaching activities effectively marks the beginning of the end of Sipaya’s long reign of terror and destruction in the bush. As the novel comes to an end, Leseiyo emerges as a hero whose fidelity to the welfare of nonhuman nature is epitomized by willingness to sacrifice his very life. His agency in the murder of Sipaya can therefore be read as the ultimate sacrifice; a symbolic victory of good over evil.
4.5 The White Hunters

Mr. Henry Caughlen, his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Duffin, and his manager Mr. Anderson, are tourists from North America on wildlife safari in the East African savannah. The quartet led by Caughlen from whom the novel derives its title, embodies the myth of trophy hunting as a viable conservation approach in the management of wildlife resources in Africa. Kulet’s portrayal of the white hunters’ relationship with the nonhuman nature highlights the doublespeak and insincerity that often characterize the narrative of ecological conservation emanating from Western metropolises. As American nationals, the white hunters’ exhibit a conflicting ecological consciousness borne out of Enlightenment notions that privileged human’s subjectivity over other live forms on earth and the contemporary upsurge of animals’ rights movements in western societies. Their sojourn to Africa is most probably informed by romanticized tales of an exotic African landscape popularized by tour operators in the West.

Mr. Caughlen is a bellicose character. His belligerent disposition instills fear and anxiety to all and sundry. He is akin to live dynamite capable of detonating at any moment. For instance, upon arrival at Esetia Camp after a hot safari in the African sun, he launches at Sipaya, “I want to know about the arrangements made here. Are we to throw dice to choose our tents or are the arrangements made?” He then snubs Anderson, “Have you forgotten that you came with me because of your job. Where is my luggage?” (67) Caughlen speaks with a forked tongue insofar as nonhuman animals’ rights are concerned. He considers the idea of confining nonhuman animals in a zoo as “a horrible barbarity” (61) yet actively participates in depriving wild animals of their right to life in their natural habitat! He comes to Africa armed with a
licence to seek trophies to carry back home as a symbol of his hyper masculinity; a statement of his triumphant conquest and subjugation of the African landscape.

Caughlen is ‘morally’ incensed by poaching which he calls ‘a disease’ (81) yet he shamelessly participates in the slaughter of wild animals under the guise of conservation (See Fig. 3 and 4). It is important to recall that under colonialism, subsistence hunting by African communities was essentially viewed as uncivilized while hunting by Whites was considered a noble enterprise. Consequently, African communities were banned from hunting, while Europeans, such as the author Ernest Hemingway, came to Africa to shoot animals for fun! It is within this context that Caughlen’s warped ecological consciousness should be understood. The abrupt cancelation of his safari and the early flight home in protest to Sipaya’s involvement in poaching though motivated by noble considerations, smacks of hypocrisy. He is as culpable as Sipaya insofar as the wanton destruction of nonhuman nature is concerned.

Mrs. Duffin’s characterization seemingly represents a counter-narrative to the ‘nobility’ of trophy hunting in Africa. She epitomizes a sensitive ecological consciousness borne out of a firsthand experience of the horrors of trophy hunting:

I did not see any fun in hunting … Now that I have seen it happen; I am left wondering why people would spend years of saving, weeks of discomfort and boredom and risk accidents, like the one of today. It took barely a second and the buffalo was lying kicking on the verge of death and the whole thing was over … I don’t see any reason for pride over the hunt, since the animals had not intended to harm us at all. (79)
Though the passage represents Mrs. Duffin as a conscientious and highly perceptive character, it is critical to note that her belated concern for nonhuman animals makes her as culpable as Caughlen and the others for the senseless carnage in the African savannah perpetrated by ‘distinguished’ tourists from the West. She did not have to wait until her ‘baptism’ in the savannah inspired by firsthand experience of the ghastly shooting of defenseless animals in order to gain the moral courage to condemn trophy hunting. Her failure therefore to castigate trophy hunting prior to her safari to Africa makes her a silent accomplice to the wanton slaughter of game by her compatriots. Nevertheless, her belated appreciation of nature’s orderliness in the Savannah as exemplified by the following passage helps to deconstruct the much hyped theory of cropping used in support of trophy hunting:

There is a rhythm among the creatures inhabiting this hill and plain from ants to elephants … nature has let each of these creatures depend on one another for survival. There has never been a time that the population of lions threatened the existence of impalas, nor have the zebras or wildebeest caused soil erosion because of over-population. Nature has always balanced itself, done its cropping and controlled the survival of the young animals. (84)

Conversely, Duffin and Anderson typify the dualistic thinking that has polarized the relationship between humans and nonhuman nature. The duo view nature as exclusively belonging to humans. They view the culture of caging animals in zoos as beneficial to the caged animals. Insofar as Anderson is concerned, “the pleasure of seeing beautiful creatures in a state of captivity far outweighs the inconvenience of imprisonment to the beast” (62). He further avers that “it is for the good of the animals to remove them from the countless dangers of the bush and the cruel plains and enable them to exercise their functions in the guaranteed seclusion of a private
compartiment” (62). Anderson’s argument that the caging of wild animals in a zoo is a positive gesture as it ‘protects’ them from the assumed perils of a hostile environment is unfounded. It echoes the hypocrisy of European colonization mission in Africa that was often portrayed as beneficial to the natives as it ‘freed’ them from the clutches of ignorance and savagery. Like Anderson, Duffin sees nothing wrong with the notion of confining wild animals in a zoo. He admits to belonging “to the school which considers it humanizing and educational to confine baboons and panthers and experiment on them for the benefit of mankind” (62). Anderson and Duffin exhibit a mindset that celebrates the ‘othering’ of nonhuman animals. Theirs is a warped mindset that represents the supposedly dominant status of humans in the universe as borne by the following passage from a Roman Catholic text:

In the order of nature, the imperfect is for the sake of the perfect, the irrational is to serve the rational. Man, as a rational animal, is permitted to use things below him in this order of nature for his proper needs. He needs to eat plants and animals to maintain his life and strength. To eat plants and animals, they must be killed. So killing is not, of itself, an immoral or unjust act. (Singer 196)

It is important to note that the anthropocentric mindset represented by the passage is what is considered by most ecocritics as responsible for the global ecological crisis facing the human race today. No single species on earth is superior to the other since life on the planet is an intricate web of interrelatedness among all species.
4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown through the analysis of characters’ ecological consciousness that culture is a significant determinant of how people relate to the natural environment. In this regard, the way people experience and perceive nature is impacted by religion, ethnicity, education, and social background. We have also been able to show that the loss of spiritual reverence for the natural environment which is a grim manifestation of modernity is at the core of the current environmental challenges facing postcolonial states. More importantly, the chapter underscores the need for humans to reorient their ecological sensibilities as a prerequisite for reintegrating with the natural world.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to analyze and examine through postcolonial ecocriticism lenses the representation of indigenous ecological ethics in Henry Ole Kulet’s novels: *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. The study has argued that Kulet’s perception and construction of nature is informed by his community’s cultural and socio-economic realities. The study further contended that the Maasai conceptualization of nature is different from the Euro-American mercantile view that holds nature as an economic resource. In Maasai cosmology, the natural world is viewed with spiritual reverence as a manifestation of *Enkai*, the Supreme Being. The natural environment is therefore perceived as a temple for *Enkai*, a pharmacy, and a place of refuge for reflection and contemplation. The study has also revealed the existence of a robust ecological knowledge system among indigenous communities that was accentuated by the existence of a sacred grove tradition that played a significant role in biodiversity conservation. The study has shown that Mother Nature is supreme and that those who violate her laws cannot escape punishment.

Relying on deep ecological concepts of biocentric equality and interconnectedness, this study has realized that indigenous communities have a profound spiritual kinship with the natural environment borne of a culture that recognizes and respects the equality and interconnectedness of all life-forms on earth. The study has shown that indigenous ecological knowledge is practically oriented as it is gained through a keen observation of the natural world. The study has argued that aspects of modernity epitomized by western mode of education, secularism,
individualism, and capitalism pose a significant threat to the integrity of the natural environment.

Based on Alfred Cosby’s thesis of eco-imperialism, this study has realized a link between British colonialism and some of the environmental challenges experienced in the post-colonial Kenyan state. The study has argued that the rapid loss of forest cover caused by human encroachment, the illegal trade in wildlife that is endangering some animal species with imminent extinction, the problem of human/wildlife conflict, and endemic corruption are some of the manifestations of British colonialism in the country. The study attributes the loss of indigenous ecological knowledge that has adversely impacted efforts to conserve and preserve the country’s natural resources to colonial debasement of local cultural traditions.

It is therefore within the context of the foregoing findings that this study affirms the validity of the call to have an Afro-ecocriticism that would effectively address the dynamism of environmental challenges from an African perspective. As argued in this study, communities in Africa have sustainably utilized natural resources for generations prior to the advent of European colonialism. It is important to note that indigenous African communities are a deeply religious lot inhabiting a religious universe. Religion therefore defines and permeates all spheres of life in Africa including the relationship between self and the natural world. Therefore, the notion that nature could be conquered and subdued by humans is an anathema to African philosophic thought. It violates indigenous ecological sensibilities that are deeply rooted in religious beliefs and practices. As this study has shown, spiritualism is a fundamental cornerstone of African ecological consciousness. Failure to realize and appreciate this reality is viewed in this study as one of the biggest drawbacks in the current crusade against environmental degradation that is based on foreign
conservationist ideals and practices. It should be understood that insofar as indigenous communities are concerned, the current ecological crisis entails both a physical and a spiritual component. Any attempt to address it must therefore take cognizance of these two key elements. As mentioned earlier, this study recognizes the validity of the call to institute an Afro-ecocriticism as a strand within the current ecological discourse. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves at this juncture whether such a call merits any considerations. To address this concern, it is imperative to first cast a critical glance at the conceptual grounding of ecocriticism as an emerging field of literary and cultural criticism. It is worth noting that as it presently exists; ecocriticism is essentially an Anglo-American literary paradigm. It encompasses two national variants; the North American version and the UK version. The American variant draws its conceptual inspiration from the works of major nineteenth - century American nature writers, notably; Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. On the other hand, the UK version or green studies take its bearings from the British Romanticism of 1840’s. Thus at the very heart of ecocriticism as it presently exists lies deep imprints of Anglo-American ideological postulations that view the natural world as a pure wilderness that ought to be protected from the effects of industrialization. It is this sensibility premised on the purity of nature that currently informs the ‘universal’ environmental discourse emanating from the west. There is need therefore for the formulation of an ecocriticism model that would be decentered from the hegemonic environmental discourse of the North. This study recognizes and appreciates the call made by some postcolonial scholars for an alliance between postcolonial theory and ecocriticism. This initiative is primarily driven by the realization that, as presently constituted, ecocriticism cannot effectively critique the socio-economic realities informing the environmental discourse in postcolonial states.
Though such an alliance as revealed in this study can provide a broader literary methodology that can effectively critique the ecological condition in formerly colonized states, this study still recognizes the validity of the drive spearheaded by scholars such as Antony Vital, Byron Caminero-Santangelo, and Ogaga Okuyade for the formulation of a domestic ecocriticism strand that would sufficiently engage the North in its attempts to universalize the environmental discourse. Arguably, an Afro-ecocriticism will be best suited in addressing legacies of colonial environmental discourses and practices in Africa. It will help critique how modernity has transformed the way Africans perceive and related to the physical environment. It is an open secret that Africa has often been derided by western environmental ‘experts’ of lacking sound scientific knowledge capable of cushioning the continent from an eminent environmental doom. African and other non-western communities have been made to believe that their indigenous knowledge systems are inimical to environmental conservation. Moreover, it has often been taken as a given that African environmental problems generally stem from a lack of civilization, ignorance, and endemic poverty. This warped vision engrained in western psyche through colonial travelogues, hunting narratives, autobiographies, and historical documents is instrumental for the representation of African environments in western environmental scholarship as a tabula rasa; a wilderness in which local communities are often perceived as a threat to its wellbeing. This colonial narrative further undergirds the neocolonial character of western environmental intervention in the continent. Its enduring appeal has helped to serve western interests and goals much more than those of the ordinary Africans as demonstrated by the displacements of local populations by colonial governments to create national parks and game reserves to ostensibly protect nonhuman animals from Africans. What western environmental scholarship has often
failed to acknowledge is the deep psychological trauma, social and economic devastations that local displaced communities had to endure. The myth of an African *tabula rasa* is sustained by the tourism industry where African national parks are often marketed to western tourists as places where they can see nature in its “genuine” form. As intimated earlier, this hegemonic environmental discourse can be countered by the formulation of a domestic ecological discourse that is rooted in local conceptualizations of the natural world that celebrates its spiritual dimension. It is this spiritualism that has enabled communities in African to co-exist harmoniously with nonhuman nature since the dawn of time. This spiritual ecological consciousness was unfortunately displaced by colonial epistemological impositions that reinforced binaries of nature and culture, wilderness and civilization, and the human and nonhuman that encouraged an instrumentalist approach to the natural world. As this study has argued, this approach is responsible for much of the environmental decay witnessed in the continent today. The recovery of this environmental spiritualism should be the cornerstone upon which an Afro-ecocriticism is built. It would promote a view of nature based on reciprocity and respect that would go a long way in healing some of the environmental wounds inflicted by modernity in the continent.

It is worth noting that environmental degradation in African contexts unlike in the northern hemisphere is exacerbated by external actors. History has shown that European imperial interests in Africa caused immense ecological abuses that still linger to this day. Even in the post-colonial dispensation the continent is still stuck in an environmental quagmire orchestrated by external forces as shown by the activities of Shell Oil Corporation in Ogoni land in Northern Nigeria, the rape and abuse of the Congo rain forest by foreign logging companies, the decimation of African game for ivory and other animals products, illegal overfishing by foreign fishing trawlers
operating on African coastlines, and the clandestine dumping of toxic waste materials on African shores by Western governments. These are just a few documented cases that help to illustrate the West’s culpability in Africa’s ecological woes. Interestingly, western environmental scholarship either by design or default has failed to censure or even acknowledge the neocolonial underpinnings of these environmental injustices. For instance, were it not for the furor raised by the late African environmental martyr – Ken Saro Wiwa against the ecological atrocities committed by Shell Oil Corporation in Ogoni land in Northern Nigeria, the world would never have known the ecological plight of the Ogoni people. Thus as a new strand in ecological scholarship, Afro-ecocriticism will enable African writers and critics to foreground the importance of the relationship between self and the natural environment. It will help counter some of the myths created in western literary circles about the absence of ecological consciousness in contemporary African literature. An Afro-ecocriticism will more importantly lend more focus on the exploration of pre-colonial environmental history of Africa to understand how Africans daily lives were affected by the conditions of the landscape and how each community related with the natural world. To this end, the study of African oral art forms such as narratives, myths, epics, songs, proverbs, and riddles will provide valuable insights into the cultural grounding of indigenous ecological sensibilities. Furthermore, Afro-ecocritics will have the task of locating ecological consciousness in African written literature in order to reclaim and reconstruct an African worldview based on African values and beliefs. In this regard, literary works by eminent African poets and writers such as Leopold Sedar Senghor, Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Koffi Awoonor, Chinua Achebe, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o and of course the late Ken Saro Wiwa should be subjected to critical ecological analysis with a view to drawing up a conceptual
background upon which an Afro-ecocriticism will be anchored on. Additionally, works from non-literary writers in environmental scholarship such as the late Kenyan Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai’s *Replenishing the Earth, The Challenge for Africa*, and *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience* should also be interrogated in this intellectual endeavour. In the final analysis, since ecocriticism is still an evolving literary field of inquiry, the drive to have an Afro-ecocriticism is a justifiable intellectual project that is analogous to the call made by female scholars from Africa and the Diaspora for an African feminist strand designed to articulate the challenges facing women of colour from an Afro-centric perspective.

This study realizes the value of literature in changing the way people experience and perceive nature. The study primarily focused on the analysis of ecological ethics as represented in Kulet’s *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*. This study therefore recommends further research on the literary representation of nature from the perspective of eco-feminism, environmental justice, eco-marxism, and bioregionalism. The study further recommends extensive research on the relationship between colonialism (neo-colonialism/globalization) and ecology in formerly colonized states. More importantly, since ecocriticism is a multidisciplinary field of inquiry, a new ecological consciousness premised on African values and beliefs needs to be incorporated in universities curricula in Africa and the Diaspora as a means of recovering and restoring African ecological values that were lost through European colonization.
REFERENCES


Kabaji, E. “Ole Kulet has secured his Place in Kenya’s Literary History.” *Saturday Nation* 12 October 2013. Print.


Appendix: Pictures

Fig 1: Burning Trees to Clear Land for Human Settlement in the Mau Forest

![Fig 1: Burning Trees to Clear Land for Human Settlement in the Mau Forest](image1)

Fig 2: Proliferation of Small Shambas within the Forest Ecosystem

![Fig 2: Proliferation of Small Shambas within the Forest Ecosystem](image2)
Fig 3 and 4: The Perverse Thrill of Killing for Sport (BBC, Web. 15 July 2015)

Fig 5 and 6: Brutal Slaughter of the African Elephant for Ivory

(BBC, Web. 15 July 2015)
Fig. 7, 8, and 9: The Magnificence of Mother Nature

Fig 10 and 11: The Great Annual Migration: One of Nature’s Most Stunning Spectacle Enacted by Tens of Thousands of Zebras and Wildebeests Crossing the Mara River (McDonald Wildlife Photography, Web, 2 July 2015)