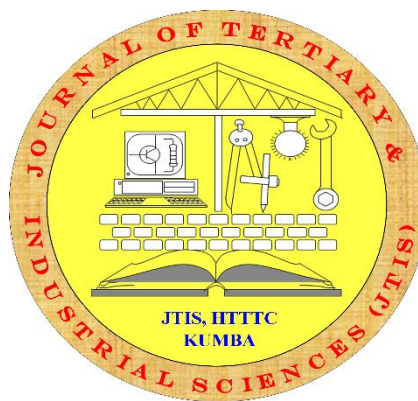


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HUMANITY AND NATURE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FOREST DISCOURSES IN NGUGU WA THIONG'O 'S WIZARD OF THE CROW.

By

FOMIN EDWARD EFUET (PhD)¹

Abstract

Preserving the environment and ensuring sustainable development of natural species therein has become one of the topical issues affecting the world today. Contemporary society is characterized by mankind's unquenchable thirst to reign as king of creation with the desire to be considered superior to all other non-human species. This paper is intended to challenge this radical attitude of mankind (anthropocentrism) by projecting and encouraging anthropomorphic values of natural and non-human species. The study is predicated on the contention that if today's African forest is dwindling with its diverse negative effects on the environment, it is a result of humanity's unhealthy relationship either consciously or unconsciously with the forest natural species through uncontrollable exploitation of such species for personal gains. The research work which cuts across other disciplines (interdisciplinary), is informed by ecocriticism as a theory of literary criticism. The study argues that in *Wizard of the Crow*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o advocates caution in the exploitation of the forest and its species for sustainable development. He feels that the forest should be a favourable habitat for humans, plants and animal species.

Keywords: Humanity, Nature, Interdisciplinary Forest Discourses, Wizard, Crow

1. Introduction

The relationship between mankind vis a vis natural environmental species has an interesting genealogical history which has transcended through different epochs and are scattered under a litany of different subject headings namely: American studies, nature study, regionalism, pastoralism, human ecology and more. The exploitation of natural species including poaching, logging, fishing and more was, seemingly not as vulnerable as is the case today because the environment was to a greater extent intact as compared to contemporary hazards. The present hazard is perhaps due to population increase which results to an increase in the need for more farming space, living houses, recreational facilities, roads and more. In the course of doing these, nature is tempered with, as more of its species become vulnerable. This study which

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is going to take an interdisciplinary approach argues that the discussion of the degradation of the natural environment and its species cannot be effected without mankind taking a greater part of the blame in the on-going hazards.

Forest is a good example of the earth's biosphere which is dominant in the text under study. Forest is seen here as a space that inhabits different living and non-living organisms, and not as a place, which in ecological terms is characterised by the transformation of space through human activities; or as Annie et al. (2007, p. 120) put it, is an environment which "is no longer something we inherit simply by residing in the same place overtime; rather, it is something we must actively construct". Consequently, man must protect the forest space to ensure that the living organisms like plants and animals species which take the forest as their habitat continue to survive and multiply their species for posterity. Mankind's activities in the forest therefore need to be checked if forest sustainability coupled with its myriad of advantages is to be given the pride of place it deserves. It should be noted that the way man interacts with the forest has much influence (positive or negative) on climate and consequently on health. This, Stefano Pagiola et al. (2002, p. 25) intimate that "forests are known to play an important role in regulating the global climate. Green plants remove CO₂ from the atmosphere ...". This quotation points to the inevitable role of the forest in our environment because it regulates climatic conditions of the world in which humans live.

To facilitate comprehension of the study, the word "interdisciplinary" will be defined. Different scholars define the term differently. In the context of this study, this word will be defined from the perspective of William H. Newell (2001) and Aboelela Sally (2007). According to Newell, Interdisciplinary studies draw insights from relevant disciplines and integrate those insights into a more comprehensive understanding. For such an approach to be justified, its object of study must be multifaceted, yet its facets must cohere. On his part, Aboelela argues that Interdisciplinary studies deal with a scientific knowledge in a wide range of disciplines. He noted that scholars have become increasingly aware of the need to link disciplinary fields to more fully answered critical questions or to facilitate application of knowledge in a specific area. Both scholars agree on the fact that 'Interdisciplinary' as a term, deals with the integration of information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge.

2. Review of existing Literature

Quite an elaborate literature exists in the works of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in general and his Wizard of the Crow in particular. Mumia Geoffery Osaaji (2010) for example writes on "The Element of Orality in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Wizard of the Crow. He discusses the ills of post independent Africa's history characterised by dictatorship occasioned by the concentration of power in the hands the Ruler whose surrogates hope to elevate him the God-like height. The Ruler announces that his mighty Ruler is the country and the mighty country is the ruler.

On his part, Dobrota Pucherova (2018) in another article in which she discusses *Wizard of the Crow* as a Postcolonial Novel, she analyses the novel from a post-cold war context as a post-communist picaresque novel. Using the instrument of post-communist and world systems theory and comparing the novel to Eastern and Central European post-communist writing, the paper examines how the concern and the aesthetics of both postcolonial and post-communist literature describe a crisis of identity of post independent cultures and represent a discursive resistance to global capitalist modernity in which the meaning of the truth (history, moral and culture) has been destabilised.

Aurelie Journo (2008) wrote on Body politics in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*. She argues that the link between body and politics goes back to Roman and medieval times. In the novel, Journo argues, Ngugi uses the image of the body, whether of power or of the people to depict the functioning of a fictitious African (Aburiria) dictatorship as evident in the text.

In his "Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* and Postcolonial Pedagogy", Raphael Dalleo (2012) posits that the novel is a rethinking of the anti-colonial ideologies contained in the earlier work. The shift, he argues, can be seen in the philosophy of pedagogy that the novel puts forward. Unlike the radical opposition of the anti-colonial stance, postcolonial pedagogy is depicted as contingent and conflicted. However, its decentralised non-hierarchical nature is potentially able to redefine the field of possibilities than a radicalisation of the master's tool.

Other scholars like Gichingiri Ndigirigi (2016) in "The Crisis of Representation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*", and also Charles Kipng'eno Rono (2021) in "Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* and Dialogue in African Literature", have, through these works, equally contributed in giving this great novel the desired critical analysis. The work under study (*Humanity and Nature: an interdisciplinary Forest Discourses in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Wizard of the Crow*) however departs from the ones herein reviewed in that it gives the Aburirian forest, the anthropomorphic strength it deserves and in the same vein debunking its anthropocentric position. It examines the text *Wizard of the Crow* from the point of view of mankind's relationship with nature and the challenges of environmental hazards that accompany this in contemporary times.

This study defines the term "Interdisciplinary" from the point of view of Wikipedia. It sees it as studies that involve the combination of two or more academic disciplines into one activity. Interdisciplinary studies draw knowledge from several other fields like sociology, anthropology, psychology, ethics, economics and more. The concept focuses on creating something by thinking across boundaries. Merriam Webster Dictionary corroborates this by saying that "Interdisciplinary" involves two or more academic scientific or artistic disciplines. The Cambridge Dictionary notes in the same light that "interdisciplinarity" involves two or more different subjects or areas of knowledge.

3. Methodology

The study uses a qualitative approach notably documentary research. Through this method, the researcher uses articles' and books' contents to illustrate his thoughts. According to Scott & Marshall (2015), Documentary Research is

"Research that uses personal and official documents as a source material. Documents... may include such things as newspapers, diaries, stamps, directories, handbills, maps, government statistical publications, photographs, paintings, gramophone records, tapes, and computer files."

This research approach helps to assess a set of documents for historical or social value, or to create a larger narrative through the study of multiple documents surrounding an event or individual and it is often related to Content Analysis research methodologies. Content analysis is a strategy in qualitative research which consist of revising the contents of a document to argue or to support an idea.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Unveiling the Forest Crisis

The study investigates the extent to which nature, with a particular focus on the forest, has influenced environmental changes in contemporary society leading to climate change, species loss, global warming, increase desertification in some parts of the earth and a good number of other environmental hazards. Mankind's radical position as superior over other non-human species (anthropocentrism) in the environment is a cause for concern in a 21st century characterised by a fight for species preservation, sustainable development of the species and more profitable environmental needs. The 21st century was characterised among other exigencies Moreover, the African forest in particular is an attractive milieu to many logging companies within Africa and abroad. Similarly, the forest in Aburiria as evident in the text under study, acts as an attractive force to timber and non-timber forest exploiters who unsustainably exploits these forests and the species therein for personal aggrandisement. Juliette Williams (1798) in her article "Trouble in the Pipeline" as evident in another article by Karl Ammann et al. (2000, p.37) entitled "Bush meat Africa's conservation crisis" edited by World Society (2014) for the protection of animals (WSPA) condemns such practices in her debate concerning logging in Africa as she writes:

"The European commission recognises that in central Africa logging has practically always meant removing the wood without the slightest attention to long -term management of the forest.... It always causes serious disturbances to the ecosystems concerned."

This condemnation of human activities in the forest biosphere criticises the fact that those involved in the exercise of logging do not care about the need to ensure environmental conservation and species sustainability as they go about their businesses. Their target is their financial interest from excessive logging, herbs harvest and backs of trees extraction for traditional medicine and more. It is realised that much catastrophe including species lost, bacteria and micro-organism damage and more undesirable effect on environment is caused by felling of trees without any effort to

replace or replant. The nature of the relationship that exists between humankind and different species in the forest (both animal and plant) will be the main thrust of this paper.

The study is informed by ecocriticism as a theory of literary criticism. I consider this critical tool very appropriate in the analysis of the work because the theory, just like the topic of this paper focuses on environmental issues. Different critics have defined the term "Ecocriticism" using different words or terminologies. These critics include among others Nancy Cook, Harry Crockett, Christopher Kokinos, Thomas K. Dean, Ian Marshall, Simon Estock, Cheryll Glotfelty, just to mention these few. The definition of ecocriticism by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) will be used as a working definition for this study. She defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between Literature and the physical environment. According to her, ecocriticism takes an earth centred approach to literary interpretation. In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, it is argued that despite the broad scope of inquiry and desperate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticisms share the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Taking these into consideration therefore, the study investigates the role that forest has played and continues to play in the on-going environmental hazards either by promoting the hazards or regulating it.

The study is based on the contention that if today African forest is dwindling with its adverse effects on environment, it is as a result of mankind's unhealthy relationship either consciously or unconsciously with this (forest) natural species through uncontrollable exploitation of it for personal gains.

4.2 A brief summary of Wizard of the Crow

The novel *Wizard of the Crow* is set in an imaginary country called "The Free Republic of Aburiria". According to the novel, the country for a long time has been under the dictatorship of a leader known simply as the Ruler. The Ruler's Machiavellian grip on power is so absolute that his ministers trip over each other, offering slavish praises, enlarging and deforming body parts (eyes to the size of electric bulb, ears like those of rabbits as well as mouth) all these to show love for the ruler and to be a specialist at his mighty service of leadership. At the Ruler's birth day ceremony organised by the ministers (Machokali, Sikiokouu, and kaniuru) the novel notes, the ministers agree to construct a mansion called "Marching to Heaven", a structure that will go right to the gates of Heaven, an edifice similar only to the Tower of Babel. This, they thought, will enable the Ruler to talk freely with God. Through this the ministers equate God with the Ruler. For this project to be realised, they thought, a loan from the Global Bank is inevitable. On their parts, the Global Bank must ensure the stability of a country (Aburiria) before a loan for such a project could be granted them. All efforts are put in place to ensure the stability of the country. Thereafter, the representatives of the Global bank are invited. The plan is however frustrated due to a rejection of such a project by a group of women called "Movement for the voice of the people", led by Nyawira (2022, P. 250). In a song and dance during the reception of the bank

representatives, they condemn the project in strong terms in these words: "Marching to Heaven is a pile of shit! Marching to heaven is a mountain of shit". As a result the ceremony ends prematurely, and the plan to get the loan fails. It is said about Aburiria that the mighty Ruler is the country and the mighty country is the Ruler. Anyone who dares to question his omnipotence is quickly sent as food for crocodiles.

With the high rate of corruption and victimisation in Aburiria, Kamiti, considered a wizard of the crowd, seen as one with supernatural powers, abandons the human community to dwell in the wilderness (the forest) where he considers trees and animals as his friends and companion. Nyawira who is also threatened in the human environment intermittently spends her time in the forest with Kamiti, her lover. As Wizard of the Crowd, Kamiti has recorded a lot of fame in Aburiria as a traditional and a spiritual healer. He has cured Tajirika and his wife Vinjina of a strange disease called "White Ache", using a strange mirror in doing this. He later is called to attend to the health hazards of some other top personalities in the Aburirian government, including the Ruler himself. These smart qualities of Kamiti (Wizard of the Crowd) are not accomplished without challenges; he is caught and locked up in a dark room and forced to travel to America to cure the Ruler of Self-Induced Expansion (SIE).

In this novel therefore, Ngugi exposes the degree to which African leaders in general and the Ruler of Aburiria in particular resist to leave power through all sorts of manipulation and tricks. Ngugi, by also going closer to nature in his writing shows how this can result to human happiness, freedom from social stress, exhibition of real love and security of mankind.

4.3 Man vis a vis the Forest in Ngugi's Wizard of the Crow

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2006, p. 35) pays much attention to the forest as we read through his Wizard of the Crow. He points out the fact that forest in Aburiria is dwindling possibly due to humanity's activities therein, as we find in these words: "In Aburiria, wild animals were becoming rare because of dwindling forest and poaching". The dwindling forest (due to logging and poaching) is the very cancer worm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the trees and animals exploitation in our forest. These malpractices exercised by mankind on his environment have resulted to the reduction and the complete disappearance of some species in the environment in general and Aburirian forest in particular. This work therefore studies the rate at which poaching and logging are practiced in Aburirian forest, causing a lot of environmental hazards and inhibiting the younger generation from having their fair share of environmental benefits as their predecessors. Much effort therefore is needed to ensure that the forest as an aspect of the biosphere is protected of its living organisms for fear of extinction.

Nyamwereu and Sheridan (2008, p. 287) propose the re-examination of educational program as a way of creating consciousness on the youths concerning environmental awareness. They note:

"Another initiative has been educational program aimed at making local youth more aware and appreciative of the cultural and environmental importance of these forests. However, it is widely recognised that it is unrealistic to expect impoverished local

communities to refrain indefinitely from using natural resources even if cultural prohibitions exist ...”

It is true what these scholars say about the difficulty to prohibit the impoverished local people from tapping from the forest natural resources to sustain a living. Some of them even go against the traditional embargo placed on the forest still to exploit it. It is possible that education can be another alternative to safeguard the forest and its species from the unscrupulous youths. It means that those who design educational programs can take it as a point of duty to include into the curriculum, text books which can enable the youths to better understand the invaluable importance of the forest and its species to mankind.

The forest, from the logic of the text, could be considered Kamiti’s second home. Ngugi projects it as a vast uncultivated wilderness. In this forest, Kamiti lives in peace and in total harmony with the various living organisms and creatures therein, which the author mentions to be “tree and animal friends ... birds, plants ...” This shows how rich the biosphere of the earth is. To Kamiti, there is the dire need for humanity to go closer to nature for happiness and peace. Fomin (2008, p. 390) corroborates this notion of the forest as a place for enjoyment when he writes that:

“All true chiefs in the grassfields have palaces and the possession of an impressive palace with a sacred forest adds much to the status and legitimacy of a ruler. The forest which may be as large as 200 acres, lie close to the palace buildings and are homes for a variety of social institutions.”

The grassfields in the context of Fomin’s study is a geographical space in the west, part of the south west as well as part of the north west regions of Cameroon; characterised by shrubs and the almost complete absence of forest trees. The tradition of the grassfields chiefs, according to Fomin’s quotation above, is among other things characterised by an impressive secret forest, some of which are specially planted trees for traditional rituals. Such forests are prohibited by tradition from hunting, crop cultivation, fetching of wood and other human activities out of the secret social institution it is meant for. Through this cultural norm of preserving the forest, environmental protection is enhanced. The forest ensures happiness and peaceful co-existence among the palace children. It also acts as a veritable habitat for some micro-organisms. They live here and multiply their species therein.

In like manner, Kamiti considers the forest as a source of happiness, hope, and freedom from stress common in human environment. That is why he tells his lady Nyawira (2008, p.204) who pays him a visit in the forest that: “I am going to take you on a tour to meet my friends, all the natives of the forest”. “Natives of the forest” here refers to trees, animals, birds, mountains, valleys and other non-human species of the forest. Such an utterance therefore points to Kamiti’s anthropomorphic view of life and his environmentalist worldview. It also signals bioregionalism in Aburiria, - the Aburirian forest zone. It is a forest because of its plants, animals, birds and more that enrich the forest and reveal the need for its protection. Kamiti considers the forest his

home. He feels that the living organisms in the forest are his friends. This forest zone is an environment so convenient for Kamiti and Nyawira to consummate their love. This, they do in different ways: having sex in Kamiti's dwelling in the forest, making a tour of the forest to view the different trees and animal species and many more. All these show that the forest must be protected of its different living organisms. Dominique Juhe Beaulaton (2009, p. 353), corroborates this with the experiences of the forest in Togo and Benin. From his analysis, these forests are not different from what obtains in Aburiria as demonstrated by Kamiti and Nyawira. Part of the secret forest in Benin and Togo, the author points out:

"Are melting places for secret societies that seek to maintain social order and cohesion. Others provide shelter for initiates during periods of ritual seclusion which may last several months or even years, depending on the deity. Still other forests are linked to the installation of royalty and the legitimization of political leadership. Many of these forests surround springs which are therefore protected as sites for ritual purification. Funeral rites are also carried out in some forests."

From the above quotation, the culture of some of the tribes in Togo as well as in Benin enhances the preservation of their forest resource. Like Kamiti and Nyawira in the Aburirian forest, such tribes attach a lot of importance to the forest from where they hope to move forward in their political and socio-cultural ambitions. It provides shelter during periods of rituals, some of which may last several months. Some are sites for some seriously rooted secret societies in that particular culture. Also, some are sites for initiating some personalities in the society to higher levels of royalty or spirituality. In this case, a lot of importance is attached to the forest in Benin and Togo. Stefano Pagiola et al. (2002, p. 1) support this debate of forest preservation when they stress mankind's relationship with the forest, in a bid to re-iterate the need for ethics of preservation and sustainability of this species as they write:

"Forests are under severe threat in many parts of the world. An average of almost 15 million hectares of forest were lost every year during the 1990's, mostly in the tropics. This loss of forest has been accompanied by a loss of the many valuable services that forest provides - such as regulation of hydrological flows and carbon sequestration and of the biodiversity they contain."

Stefano et al. (2017, p. 205-206) argue that the forest is in danger because of mankind's disrespect for it. The rate at which forest is fast disappearing has got a lot of repercussions on the climatic condition of that environment in particular and the world at large. It is this lack of environmental awareness by humankind in his environment which will surely result to further hazards and doom if care is not taken.

More so, the younger generation may be seriously on the disadvantage for the crime of environmental destruction caused by their parents.

It is also worth noting the richness of the forest which creates a favourable and conducive arena for Kamiti and Nyawira to consummate their love. This is thanks to

the different organisms contained in this aspect of the biosphere as the author notes in connection with Kamiti's and Nyawira's relationship in the forest thus:

"Love was everywhere, in the tree branches where the nests of weaver birds hung; in the fern where the widowbird had left two long black tail feathers; in the murmuring of the Eldares River as it flowed eastward before turning into a roaring waterfall; in the sun's rays which pierced through the waterfall, splitting the seven colours of the rainbow; in the still waters of a small lake made by the river where Kamiti and Nyawira now swam and bathed and chased each other, splashing water on each other; in the blackjacks, the goosegrass and other plants, the flowers and seeds of which stuck to their wet clothes; in the movement of porcupines and hedgehogs, in the wings of the helmeted and crested guinea fowls [...] in the honey bees and butterflies, hoping from flower to flower; in the cooing of the doves; in the mating call of river frogs from among the reeds and water lilies. Love was there among the creeping plants that twined around the tree trunk, in the blackberries, some of which they plucked and fed each other. Love was there in the breeze that made the leaves sway ever so gently. Love was everywhere in the forest."

This quotation points to the rich nature of the forest. It is characterised by a myriad of living organisms. It further justifies the reason for which the forest, as part of the biosphere, needs to be protected. Protecting the forest ensures the continuous existence of the natural organisms therein. This is a call to all the department in charge with forestry management in the different African countries to treat this as a matter of seriousness, taking into consideration the fact that poaching and logging in these forests are not only practiced by the Africans, most of who feed by the forest, but also by European, Asian and American companies who pass through some unscrupulous African leaders to destroy the ecological prowess of most of these African forests. When the speaker intimates that; "... though the crickets were calling and hyenas were howling from afar ...", it shows another way for him to re-iterate on the importance of living organisms and the need for them to live freely like other species in the forest biosphere.

Kamiti has turned the forest into a dwelling place where he reflects freely about the welfare of Aburiria. He has become so friendly with this forest that he considers it his home. He notes that: "...one may find oneself back to places one had thought that one had left for good. I am now a dweller in the forest" (p. 213). He accepts the harmonious relationship expected between human and the non-human species. According to Kamiti (2017), circumstances may one time or the other force mankind to turn to nature, a thing he had once abandoned. Considering the fact that humanity is considered king of creation, Kamiti tries to protect the forest. His vision of the forest is the very anti-thesis of the way most Ghanaians view the forest. This, Yaa Ntiamoa Baidu corroborates thus:

"In Ghana it is estimated that over 70% of the country's original closed forest has been destroyed; and of the remaining forest 85% are in protected areas. The demand for forest lands and pressure on forest resources in Africa will continue to increase with

the increasing human populations and heavy dependence of African economics on agriculture.”

This analysis shows that the struggle to maintain a sustainable forest resource in some parts of the African continent is being jeopardised in other parts. It goes not without saying that the Ghanaians like other African countries need to be educated on natural environment and nature protection. When mankind continues to interact on the natural environmental pressure, most of the natural species tend to disappear. Even though the population is rapidly increasing and agricultural land is rapidly taking a good chunk of the forest, part of the forest must be reserved for biodiversity conservation and sustainability of natural species. As human population increases and the need for more land for human habitation and agriculture increases also, the cutting down of the forest and consequently bio-diversity destruction in this regard becomes evident. This notwithstanding, care should be taken to ensure that not all trees species are cut down at such moments.

When Nyawira, a lover to an environmental activist (Kamiti) makes her second visit to the forest, she is not fortunate to meet Kamiti in his cave. Since Kamiti lives around the foothill, she prefers to search for him elsewhere in the place she and Kamiti had visited during her first visit. Nyawira notes that: “the entire place (forest) was enveloped in a magic of love and wild beauty”. Nyawira in this quotation which she utters in the forest in which Kamiti lives, appreciates the forest natural beauty, considering it as an environment surrounded with love, the love she has for Kamiti and for nature.

Feeling so lonely in the forest, she nurses fear of encountering some of the wild beasts that live in the forest. This, the speaker tells us:

“She dreaded encountering a lion, a leopard, or any of the cats she had earlier wished to see. How would she escape from them? She imagined cobras, puff adders, and pythons lurking somewhere in the dark and with every step, she pictured herself being ensnared by a snake or a three-horned chameleon Now she was in a bush where real snakes resided and she was terrified. What if I should escape human fangs and end up in the belly of a puff adder? She imagined her body slowly decomposing in the belly of a viper and she shivered.”

This quotation echoes how rich this forest is. It is a suitable habitat for all the animal species that dwell in the forest. It is perhaps due to the richness of this biosphere (the forest) that man often turns it into a hunting ground. Most of the animal species mentioned above are hunted, killed and sold for food and wealth. This is going against the protective measures of Eco critical doctrine and the forestry law in almost all

African societies. The forest, with its living organisms, must be protected so that the younger generation should not be deprived of the privileges of this rich ecosystem.

Though mankind is considered king of creation in the context of this study, Nyawira is afraid to be attacked by most wild beasts in the forest. Being king of creation does not mean that one goes into open and unprotected confrontation with wild beasts. As

king, mankind is powerful, knowledgeable, tactful, careful and imbued with other skills which he uses to subdue, capture and exercise total control and protection over the wild animals and other natural non-human species in the environment. Nyawira in the forest is not armed or prepared with the necessary tools to ensure her security and consequently has all reasons to be afraid of these wild beasts. To visit the forest biosphere, one must be prepared to subjugate and exert total control on wild animal species, and not to kill them indiscriminately for what Karl Ammann et al. term 'bush meat' business.

Kamiti, in a deep conversation with his lover, teaches her more about the forest as a store of medicine for mankind:

"I want you to learn what nature and solitude can teach us; simplicity and balance, the way. Call it the forest school of medicine and herbology. I shall offer you such medicine that will make your eyes see what I see ... Did you learn this in India? Nyawira asked a couple of days later, after realising how much medicine even a tiny bush contained, what he described as nature's pharmacy."

To Kamiti, the organisms of the forest have much to offer especially to mankind's health. When he talks of forest school of medicine he actually means that mankind must learn and continue to learn on how to judiciously use the forest to guarantee a healthy body. Hence, he talks of nature's pharmacy. The forest therefore is a whole world of its own. Humanity, to fight for a healthy body, must not be nature sceptical, rather he must be nature endorsing so as to reap much benefit from the forest biosphere. If the rich environmental prowess is preserve, these riches of the forest will have invariably been preserving the forest, and guaranteeing a better future for humankind. Annie Merrill Ingram et al. (2007, p. 143) quotes Amy M. Patrick who gets worried about the uncertainty of the forest in these words

"Many conservation biologists, faced with the reality of this uncertainty advocates that the safest most economically beneficial way to avoid environmentally related catastrophe is to adopt the precautionary principle and avoid actions that may potentially result in negative consequences to the environment and human health, especially when alternatives exist."

In the above connection, deforestation of the African forest by western companies, and with the complicity of African governments is directly and perhaps indirectly aggravating precarious environmental situation. Alternative means of using the forest products such as irons to replace wooden materials, meat of domestic animals to replace or curb poaching often called "bush meat trade", and many more substitutes should be used. Such actions will go a long way to enhance sustainable development of endangered species in the environment. The conservation of the species will also ensure climate moderation and consequently help to regulate human health hazards caused by climate change.

Kamiti recounts much information about his clan - the 'miti' and further gives the importance of nature thus:

“We are descended in part from hunters who dwelled in the forest, mostly and come to know it well. Nearly all were healers. There was not an illness against which nature did not provide the necessary juices of life. Not only were they healers, but some had the gift of seeing things hidden from ordinary eyes.”

This quotation further confirms nature’s riches in pharmaceutical products from its rich organisms. The forest was like a reservoir of all these medicinal products. This is enough reason why man should protect rather than destroy the forest and indirectly destroy himself.

The forest, from Kamiti’s view point, acts as a source of aesthetic contemplation. It has the potentials to lead one to a high level of spirituality and knowledge. Thus, Kamiti makes us understand that: “when one is alone in the forest, one is forced to contemplate the universe and creation. My thoughts were mostly on African deities. I caught myself thinking; why don’t I cause a pan-African pantheon of the sacred?” (p. 268). This quotation shows how mankind can use the forest to further understand the functioning of his environment or the universe; and to further move forward in philosophical thoughts. This is partly because the forest is a quiet and calm space conducive for human reflection as Kamiti does. The author further intimates that: “the forest was a school in which they (Maritha and Mariko) often come to hear what it had to tell them”. This again projects the forest as a store of knowledge wherein mankind could improve on his level of spirituality and vision. Ngugi in *Wizard of the Crow*, therefore, pays much tribute to the forest as an element of the biosphere. Through the forest, humankind had to learn, not only medicine, animals, plants and a good number of living and perhaps non-living organisms that dwell in it, but also some social interactions. In this connection Fomin (2008, p. 405) notes in relation to the social inclinations attached to the palace sacred forest thus:

“The palace sacred forests are therefore not just elite symbols; their multiple meanings make them important for different social groups. Local elites are also strong supporters of preserving these forests and because many people depend on these notables, sacred forest conservation tends to get significant public support in grassfields communities.”

Fomin in this reflection argues that forest conservation is achieved through social interaction in what is known within the grassfields area as the “Palace Sacred Forest”. Since this aspect is respected by both the traditional authority and the elites, the local population for the most part depend on agriculture and are forced to respect the stretch of the forest reserved for the palace. This stretch of the forest has a lot of importance for not only regulating the climatic conditions of the specific Fondoms, but also in contributing towards sustainable development of the forest and its species.

5. Conclusion

It is evident that the role of the forest in regulating the climate, providing food for human health and acting as a home or habitat for some species cannot be over emphasised. As a result of these, the need to protect the forest has been seen to be inevitable. Nevertheless the unsustainable rate at which man harvests the forest has

rather reduced these potentials through complete and near extinction of some rare protected species. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's focus on the forest, apart from projecting the rich Aburirian forest through different animal and tree species being very close friends to Kamiti, it also reveals unhealthy relationship with timber exploiters in Aburiria like Wangahu. Effort for sustainable development of Aburirian and other African forest zones needs to be given the pride of place it deserves.

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