

# Literary environmentalism: An ecocritique of Kiswahili literature

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## ABSTRACT

Climate change cuts across the micro and macro layers in populations. It is a demographic issue, which infects and affects each individual irrespective of status. Ecological imbalance is the greatest challenge humanity is facing. Literary environmentalism has permeated into diverse discourses affecting economics, politics, and modern literature. Kiswahili literature is no exception; its reflection of some of these ecological issues is extremely profound. Several Kiswahili artists of poetry, drama, and prose have taken it upon themselves deliberately or otherwise to subtly create awareness to explicitly and implicitly cause ecological cognition in their audience on the existing as well as potential natural and manmade calamities in view of the social, political, and economic ramifications of a destroyed ecosystem. This research therefore immersed itself into a textual analysis of Kiswahili genres that is poetry, drama, and prose to bring to light the ecoliterary developments done by Kiswahili author. The research found out that indeed Kiswahili authors have thematically demonstrated that the most pressing ecological issues are drought and famine brought about by felling trees, encroaching on riparian areas and failure by national governments to take charge of ecological protection. They have portrayed these issues subtly and in aesthetic style, different from scientific perspective. The research selected following texts *Kifo Kisimani*, *Babu Alipofufuka*, *Nakuruto*, and *Bara Jingine* for analysis.

**Keywords:** Climate change, literary environmentalism, ecological cognition, Kiswahili literature, textual analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ecological issues presently than never before occupy a central place in the world as orient every discursive sphere touching on the nature of humanity (Desome, 2008; Toulmin, 2009; Nanda 2011). These ecological issues, we can say have defined humanity and the quality of life he leads. Though scientists appear to have explicitly had their scientific say, the literary artist too has had his. The downside is that he has not been heard and observed keenly, and if he has, he has not been appreciated for the lack of hard statistics, yet: he like the scientist actuates the reality albeit creatively. Though both appear to part ways, they share a destination: man and the ecology and this they arrive at through their sensorial perceptions. It is these perceptions that have implanted a serious intellectual discourse not only into the mainstream environmental conservationists but also

into literary artists as well with regard to the menace created by climate change (Nwagbara, 2010; Fai, 2010). Ecological *thematizations* characterize most of the hotly debated topics in our world today as they not only affect the physical [mother] environment but have a debilitating impact on the whole being's emotional, psychological, physical as well as the spiritual state because of the resultant devastations on the planet we inhabit.

Literary environmentalism is an idea that is purely grounded in ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment...takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glottfelty and Harold 1996). As a novel field of literature, it opens up novel frontiers for debating environmental and literary issues in one merged discourse. Many of the global debates on climate change

and degradation have been premised on scientific and cultural themes omitting literary perspectives on the same. Ecocriticism reckons that all humanity is affected by climate change and environmental degradation regardless of social class, economic systems, political or professional orientations. Hence the view by Sun and Meng (2006:68) that “all disciplines including humane studies cannot or should not avoid the increasingly serious environmental problems and should undertake the responsibility of solving the problems,” needs a closer attention by all the stakeholders including Literature departments in universities. Indeed, Kiswahili literature is growing by exploring various themes that affect the society though socio-cultural and sociopolitical issues still form the main themes and the subthemes.

### **THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN EASTERN AFRICA**

The subject of climate change and the accompanying environmental degradation remains at the heart of the region. The Swahili speaking community of Eastern Africa has not and cannot escape the ecological implications. The region is a constituent of an indivisible global ecosystem, and the natural laws of this ecosystem must perforce judge the region as its constituent. East Africa is in an ecological turmoil (Madulu, 2004; Stockholm Environment Institute, 2009) and as part of the developing countries; the consequences of climate change will be heavier as compared to the Developed nations. Environmental issues in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and other Eastern Africa countries have started to be taken with the gravity it deserves. Many ecological campaigns, evident in the many NGOs like The Greenbelt Movement are being carried out in these countries to sensitize the people to this grave natural time bomb (Kimani, 2010). Many environmentalists led by the Nobel Laureate, the late Wangari Maathai have done excellent work of activism in Kenya. To echo the supremacy of nature Wangari Maathai in her acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize for Environmental leadership averred that nature is very unforgiving (Maathai, 2004). These individual efforts have managed to a remarkable degree permeate in the individual and collective consciences of nations within the sociolinguistic communities in this Swahili speaking region from the platform of civil groups and non-governmental organizations.

Since independence, East Africa region has not given much credence to environmental issues and ramifications in the society. At independence, especially in Kenya, all the post independence governments led by the KANU regime began on a weaker note in terms of protecting ecologically sensitive areas like the forests. It is at this time that authoritarianism, nepotism, tribalism, began

rearing their heads and were subsequently embraced and nurtured by subsequent governments (Klopp, 2012). The famous Mau is case in point even when all the hard ecological facts became political fodder for (re)election and boundary politics (Klopp and Sang, 2011; Olang and Kundu, 2011). It is instructive to note that the deepening tribal chasms in Kenya have hallmarks of ecological undertones. The national resources were looted, including the important ecological elements like water catchment areas and forests (Government of Kenya, 2004). In Vihiga County for instance, there was a lush green Maragoli forest, which the colonial government guarded with a lot of interest. On the heels of independence, much of the forest was cleared and the land used for plantation of crops. The reason for such destruction is what Klopp (2000; 2012) calls the shamba system and poor local governance. In the past years since 2008, a new coalition government has tried to reclaim the Mau water catchment, the Mount Elgon forests, the Embobut forest, and other forest covers but all the efforts have been politicized putting an otherwise noble ideal on the stakes of alter of political expediency (Klopp, 2000; Klopp, 2012; Mkawale, 2013). There has been enormous resistance by powerful people in both former and current governments. A discerning mind will reveal a hegemonic tendency of what we may call *institutionalized anti-ecologists* comprising some members of the political class who have mounted strong political campaigns to have the conservationists voted out in competitive politics to guarantee a permanence of individual utilitarian ideals (Mkawale, 2013). In doing so, ethnic jingoism: base feelings of ethnic nationalism/patriotism are evoked to exclude those considered subversive to the so called ‘community interests.’ Proponents of this propaganda often target the uncritical mass of supporters, often telling them not to move out of the forests with post hoc argumentations that the rains do not come from the forests. The Kenyan environmental conservation efforts have encountered this is the kind of resistance in their quest for a better environment (Mkawale, 2013)

While Kenya is grappling with sub-terrain anti-environmentalism of some sort, other nations in this linguistic community have ‘contagiously’ had their side of the same ecological coin. Currently, Zanzibar Island is experiencing environmental degradation. Some factories have given a deaf ear to the environmental plight the surrounding locals are faced with thus ignoring the global legalities of the Copenhagen Accord, which mandates industrializing nations to develop and ensure low industrial emission (Majamba, 2005). Locals are losing their lives and vibrancy to environmentally related ailments like cancer and tuberculosis, social interaction has been strained, there is no peace, and there is increased discomfort among the residents of Chake Chake (Department of Environment and MACEMP, 2009:42-60). Research conducted by Swedish University

of Goteborg indicates that Uganda is also in a crisis on environmental conservation. Demographic change is straining the land resource in Uganda. Perhaps out of concern for the ecological balance and sustainability of its carrying capacity, many environmentalists decried the Ugandan land tenure-system, which has affected production due to generational subdivisions. This has in effect pressurized the people to encroach on wetlands, forests reserves, and generally poor disposal practices of waste (Kamanyire, 2000). Cross border conflicts due to rustling in the East African region is a testimony to the worth of an ecocritic essence in artistic problematization and solution of ecological issues. Such a long list of ecological litany is putting the citizens on a collision course with nature causing a serious imbalance in the ecosystem. This imbalance is certainly responsible for the vicious cycle of poverty as every human action remains within the loop and thus ecologically counterproductive (Africare, 2008). The futility of fighting nature can be likened to the Greek myth of Sisyphus: condemned to push a stone up in vain for the rest of his life for violating the decrees of the gods [read nature]. It is evident in the organic scramble for the thinning resources. Though the Great Gandhi ecocritiqued when he said that, "there is enough for everyone but not for everyone's greed," the capitalist mode of production inculcates a master servant relationship. It is not surprising for instance that the poor in Uganda see the capitalist rich-owners of the factors of production and as the major destroyers of the environment<sup>(6)</sup>. The script is the same in Rwanda, which has the highest rural population in the African continent. These demographic indicators in both rural and urban areas puts great pressure on limited, exhausted, unfertile, and strained land and other resources. The consequence is the inevitable encroachment on supposed-to-be-guarded critical ecological balances like forests, water bodies and other wetlands (Moyini et al., 2002:2-6).

Briefly, the Swahili speaking region of East Africa is in what we can term a titanic battle with Mother Nature whose echoes will obviously reverberate across the generations. We are bound to experience socio-political and economic ramifications of great magnitude including social unrest, mistrust between the poor and the rich classes, unfulfilled Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and more leadership wrangles, which can only worsen the nation states social security systems. When we say mistrust between the poor and the rich classes, we mean this: the poor will see the rich as the cause of their ecological miseries. The rich class buys the lands from the poor and sends them to urban and suburban slums. As is the case with politics of and Power relations, the rich, because they want to maintain the status quo will use all the means at their disposal to regulate and legitimize their actions by taking a strangle hold on all the socializing agents: the education system, churches, political parties. Although education liberates, Bowles and Gintis (1976) observe that it is the ruling class, which

determines the kind of education the working class receives. Education tends to legitimize and institutionalizes the value, knowledge, and skill levels in the social system. The worker thus has only his labor for which he cannot decide his worth. This observation demonstrates why the rich end up employing the poor in their institutions on slave wedges that can barely make them break free from vicious cycle of poverty and without guaranteed occupational safety measures.

When the UN met in Washington in 2010 to assess the progress met by all nations on Millennium Development Goals, it painted gloomy scenario on developing nations in Africa, Asia, and South America. Meeting these goals, especially the universal access to basic education, health, and reduction of poverty will require first, exorcising ecological ghosts. The late Maathai shared the above view<sup>1</sup>. Hunger in East Africa is taking its toll in Kenya and Somalia (it is the worst since 1950s); ever-reducing forests covers; invaded wetlands and increasing population, the Adam Smith tinderbox that can only worsen the vicious cycle of Poverty in the region with the potentiality of eventually abetting the ecological mess. Fighting climatic change and its allied effects like famine menace will require short and long term planning by the region and the whole globe. The recruitment of ecological foot soldiers should take a multi-sectored approach and pull in all people and not just the law and policy makers, environmentalists, agro forest experts and governments. Even curriculum planners, implementers, and researchers of ecocriticism in literature departments have to rise to the greening occasion and turn the eco-destructive argument that for a country to industrialize it must produce tons and tons of carbon; on its head by using the reflective nature of art to proactively forestall an ecological vortex that can only sack in the agitator. Ecocritical sensitivity in art is a sure way of humanizing man by taking him back to the archetypal perfect/ideal Garden of Eden as it were.

## ECOCRITICISM OF KISWAHILI LITERATURE

Ecocriticism also known as literary ecology or environmental literary studies is a field that emerged in the late twentieth century as a slightly delayed response in the humanities to the global emergence of the environmental movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Together with environmental philosophy and environmental history, and to some extent studies of place, space, and landscape, it forms the core of what in

<sup>1</sup> While addressing The African Development Bank "EMINENT SPEAKER'S PROGRAM" in Tunis, Tunisia 27<sup>th</sup>, October 2009, Maathai observed that "Without political will and commitment to manage the national resources responsibly and accountably, share them more equitably and consider intergenerational moral responsibility, poverty will only increase and {the MDGs will not be realized. Indeed MDG No. 7 (environmental sustainability) is the mother of all MDGs. If we can achieve No. 7, we can achieve most of others.

the early twenty-first century is an emerging cross-disciplinary field of environmental humanities (Payne and Barbara, 2010:205). Ever since its emergence as a field of study in literature and cultural studies in early 1990s, there has been little attention paid to Swahili literature. The only material on ecocriticism on Swahili appears in the *Booklist of International Environmental Literature* coordinated by Scott Slovic, published in World Literature Today Online 2009. The book, *Bustani ya Edeni* (2002), translated *The Garden of Eden*; by Timothy Arege of Catholic University of Eastern Africa is a comprehensive and insightful Kiswahili ecocritique. This is the only published reference material on ecocriticism. Ever since the field began in the United States, it had to go through Europe before knocking at the doors of Africa and the Oriental. Within Africa, the field has spread in most of the South African Institutions of Higher learning, West African states of Nigeria and Ghana and partly North Africa. Diverse plenary sessions in literary conferences have been held on African ecocriticism in West Africa and the Western world but as Scott Slovic says, "it is regrettable that East Africa is not yet involved." The exclusion of East Africa and specifically Swahili scholarship in this field has denied it a special part because every literature brings to the ecocritical table, a novelty of cultural materialism, philosophical thought and a distinct mode of presentation.

At the turn of the millennium, several Swahili authors began churning out works thematically centering, in varied degrees, on ecology as a literary concern. The urge to participate actively in bringing into prominence the concerns of nature to the world of Swahili literature can be noticed in the ecocritical tone the artists bring to bear upon their creative works. Their actions, apparently lacking a direct relation to the global normalizations, are but quick futuristic rejoinders to the clarion call of the Copenhagen Accord. The accord states that, "we emphasize our strong political will to urgently combat climate change in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (UNFCCC,<sup>2</sup> 2009:1). The artist comes out as the vanguard in the advocacy of ecological truth and fulfills his cardinal objective as not merely an agent *provocateur* but a seer, a visionary whose sensitivities and sensibilities bring him into cognition early enough before the rest of humanity does. For example, Kiswahili authors like Kithaka wa Mberia, Emmanuel Mbogo, Said Ahmed Mohammed, Clara Momanyi are some of the outstanding authors whose contribution to writing on environmental issues affecting their society. We will discuss them in detail within the paper. These literary authors have seen the effects of monstrous catastrophes of climate change and degradation in the East African region and the whole world: prolonged droughts; receding water tables; soil erosion; unproductive farms; flash floods; hot days and sometimes, nights; reducing volumes in our water bodies. To all the Swahili authors

within East Africa region and the Diaspora environmental destruction is a real ecological situation, which each person must deal with decisively and unwaveringly. They have come to the knowledge that the ire and of climate, change is blind: this is Mother Nature the represented/referential object in Shakespeare (1957) observation that "there is no fury like a woman scorned" they affect each person regardless of class, gender, and age. As Kiswahili scholars, they also know that environmental education is a collective effort of all living on the face of the earth and that each person must be reminded to ensure the wellbeing of the ecosystem. They also realize that even their literatures be they orate or literate are going to be affected sooner rather than later. For example, we have the Kiswahili, idiom responsible for most of the archtyping. They take humanity back to his original state by giving a backdrop upon which the present ecological discrepancies can be understood. Archetypes as Jung (1957) posits are collective symbols. Jung further describes an archetype as: A symbolic key to the truth about human conditions and to the path of personal enlightenment. They can reveal the workings of the world, as to how it affects the human psyche, and what man should do to accomplish something or ward off something.

To Jung, archetypes create myths, religious, and philosophical ideas that influence and set their stomp on whole nations and epoch's. The use of ecological properties like the rivers, trees, water masses, sea creatures, and other natural phenomena is not for the sake of it. The Kiswahili artist is not engaging in linguistic luxury, such imagery conveys the ecocritical essence which if anything comes naturally through the creative process. It captures the Platonian conception of art as an inferior creature as it can only mimetically reflect the superior, which in our thinking is naturally the ecology. If we allow them to disappear because of climate change and ecological destruction, we will, though debatable not have much of an objectifiable ecological inspiration for the artists. East African Oral literature, from which Kiswahili mainstream prose and poetics heavily borrow, is tinged with ecosystem elements. The *special African* trees like the baobab; the Mugumo<sup>3</sup>; the palm<sup>4</sup> trees and forests<sup>5</sup> in particular which carry great stories, songs, myths are logged (Achebe, 1958; Thiong'o, 1965; Reed and Bakert, 1964). The rivers, lakes, natural springs and other waters from which some folktales were born are drying up; some natural shrubs, plants, and general special flora which defines the aesthetics of oral poetry were composed are slowly diminishing. Their

<sup>3</sup> Ngugi Wa Thiongo in *the River Between* and general Agikuyu oral tradition captures the reverence attached to the sacred Mugumo tree.

<sup>4</sup> Leopold Sedar Senghor in his poem *Ndesse A Book of African Verse* (1964) John Reed Clive Bakert (eds) though West African is an ecoreflective poem that use mother nature to convey the resultant cultural deracination assimilation wreaked on the persona. pg 73-74.

<sup>5</sup> Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) 'evil Forest' as a metaphor is objectified as the cleansing agent of all societal malaise

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Framework Convention On Climate Change

disappearance in real terms is in future, going to impact all these genres of African literature at this point we may not say how based on presence and absence<sup>6</sup>, for it is not a given that a devastated ecology will stop the creative endeavors any creative artist more so from this the East African religion. It is imperative that Kiswahili literary artistry and scholarship converge on the issues of the day by forcefully articulating climatic issues and environmental destruction. The artist as the Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo put it: “must be in the thick of things he should put his pen down and take up the gun...” (Uzoma, 2000) our proposition is not that the writer should do an Okigbo, rather the artist has his stage upon which he acts. He can only unlike the scientists, policy makers and environmentalists, differentially be part of the ecological army taking orders from the ecological demands as distilled through his senses.

Several works have been penned with themes on ecological issues since the year 2000. Kithaka has been active in pushing environmental agenda in Swahili literary studies since the turn of the millennium. His main anthology *Bara Jingine* (2001), translated Another Continent, is loaded with numerous environmental poems like *Jinamizi* (nightmare), *Nieleze* (Tell me), *Ngoi na waimbaji* (Ngoi and the singers), *Ngao* (the Shield), *Thagicu*, *Mimi mto Nairobi* (I river Nairobi), *Okidi piga Ukelele* (Okidi, Cry Out), and *Bwawa la Ithanje* (Ithanje Dam). He has also written a play *Kifo Kisimani* (2001) translated Death at the Well, which focuses on Africa governance, corruption, and ecological destruction. Kithaka wa Mberia can be regarded as a green author, a pioneer of sorts in ecoliterature, and a writer who can be credited for the paradigm shift in Swahili literature. Other writers like Said Ahmed Mohamed have also thrown their hats in the ring, having produced several poems and a novel that has literary echoes in literature in Swahili. Under his name, he has penned a poem *Wawapi* (Where are they), a poem that talks about the birds which have gone extinct due to climate change. One of his novels *Babu Alipofufuka* (2002), translated as The Reincarnation of Grandfather, and is impregnated, though just a paragraph, with ecological sub-theme. Mbogo (2002), has authored *Bustani ya Edeni*, an environmental novel set in the coastal Tanzanian town of Dar es Salaam, where various kinds of pollution affect the lives of local people. In particular, the narrative focuses on the problems caused by a chemical factory called Sagasaga. Factory workers get sick because they do not wear gloves or masks. The factory dumps waste materials directly into the Zamala River, poisoning plants and animals and threatening the people who use the river—for bathing, drinking, and washing clothes—with cancer. The novel tells the story of public resistance—led by a pastor, a journalist, and a lawyer—to the environmental

destruction caused by the factory. Mr. Abdula, the managing director of Sagasaga, eventually is forced to close the factory and is reputed to have taken refuge from angry citizens by fleeing to the United States. Momanyi (2009) focuses her novel *Nakuruto* on the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial times and how ecology has suffered through these dispensations. The author, using magic realism narrative style intimates that ecology has suffered destructions due to bad governance. The author uses a woman to awaken the conscience of the society that despite the opposition and stigmatization, her efforts finally pays off. These authors have articulated the issues of climate change and ecological degradation. Their writings show that Swahili literature is making a valid contribution to the ecogenerational issues of our time. It also indicates that these Swahili authors, after seeing and experiencing the symptoms of environmental crisis, want to be part of the solution, not the problem. The authors are using art “to address as well as to bring to the knowledge of humanity this form of environmental devastation and inhumanity” (Nwagbara, 2010:18).

In this paper, we intend to deal with prose, drama, and poetry; more precisely in these selected works: *Kifo Kisimani* (2001), *Babu Alipofufuka* (2002), *Nakuruto* (2009) and *Bwawa la Ithanje* and *Mimi Mto Nairobi*, poems from wa Mberia's anthology *Bara Jingine* (2001). We have chosen these works because they are written in an era where environmental consciousness has been and is being raised to a new level, from Africa to Asia, Europe to Americas.

## TEXTUAL ECOCRITICISM OF SELECTED BOOKS

Said Mohamed's novel *Babu Alipofufuka* (2002) is one of our texts for ecological exploration. It is a magical realist novel, one of its kinds from this versatile author and literary critique. The novel's temporal setting is in the future at a point in time when the Eastern African region will have been mutated by globalization. The author aptly chooses the setting of East Africa because, as several environmentalists had intimated, this region is faced with environmental calamities (Moyoni et al., 2002; Madulu, 2004; Kamanyire, 2000; Government of Kenya, 2004). Therefore, the readership is believed to be well averse with climate issues and its effects. The work depicts a society where the leadership has fallen to unfathomable lows, humanity is suppressed and dehumanized, and the African philosophy of Ubuntu has been “desubstantiated” and “dehistorised” into oblivion by a perverse capitalistic forces. In fact in her introduction to this novel, Bertoncini-Zubkova (2002) remarks:

The results are disastrous: impoverished and dulled masses are governed by a handful of immensely rich, powerful, and arrogant persons mostly of foreign origin, deprived of all human

<sup>6</sup> See oppositional binaries presence as absence with regard to Suisse Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in Joseph (2012)

qualities, which have thrown away any inhibition and deliberately sunk in all sorts of physical and moral debasement; nothing embarrasses nor frightens them anymore, as they feel unpunishable.

Of great consequence is the environmental calamity that has befallen the people of Eastern Africa. The village of K, the main character in the story, resembles hell. In fact, the author narrates thus:

[...] *Akajikuta kwenye jahanamu. Dunia ngeni ya kitisho na kuogofya. Ya kukatisha tamaa. Akajikuta kasimama kwa hofu. Akagwaya. Kasawijika uso na mwili ukimtetema. Akatupa jicho kulia, jicho kushoto. Tena nyuma na mbele. Mazingira mahame. Pate ya Al-Inkishafi. Dhii tupu. Sakariko kamili. Damiriko. Tibutibu mwenendo mzima. Mfumo wote. Upeo-wa-macho! Jua likadinda. Linawaka moto mara milioni moja kuliko lilivyokuwa likiwaka mwaka wa 1940 alipozaliwa. Utosi bado kidogo uyayuke. Na ilionyesha wazi manyonyu ya mvua hayajatonwa kwa miaka. Na miaka ile pale mvua ilipoanguka, ilichimba misingi na mitaro na ushahidi ni hii mandhari jinsi inavyoonyesha. Ilikuwa kitu chengine kuliko Alninyo. Hata vibanda bado vilikuwa vimebaki vilevile vilivyoporomoka miaka yote hiyo- vimelala chini mpaka leo. Iliidhihiri kwamba maangamizo yalikuwa yameenea nchi nzima [...] Nchi nzima haina vya kuuza wala kununua. Kilimo kimewafisidi. Mifugo imewatoweka. Uvuvi umewamaliza... (145-147)*

[...] He found himself in *hell*; a new freaky world, full of terror; a world of despondency. He found himself standing in fear. He shuddered. His face was contorted and the body shuddered. He turned to look left, right, then behind, and ahead. The place was deserted just like the *Kingdom of Pate in the Al-Inkishafi epic*. He became helpless, hopeless, and weak. His journey to the end became vague and frustrating! The sun was adamant; one million times hotter than it was in 1940 when he was born. His head was nearly at the melting point. From the look of things, it was many years ago since the last drop of rain graced the land. In addition, the last time in those years of yore, since it had rained, it had made huge galleys. The evidence was clear from the environment. The situation was something worse than El-Niño. The small kiosks to this day, remained fallen all these years. It was evident that the whole country had been swallowed by the disaster [...] the whole country has nothing to sell or to buy. Farming is no more practical. The livestock wiped out and fishing is no more... (MT)

In this excerpt, K the protagonist is taken through a

journey that spans into the year 2058. The journey, navigated by his late grandfather's apparition *Mzuka* brings K to his childhood village, a village ravaged by the effects of climate change; it is a long time since it last rained; there is no water for drinking; no farming activities; no commerce; no livestock keeping and definitely no fishing! The setting, which symbolizes Eastern Africa, a purely agrarian society finds itself in 2058 devoid of basic essentials. The society is helpless and in a state of despondency, impoverished and exasperatingly bureaucratic. According to Bertoinc-Zubkova (2000), "the whole book is a desperate protest against wastefulness, plundering and ravaging of the Earth, against a progressive destruction caused by a handful of the rich with the complicity of the poor- a protest that cannot leave anybody impassible." Bertoinc-Zubkova's judgment of the whole book reiterates the current environmental situation in Uganda where the common Ugandans feel that the rich and capitalists are the major plunderers and destroyers of ecology. Ecological ruins as depicted in the novel ultimately affect the development agenda of the villages in the larger society. In an ecologically damned society of Eastern Africa basic education will remain a pipedream, diseases will continue to haunt and kill, extreme poverty will be inescapable, and it will be difficult to capture national development agendas, which also form the kernel of MDGs. According to the author, this is the price, probable impossibility; the world may pay by 2058. The time that Said Mohamed's novel predicts is almost the same time which scientists predicts to be a chaotic age in terms of climate change, population explosion and meeting humanity's basic needs (OECD, 2012). Using an effective literary style and aesthetics, Said makes a picturesque presentation that transports the reader into the realm of the imaginary. The author effectively communicates his theme to the readership when he employs occurrences like the El Niño, drought, and failed agriculture that have taken place, largely and negatively affecting the residents in East Africa. His language has the ability to call a reader into a reflective mode thereby making him interrogate his relations with the environment. Unlike the scientific language we see in Madulu (2004), the author carries the reader literary and transports him into experiences rather than using direct, hard-hitting, and factual language, unaesthetic, and unemotional language as used in science. His language evokes and arouses the emotions of the reader in a way that is purely literary. This trend is also discernible in Ojaide's poetry (Nwagbara, 2010) where the poet uses his art to speak about the scientific reality through literary signification and aestheticisation in Niger Delta.

The use of metaphors and other literary devices makes it even more appealing to the readers. The images are a metaphor Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in *Metaphors We Live By* observe: Metaphors are not merely things to be seen beyond. In fact, one can see beyond them only by using other metaphors. It is as though the ability to

comprehend experience through metaphor were a sense, like seeing or touching or hearing, with metaphors providing the only ways to perceive and experience much of the world.

The transposition of the metaphor within the ecological and the social through a bipartite association helps in the appreciation of the Faucoldian power relations as played out on the ecological plane to make a revelation of the human imitative capacity of nature's destructiveness. The sun's immense heat, rain falling from up and the earth a passive recipient of the hyperbolic climatic elements helps demonstrate the bipartite associations. These elements being beyond man's control demonstrate the helplessness the poor have before their masters. Our argument would be that man being part of the ecological elements he must perforce be humanized to restore the ecological balance by dealing with the *up versus down, mighty versus weak, big versus small* social binaries which should result in a synthesized ideal horizontal and not vertical social relations. To the extent that we are not on the same thematic/topical pedestal, we cannot objectively claim to be talking and doing the same thing, that the destruction of human essence is the beginning of ecological destruction. One clear picture coming through this paragraph is that, the author does not veil environmental issues but tackles them succinctly but with a "massaging" language. He uses the restorative ecological concrete to reveal the nature of man as a creator and destroyer with regard to social systems. While science experts like the IPCC (2001) speak of rising global temperatures, and even going to the extent of quoting exact change in centigrades over several decades, the author uses simple and effective language and tells the reader how he shall feel when the heat will increase. Reading scientific literature filled with facts and scientific jargon may not have the same emotive effects on the reader even though the author and scientist speak on the same theme.

The desert image and the allusion to the *Kingdom of Pate in the Al-Inkishafi epic* reinforce man's reaction to potential and real threats. This is the flight motif. The apparent craving for materialism-the capitalistic spirit-shows man being in perpetual flight, running away from the unpleasant pressures objectified in the heat and desertification, which has resulted from man's overexploitation of nature. Everyone appears to run away from the desert, a sign of wanton poverty. Survival for the fittest becomes the common mantra. Those who are agile will off course escape, ironically even those who are ahead face the same threat: the desert is all over. Though it has rained equally for all, the state of abundance is however not guaranteed forever. This is more reason why the rich who are the runoff should not strip off the poor naked and destroy their sources of life. The author uses the imagery of Pate Kingdom to effectively, pass his message to the rich that, no matter how rich, powerful and authoritative you can be, your own

actions will destroy you. Wirth (1945) notes of the same in Nigeria when he says that, the rich maintain social, political, and administrative structures to undermine the place of the poor. However, what they do not reckon is that when they will have destroyed the environment, they will have no solace for themselves. The author also speaks of the relations with trading partners in his novel. The idea on balance of trade is captured in the last line; the geopolitically weak country has nothing to sell to her more powerful counterpart. Said's creation of implicature as seen in this ecological metaphor creates a subtle temporal concretization of a forward-looking humanity in the year 2058. Science literature depicts this humanity as calamitous in terms of environment, population, basic needs, and social relations in its findings (OECD, 2012).

In *Kifo Kisimani* (2001) by Kithaka wa Mberia, the environmental conundrum has also been tackled at a glance. *Kifo Kisimani* is a tragic play crafted around the Swahili epic of Fumo Liongo, a mythical legend of the Waswahili of the Kenyan coast. The play makes an interesting and successful connection between environmental destruction, its effects, and the political leadership of the day. The author intimates that the political leadership is ruining our environment for individual utilitarian ideals and political expediency. The politics of ecology are inescapable. The political class *id abid* to hold onto power are using the ecology to maintain power, to propel their political ambitions, to make economic gains and to subjugate their subjects by subverting their interests. For instance in this excerpt:

Mwelusi: Hatufanyi watu kukasirika. Wanakasirika wanaposikia ukweli wa maisha yao.

Gege: Ukweli?

Mwelusi: Ndiyo ukweli. Dhiki maishani mwetu imesababishwa na utawala mbaya. Zamani tulikuwa na chemichemi za maji. Zimekauka. Tulikuwa na udongo wenye rutuba. Rutuba imebebwa na maji ya mvua baada ya miti kukatwa ovyoovyo. Zamani tulikuwa tunapata mazao ya kutoshana. Sasa, njaa na Butangi zimekuwa chanda na pete.

Mwelusi: We do not make the people angry. They get angry when the truth about their lives dawns on them.

Gege: Truth?

Mwelusi: Yes, the truth. Bad leadership has brought about our sorrows in life. Long ago, we used to have water springs. They have dried. The soil was fertile but because of logging, there are no trees to protect the fertility. It has been washed by the rains. Those days, the harvest was bounty but alas! Hunger and Butangi are the best of friends (MT)

Kithaka Wa Mberia gives the ecocritical voice to Mwelusi

who is not shy to intimate that hunger is caused by bad leadership. In order for the author to effectively communicate with audience, he uses a common person (Mwelusi) to make himself clear. The reader is able to fit in Mwelusi's shoes and be able to debate common but pressing issues of ecology and social leadership. Through these two characters, we can easily understand what Maduka (1981) says there is a direct relationship between literature and social institutions. The principal function of literature is to criticize these institutions and eventually bring about desirable changes in the society. The drying of rivers, springs, and other water bodies is not a natural phenomenon per se but a man made artificial- brought about by irresponsible leaders. This excerpt can easily be placed in the Kenyan context regarding past environmental issues. This is true of Kenya and the Eastern African region. For a while now, Kenya has been grappling with wrangles with varying ideas in the leadership on ecological preservation (Mkawale, 2013). Documented knowledge in the public domain proves that under the leadership of Presidents Kenyatta and Moi, forests were given to *powerful* politicians and their kindred, hangers-on and political cronies as inducements for hegemonic support (Klopp, 2000; Klopp 2012; Government of Kenya, 2004). Water catchment areas like Mau forest, Karura, Embobut forest, and Mount Elgon were deforested and tea factories, large-scale commercial farms, palatial homes, and private academies put in their stead. In most cases, we have had legitimate authorities conniving with illegal gangs to log the trees for timber, firewood, charcoal, and construction (Government of Kenya, 2004; Klopp and Sang, 2011). In some cases, indigenous trees with medicinal value are logged and exported in well-connected rackets on the black market. Although Mwelusi seems to blame the leadership, we doubt if Mberia wants the reader to see the ecological challenge as lying squarely in the province of the authorities. Gege appears to be the ecocritical voice of ignorance. He is unable to see the relationship between the present devastations of the environment and the famine situation as actuated by the leadership.

The Kenyan government and other Eastern African governments have also been blamed for being complacent in environmental policy implementation. The government agencies mandated to implement these policies have sometimes come under sharp criticism in the mainstream media for ineptitude, incompetence, and outright corruption. This is well elucidated in this excerpt:

Gege: Utawala wa Mtukufu Bokono unawezaje kuzuia ukosefu wa chakula. Hujui njaa ni mpango wa Mungu?

Mwelusi: Usimsukumie Mungu lawama asizostahili. Siku za nyuma hatukuwa na mmomonyoko wa udongo katika Butangi...Sasa hali ni tofauti...Wanaoshikilia usukani Butangi ni nzige

hatari. Wameifanya Butangi kuwa kilema...Wao, watoto wao na marafiki zao, wanalima popote watapo. Wanachunga mifugo popote, bila kujali kanuni zinazolinda ardhi ya Butangi... Matokeo ni kuharibika udongo, kudhoofika ardhi, njaa, mashaka, machozi na mazishi.

Gege: How can the leadership of Honorable Chief Bokono avert famine? Don't you know that hunger is God's plan?

Mwelusi: Do not blame the blameless God. In the past years, we did not have soil erosion in Butangi. The Butangi hills were very healthy, covered with tall trees, shrubs, and lash grass. The springs did not dry even in dispensations of droughts. All through, Butangi was very lively. In those days, there were laws, which were followed by all Butangians. Now the situation has changed. Those who wield power in Butangi are ravaging locusts! They have crippled Butangi. The laws that guarded Butangi are nothing in the eyes of these rulers. They, their children, and their friends cultivate wherever they want. They are herding livestock everywhere in disregard of the laws. Even the shrines, they have despicably and unashamedly desecrated them! The result is the infertile farms, hunger, weak soils, tears, and funerals (MT)

In the above excerpt, it is clearly described how governments are directly responsible for ecological destruction. They govern with impunity and do not care about the traditions and traditional places that represent the local mind on ecological interactions. Absolute power is in the hands of the few (Wirth, 1945). It is these few who decide how, when and who should hold on the resources. Power thus loses its utilitarian value, as cronyism takes precedence over conservation. The political class that creates its own status-based state in which international protocols are differentially applied trashes the global ecological legalities. The subjects are left to conform to the international legalese while they follow the broken away expediencies. The irony is observable when the same politicians come in pomp to bury the law-abiding conservationists and victims making many promises and pledging aid for the survivors of their ecological destructions. When we compare this East African scenario to the Nigeria's in Ojaide's poetry, Nwagbara (2010) tells us that Ojaide's poetry highlights the system of exploitative environmental policies that place the multinational corporations—represented by Shell, AGIP, Texaco, Chevron, and Mobil as well as the political elite above the people (the subaltern), thereby destroying the Nigerian environment. This shows how the authors are similar-minded when dealing with ecology and social governance. Even though the literary language bears the same theme with scientific language, the way UNFCCC (2009) and United Nations (2008) tackles

governance, climate change and citizenry is succinct and scientific. The scientific debates are heavily backed by concrete data gathered from around the globe using scientific methodologies. However, the authors do not consider such mode of scientific expression in their works majorly because they are meant to impress the emotive side of readers in an aesthetic way (Debreceizny, 1997; Albrecht, 1954).

The words of Mwelusi, who at the end of the play is killed by his brother at the instigation of the powerful Chief, are an indictment on poor governance within the larger East African region. His death symbolizes the demise of the efforts of environmental activists in our society. The play within the excerpts manages to put across the dire ecological ruins that national and regional governments bring about. Recklessness, blatant ignorance, power soaking, and truancy especially when exercised by the mighty, will always get the better of good policies and established laws that guard the ecology (Nwagbara, 2010). This partly explains why in Africa, it is difficult for a sitting government official to relinquish power; one can bend the law, dictate, and darken the vision of their subjects, just to protect themselves and what they perceive to be beneficial to them (Kimario, 2013; Bratton and Nicholas, 1994). Those who have proved too parochial and critical have been bribed with plum jobs and political largesse to mutilate their critical voices. Some activists like the late Wangari Maathai had to resign from the government as Assistant Minister for Environment just to keep the fire of environmental activism burning. She realized that what the government preached was the opposite of what it practiced; she could not trade her ecological cause with political appointments. It is paramount that literary authors, critiques and other ecologically minded people within the field of literature discuss these issues.

Momanyi's novel *Nakuruto* is set against a backdrop of environmental activism. In fact, the kernel theme is ecocritical feminism. Ecocritical feminism is a branch of ecocriticism, which deals with women and art in the realm of ecology (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Gaard, 1993; Grazebrook, 2002). It carefully analyses the works authored by women, portrayal of the characters in these works and what kind of ecological issues these women portray in different artistic works (Warren, 2000). *Nakuruto* is a novel, which parodies the life and works of the late Wangari Maathai, especially her commitment to saving Mother Nature. The author uses the main female character Nakuruto to admonish humanity, educate society on climate change and to foster workable solutions to current predicament. Concisely, Nakuruto has seen in real and in dream an environmental change and its effects. For example, she has witnessed a situation in a dream where her society has degenerated from food sufficiency to food insecurity due to ecological destruction. In the same dream, Nakuruto sees her society turn into a drought and famine ravaged. The

social turmoil replaces peace and co-existence that was the landmark in her traditional society. Another important issue that Nakuruto sees in her dream is the destruction of the African indigenous culture of ecological conservancy. The onset of liberalism brought about by colonialism actually ruins this African indigenous culture of conservancy. In her traditional society cutting of trees and exploitation of other ecological elements was a controlled affair but colonialism opens up her society to wanton destruction of nature for capital gains. With the onset of colonialism, her society changes suddenly and rapidly. The once clean water dries up, food sufficiency becomes a myth, and self-governance is subordinate to the colonial master.

Within this novel, several ecological issues are brought to the fore namely, resistance to environmentalism, male chauvinism, complacency and the civic education which empowers the critical mass towards a social revolution. The author falls short of blaming colonialism for the ecological turmoil in the African setting. Ecocriticism makes the issues of the post colony substantive through a composite creation that fuses the reality and fiction. Momanyi's *Nakuruto* treatment of colonialism cannot escape the critic of politics of the ecology. The composite picture painted becomes the vehicle through which the subjugation of humanity becomes inferentially the exploitation of Mother Nature. The perception of social evils of colonialism can be well understood through a metaphor.

The author begins by showing how the ecology was before colonialism. She draws a picture where animals, birds and other creatures co-existed, just like in the Garden of Eden. She narrates:

Chemichemi za maji hayo zilimetameta juani huku ndege wa angani wakifurahia mandhari yake. Alipitishwa kwa kasi juu ya msitu huo ambapo aliweza kuona miti mikuu asiyowahi kuona maishani mwake. Miti hiyo ilisheheni viumbe wa kila aina. Kulikuwa na sokwe-mtu, ngedere, kongoni, twiga, faru, mbogo, tembo, chui, nguruwe mwitu hadi wale wadogo kama ngiri, sungura, nguchiro, nungunungu na hata panya buku [...]Lakini lililomshangaza Nakuruto katika pepo ile ni kwamba hakukuwa na uhasama miongoni mwa viumbe wale. Wanyama hao waliishi pamoja [...] aliwaza huku nguvu hiyo ikimrusha upesi na kumpitisha kwenye jangwa kubwa. Ardhi hii kame haikuwa na miti au mmea wowote. Isitoshe hakukuwa na dalili ya uhai. Ilikuwa imepasukapasuka kutokana na hari iliyokuwa katika sehemu hii ya dunia.

The water springs shone in the sun as the birds enjoyed the beautiful scenario. Within no time, the superpowers lift Nakuruto high up and through the forest; she saw colossal trees never seen in her life. The trees played

host to all kinds of creatures: chimpanzees; giraffes; warthogs; hares; rats; elephants; buffaloes; leopards; porcupines; wild boars; monkeys; wildebeests among other birds [...] but what amazed Nakuruto was the peaceful coexistence in this paradise. As she thought about this paradise, the powers overwhelmed her through a desert. The soil was dry, devoid of any tree or plant. The place was desolate, with no iota of life. The unbearable heat had split the ground into gullies. (MT)

However, in subsequent paragraphs of this novel, the lovely textual picturesque changes and life becomes a struggle for almost everything. Man was striving against himself and animals were striving against other inferior animals. It became a society of boundaries and creature eat creature. She narrates:

Walitisha kutokana na jinsi walivyosimama tayari kumfuma mshale yeyote aliyejaribu kuutisha usalama wao. Alijua silaha hizo ziliashiria uhasamauliowazunguka. Sasa alitambua kuwa alikuwa katika eneo la uadui ulioshamiri miongoni mwa watu hao. Hakuona simba akilisha na kundi la mbuzi au swara kama ilivyokuwa hapo nyuma. Je, sababu ya uhasama na kuwindana huku ni nini?

From the way they postured, it was clear that they would shoot at any enemy who threatened their security. She understood that the weapons represented animosity that reigned within their community. The animosity was even among the wild; the lion did not eat together with antelopes, as was the case in the previous scenes. Her mind was bothered: what was the reason for the animosity [within this community]? (MT)

The strife gathers momentum and due to strained resources, people clear forests for firewood, farming, and other income generating activities. In her journey, Nakuruto meets some women who are carrying loads of firewood, and when she seeks their attention for ecological education, they disparage and despise her efforts especially Bi. Cheusi and mama Bintifundi. Nakuruto becomes an embodiment of dishonor, cynic, prejudice, and public ridicule. It is because of cultural inclinations that several ecofeminists have pointed out in many societies (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Warren, 2000). By using a female character, the author wants us to reexamine our cultural inclinations and to give the woman slots in development agenda. She is effective in her expression because she castigates the very society that has given birth to the woman. Nakuruto's acceptance within the culture that initially rejected her is an indication of the real Kenyan society that accepted Maathai after suffering rejection. The reader is able to draw parallels between the two characters-the literary character and the real character.

The reading of this text demonstrates a clear contextual backdrop to conservation efforts by the Late Wangari Maathai. In this composite creation, she the real Maathai transits into the fictitious ecocritical voice of Nakuruto.

Momanyi the artist thus sublimely gives the feminine a *messianic* voice and a platform paving the way for conservation. However, deconstructionists see the feminine as inward looking and incline to creation and conservation, the *anti Nakurutoists* show a gendered deviation. It stands in contrast to the dictum that 'women create men destroy'<sup>7</sup>. The *anti Nakurutoists* are an ironical manifestation of challenges the environment faces as they become destroyers of their heritage their patriarchal mindset reveals what the feminists critic De Beauvoir's observes that:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as another (Borde and Malovany-Chavellier, 2010)

The 'otherness' of Nakuruto's counterparts is learned and can be unlearned which can be attributed to the intervention of an (other): a patriarch to make them see themselves as dissimilar and driven by base instinct of destruction. Nakuruto nonetheless is indefatigable, she does not lose the fire in her crusade for environmental justice; she marches on, causing a great civil revolution in her society. Everywhere she goes, she encounters mindsets of environmental rote. Nakuruto seems to be driven by the UNFCCC (2009) mantra of collective responsibility. UNFCCC's regulations were based on scientific research and deliberations, yet it did not take into consideration the cultural dynamics in our societies. The novelist is actually telling us that despite the United Nation's efforts to pull humanity together for environmental action, it has not considered cultures that are male chauvinistic. Many efforts to reconcile gender differences are needed from different quotas as we see in the novel. In *Nakuruto*, the crowd eventually takes seriously every word she speaks towards an emancipating comprehensive ecocritical ideology of ecological sustainability. The author simply concurs with Moore (2008) who argues that the relation between women and environment is mutual. When the women suffer under repressive cultures, ecology and its elements also suffer in the same way, under the same culture. The author is successful in telling us that the liberation of women from the repressive cultures is the liberation and restoration of Mother Nature.

Some interesting issues that Momanyi is connecting to climate change and ecological destruction in this novel are corruption and impunity, dependence [and not independence] on government, lack of civic education, capitalism and modern consumer culture, gender politics, social stratification, colonialism and inequity and politics of inequality and poverty in collective resource distribution. These are the deep surface issues Momanyi decries, if the restorative greening culture must of essence take root in the physical as well as the

<sup>7</sup> McGoye Marjorie Oludhe in her Novel *Coming to Birth*. Seen as phallogocentric symbol yet revealing an ecocritical thought.

metaphysical. We see the same in Ojaide's poems (Nwagbara, 2010). Society has no choice but to face the challenges facing the ecosystem. Women according to Momanyi must be involved in solving ecological problems we are experiencing today; they ought not to be alienated based on gender, social class, education, culture, or 'gendered' roles they hold in society. Momanyi is simply reiterating what UNFCCC (2009) scientifically said about leadership and environmental conservation efforts. The foregrounding of ecofeminism is not dealt with as such in *Babu Alipofufuka* (2002) and *Kifo Kisimani* (2001) texts. We believe not because these authors as some critics may argue set to objectify masculinity, but that artist cannot write about everything and everyone. But in the spirit of dialogism<sup>8</sup> they, too have brought an issue on the ecocritical table it can only grow and not reduce

In some of his poems, Kithaka wa Mberia also succinctly tackles environmental issues. He makes it clear that a ruined ecology is in itself a calamity to the whole system of life. In one of his poems *Jinamizi*, Mberia brings up the devastations resulting from drought. He says:

<i>Mazizini na njiani</i>	<i>In the pens and the roads</i>
<i>Yalianguka magombe</i>	<i>Cows collapsed</i>
<i>Kama majani makavu</i>	<i>like dry leaves</i>
<i>Yakianguushwa na upepo</i>	<i>Fallen by the wind</i>
<i>Majira ya mpikutiko [...]</i>	<i>during spring [...]</i>
<i>Walizikwa watoto</i>	<i>Children were buried</i>
<i>Na wazee</i>	<i>and the aged</i>
<i>Na hatimaye simba</i>	<i>and eventually the lions</i>
<i>Ambao kabla ya janga</i>	<i>who before the calamity</i>
<i>Waling'ara kwa afya</i>	<i>Radiated with health</i>
<i>Kupitia ukungu mwekundu</i>	<i>through the red mist</i>
<i>Sauti ya kejeli</i>	<i>A mocking voice</i>
<i>Ilisikika ikiimba</i>	<i>was heard singing</i>
<i>Ndimi Jangwa</i>	<i>it is I the Desert</i>
<i>Niogopewaye na mvua</i>	<i>Most feared by rain</i>
<i>Ndimi Jangwa</i>	<i>it is I the Desert</i>
<i>Ninyonyaye mito</i>	<i>That dries the rivers</i>
<i>Ndimi Jangwa</i>	<i>it is I the Desert</i>
<i>Ninyimaye mayai, maziwa na nyama [...]</i> (uk 55-58) <i>That denies eggs, milk and meat</i>	

This poem exposes an ecological conundrum. Mberia gives a condescending voice to the desert personified with all the destructive powers akin to man. The deserts ability to dry eggs, dry meat, and milk strikes at the core of life itself. It cannot give life because it is not and has none to give; the desert is a symbol of death and destruction. The poet is successful in communicating to us the effects of environmental destruction using the desert as symbol. It makes the reader to sit back and evaluate his ways and how he relates with nature. What the desert does is scary but real. It begins with the death

of domestic animals and wildlife and later makes its way into the human society. The death of wildlife reinforces the composite picture the concrete mutates into the abstract of economic materialism and how the networks of economic undercurrents play out on the global stage. Kenya's economy for instance relies on tourism as well as other African countries. The wildebeest is an ecologically induced tourist activity in the two East African countries Tanzania and Kenya. The author seems to allude to the fact that any threat to this ecological balance has economic ramifications. The vulnerable in the society especially the children and the old do not survive hunger and drought due to malnourished and weakened immune system, these vulnerable groups eventually succumb to starvation. Desome (2008) has mentioned some of these effects when he discusses the causes and effects of climate change. The very drought and famine that ruins us begins to mock humanity telling us "Ndimi Jangwa/Ninyimaye mayai, maziwa na nyama (It's me the Desert/that denies the eggs, milk, and meat)". This poem seems to be in dialogue with Said Mohamed Ahmed's excerpt in the earlier citation and Momanyi's well-crafted novel Nakuruto. Related to this theme of implications of environmental destruction on society, his other poem *Bwawa la Ithanje* seems to belabor the same point. In the poem, the poet begs Ithanje Dam not to "die"

<i>La! Usife! Ithanje usife!</i>	<i>No! Die not! Ithanje do not die!</i>
<i>Kwani kifo chako</i>	<i>your death</i>
<i>Hakitakuwa chako pekee</i>	<i>will not be yours alone</i>
<i>Kitakuwa cha familia kubwa [...]</i> (uk.69) <i>it will be the death of a mammoth [...]</i> [MT]	

The poet uses an apostrophe, which characterizes the vertical social relationships. The Dam is superior and the persona supplicating makes a desperate plea of not only his life but for humanity. It is clear that the poet understands the saying that water is life. Where there is no water, people migrate in search of this precious commodity. In extreme cases of drought and famine in our African societies, we have had tragic incidences where people have succumbed to water related diseases. Water in many parts of Africa is still a thorny issue that pricks the leadership of Africa. Scientific research shows that water scarcity is an issue that will affect most of African nations as climate continues to change (UNESCO, 2003; Bates et al., 2008). Coupled with climate change, [clean] water may turn out to be the most sought after commodity especially in urban, peri-urban, and dry areas of African societies (OECD, 2012). Pastoralist communities bordering each other have had issues with boreholes and some even going to the extent of stoking animosity with their neighbors due to water scarcity. Therefore, with prolonged droughts due to climate change, seasonal water sources serving many communities are bound to dry. Even though the poet may not be as detailed and scientific as UNESCO and OECD, nonetheless he still manages to catch the attention of the

<sup>8</sup> Dialogism was used by Michael Bakhtin, the Russian theorist who claimed that any sort of utterance is a contribution to a continuing human dialogue.

readers. Just like Ojaide in Nwagbara (2010) Mberia' poetry is still a functional, aesthetic, and ideological tool for environmental agitation.

## CONCLUSION

Using prose, drama, and poetry the paper has attempted to demonstrate the verisimilitude in Kiswahili literature as it thematises climate change and ecological destruction. They may not do it like the pure scientists, policy makers in government and other formal agencies as we have realized but they will write art that reflects the true picture of environmental degradation in society. The literary language used is powerful enough to appeal to the audience and to awaken them into environmental action. The authors whose works we have analyzed have touched on various issues that affect and contribute to environmental degradation. Some of these issues include poor governance, logging of forests for commercial gains, leadership-supported encroachment on lands set apart as ecologically sensitive areas and the role of women in environmental conservation. Within these literary works, the authors are also concerned with the current and future effects of destroyed ecosystem. They have highlighted that the society cannot practice agriculture due to droughts, deaths of humanity and wildlife shall be common if we ruin our ecology and more so there shall be movement of human capital to countries less affected with climate change. The authors however do not stop at pointing out the problems but they have suggested solutions. They encourage the leadership to consider the matter and to push for active participatory role of women in climate change management and education and the general collective responsibility towards alleviating the problems. Momanyi has pointed towards this issue of women liberation and involvement in matters affecting their community. Her view stems from the activism of the late Wangari Maathai, a Nobel Laureate whose environmental efforts to save forests and the ecosystem from complete destruction have reverberated globally. This analysis brings another aperture of viewing ecology and ecological destruction; an aperture that makes it easy for Kiswahili literature students and global polity to comprehend climate issues and how they affect their literature, culture and how best they can get themselves involved. We have seen the same issues being discussed by Nigerian critique, Nwagbara. This shows that indeed the issues of environmental destruction are the same all over-be it social and political leadership in environmental management or the role of ruling class in undermining environmental efforts.

In this conclusion, we can concur with Glotfelty and Fromm that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact. This means that literature can play an important part in environmental protection by

creating awareness on some of man's destructive activities to the environment while at the same time encouraging sustainable nature-friendly activities.

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