

Chenjerai Hove's Environmental Sensibilities: Ecocritical Readings of *Bones* (1988) and *Ancestors* (1996)

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Abstract

*The study explores the sensibilities of Chenjerai Hove to the ecological environment in his writings *Bones* (1988) and *Ancestors* (1993). This is done through an analysis of the representations of the environment in both works of fiction. The study finds its gap from other critics who have studied Hove-(Veit-Wild(1992); Engelke(1998); Zhuwarara (2001); Primorac (2006) in that while their main focus was on the land issue in these works and on the war of liberation, this study looks at his (Hove) representation of the ecological environment as custodian of human, animal as well as plant life and how these work together both positively and negatively as depicted by Hove. The theory that informs this study is ecocriticism which is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment.*

Keywords: Environment, Ecocriticism, African, Metaphysics, Representation

Introduction

In Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, works on the relationship between literature and the environment are rather scarce. The main reason for this scarcity is the fact that critics of Zimbabwean literature (Veit-Wild(1992);Zhuwarara(2001);Primorac(2006)) have been exploring issues to do with colonialism and the liberation struggles that followed, gender issues as well as the disillusionment that followed the attainment of independence in most African nations. These themes, though important, tended to push analyses of the representations of the environment in African novels, poetry and drama to the margins of critical discourse.

Also in Africa, the loss of African freedom was linked to the loss of land; hence the land issue has tended to be directly linked with metaphors of nationalism and not with other environmental phenomena. Where the environment is considered, it is depicted as an exploitable commodity for profit, oftentimes leading to environmental degradation. The view of land as space for cultural and personal memory has in other cases, led to the romanticisation of the environment and not focusing on balancing the ecosystem for society's benefit.

The paucity of critical works on ecocriticism in Africa, and Zimbabwe in particular does not mean, however that fiction writers have not been environmentally conscious in their writings. In Zimbabwe Hove in the novels *Bones* (1988) and *Ancestors* (1993), for example links the "geographical context of the novels clearly to the marginalized nature of their characters" (Bowers,2004:270).In this sense fiction merges environment and society for the formation of identities.

Background to the Study

Environmental issues such as climate change, deforestation, land degradation and issues to do with endangered species are dominating world agendas in the media-both print and electronic as well as other foras of discussion. Human as well as animal survival is dependent upon a sound environmental situation; as such world leaders and stakeholders have, over the years, upheld enviromental issues. In the print media, however, there's a gap in literary texts, especially the fiction, though the impact of nature on humanity is so intense that writers often mythologise and sexualise nature, as will be revealed in this study.

Nature writing or the study of the representations of nature by literary artists began as an academic discipline in Britain and the United States in the 1960s and gained momentum in the late 1990s.

Ecocriticism came into being in response to the late 20th Century recognition of an environmental crisis taking the form of a powerful threat to health and even the existence of nature due mainly to global industrialisation. It is a new discipline that has been defined as “study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”(Glotfelty in Glotfelty and Fromm 1996:vii). As a result, there is not much scholarship on it in terms of research. Rueckert (1978) may have been the first person to use the term ‘Ecocriticism’ in 1978 with a focus on the “application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature”(Glotfelty and Fromm,1996:xvii).In Africa there is still scant scholarship on ecocriticism despite the fact that the continent maybe one of the most areas endangered by the environmental changes. Most of the ‘scant’ works are concentrated in Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa. These, however possess no formal academic association and no dedicated ‘local’ journal. In South Africa however, there has been an annual “Literature and Ecology Colloquium” since 2004 as a sign of commitment to the cause and need for more people to join in. The colloquium published the collection of essays on African (South) ecocriticism in 2008 edited by Professor Dan Wyllie. This can be read as a response to a call by Glotfelty (1996: xxi) in which she questions “where are the other voices?”

The natural world makes its presence felt in ways that includes the aesthetics of landscapes- the impact of seasonal agriculture –social class, the ownership of domestic animals and the impact of weather patterns. Thus this study aims to show that the environment has a role to play in African lives - Zimbabwean folk tales, myths, legends and animal fables, are attempts to provide an explanation of the nature of the African people’s relationship to and with their environment. It is during the process of engaging with, reconciling with and struggling against nature that people make stories.

Statement of the Problem

Research on environmental issues in Zimbabwe in particular has focused largely on deforestation, land use and water management (Moore (1998), Whitlow (1980), Muzondidya (2007),Dearn(2011)). Of late most research has shifted to mining activities and their impact on the environment; take Chiyadzwa Diamond and Marange black granite mining for instance, as well as issues of poaching and the protection of the endangered species. The land redistribution programme has also received attention, Ludwig (1992),Moyo(1997),Thomas (2003). Although many researchers have written on the above issues, they have not really focused on representations of nature and the impact of some human activities on the environment as depicted in the novels under study. This spurs the researcher to interrogate the representation of the relationships between human beings and the environment/nature in the novels as well as the impact of certain human activities on the environment be it the land, water, the animals, the atmosphere.

Literature Review

For a full understanding of the concept of the relationship between literature and the environment the researcher feels it is imperative to briefly look at a few of the various works that have been done on the topic outside Africa and in Africa before looking at what has been done in Zimbabwe.

Ecocritical Works from Outside Africa

White (1996) critique of Meeker’s (1972) novel can be seen as one of the few precursors of Ecocriticism. White contends that Meeker’s (1972) novel is a classic tragedy that reinforces the anthropocentric “assumption that nature exists for the benefit of mankind , the belief that morality transcends natural limitations and humanism’s insistence on the supreme importance of the individual”(1996:6). The assessment by White is important for nature oriented criticism in as far as it advances ecocriticism (nature-centredness) but White fails to acknowledge the fact that nature and humanity complement each other. All the same the critique is hailed for advocating the study of the relationship between literature and the environment.

It is uplifting to note that Ecocriticism has found footing even in theatre- May(1999) did a review of Schenckan’s play “The Kentucky Cycle” which examines the relationship between the people of Kentucky and the land from which they have drawn profit , spilled each other’s blood and in which they have buried both enemy and kin. May hails the play for being the first American play to stage the complex interdependency between capitalism and environmental crisis. The critique can also be hailed for its lack of bias in exposing America as the home of capitalism which in most cases has sanctioned activities that have been harmful to the environment.

On fiction Cohen (2004) looks at Carson (1962), Marx (1964), Meeker (1972) and Bate(2000)'s novels and the main idea derived from this study is the possibility for humans to listen to the environment and vice versa. Other Ecocritics who review novels are Fenton (2008) who reviews Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and De Bruyn (2010)'s ecological analysis of McCarthy's (2006) *The Road*. Interestingly, Burberry (2012) extends Ecocriticism to the Bible in what he calls 'the consonance of Ecocriticism and Christianity'. Burberry (2012) brings to attention the fact that the first chapters of Genesis have been blamed as the root causes of Western technological domination basing on God's instruction to man "to have dominion over all the earth"(Genesis 2). Burberry goes on to say that Bible narratives such as creation and incarnation can inculcate the appreciation of nature but it is also full of stories of divine acts that can be seen as ecocide-for example later in Genesis "the deluge drowns all humans, excepting Noah and his family as well as every bird, beast, insect not on board the ark and undoubtedly a vast number of plants and trees as well (though not mentioned)"(2012:195). Burberry goes on to show many instances in which the Bible and Ecocriticism intersect. These examples serve to show just how advanced other nations (the United States of America to be precise) have gone in the study of the relationship between literature and the environment.

Africa and Ecocriticism

In Africa Mwangi (2004) in a rather hurried essay, probably because he looks at too many issues at the same time- novels, poetry and general events, acknowledges the need for scholars to appreciate the relationship between literature and the environment. Mwangi first makes a review of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and hails it as a good attempt at "reversing Conrad's male characters' view of the African forest as a site of death". He (Mwangi) hails Achebe for capturing the richness of African village life with a self-sustaining forest which has 'almost everything that the west, in its arrogance, claims to have come to introduce'. He then, in passing, looks at Ngugi's descriptions of the topographies of the Mukuyu and Kameno ridges in *The River Between*. Mwangi(2004) then goes a bit deeper in his analysis of Zimbabwe's Christina Rungano's poetry and acknowledges the fact that Rungano's verse is loaded with images of the life-giving powers of nature which intersect with the resilience of the African woman to widen human possibilities. He does justice by looking at poems like 'A Storm is Brewing', 'After the Rain', 'This Morning', to mention but a few. This analysis of poetry is hailed as excellent ecocritical work, the main shortfall being that it has not been exhaustive enough and of course also that it is on poetry and not prose.

Addison (2007) makes a review of a number of essays on ecocriticism by South African critics. The review on Stiebel's "'The thirst for the wilderness was upon me'": *Africa as wilderness in Rider Haggard's African Romances*' shows that the article is about colonial texts and shows how African nature is commodified for the consumption of the coloniser or adventurer back home in Britain. Addison argues that the power relations between Haggard (and his male English protagonists) and wild African nature are not as simple as the stereotype would suggest. Addison also does a review of Glenn's '*Francois Levallant and the mapping of Southern Africa*' and reveals that the article emphasizes the ability of maps to assert power over wilderness as it was compiled by the French explorer Levallant and given to King Louis XVI to pique his interests in hunting and expanding France's sphere of influence in Africa. The map is seen to be possessing imaginative powers over and above its colonizing potential- it is a multi-media artefact including narrative, representation of space and bio-geography. Addison also looks at articles by Gane, Mthathiwa and Wylie. What has emerged is that these articles are on forests only yet the environment covers a whole lot more and being short articles, they are also not exhaustive though they are a 'shot in the arm' for African Ecocriticism.

Ecocritical works in Zimbabwe

Studies on Ecocriticism in Zimbabwe are still very thin. If one is to look at Zimbabwe's 'main' literary critics of literature in English- Zimunya(1982), Veit-Wild (1992), Zhuwarara (2001) and Primorac (2006) to mention but a few, one will realise that most of their work has been anthropocentric, that is, human-centred.

Zhuwarara (2001) looks at Mungoshi (1972, 1981) and other authors while Primorac(2006) looks at Chipamaunga(1983) , Mutasa(1985) , Hove (1988,1996) Chinodya (1989) , Kanengoni (1997) and Vera (1994) in all these the critics' focus is on human-social , economic and political experiences with superficial references to the authors' environmental sensibilities. This researcher will re-tread the footsteps of Zhuwarara(2001) and Primorac (2006) but focussing on the authors' representations of the environment.

Again much work on ecocriticism in Zimbabwe has been on poetry as in Mthatiwa's (2007) "*Human-animal relationships and ecocritical study of the representation of animals in poetry from Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa*" in which he looks at the ways in which the metaphors generated in relation to animals influence the way they are treated by humans as well as showing that in selected poetry animals occupy important positions in terms of social, psychological, political and cultural issues. The study is credited for highlighting that studying animal representations in poetry reveals a range of ecological sensibilities as well as the limits of these. Again a major shortfall is that this is not exhaustive and it is also on poetry.

Wylie, in an article titled "*Mind has mountains; poetry and ecology in eastern Zimbabwe*" in Muponde and Primorac (2005) has looked at A.C. Hodza and G Fortune's '*Shona Praise Poetry*' , Zimunya's *Thought Tracks*"(1982b) and Brettell's 1994 selection of poems.

Again these works's human geographic or anthropological bias remains to be linked to, and amplified by literary and related aesthetics. As Wylie (2005; 48) asserts;

An ecologically sensitive literary criticism thus goes beyond merely noting the presence of the natural in a body of literature, whether as historical evidence, setting or symbol, and beyond merely designating poet (*novelist*) X and Y a 'nature poet' (*novelist*) or not.

It would attempt to place that literature within the ecosystems of the time, as this study will do in looking at the various works by Zimbabwean prose writers.

Vambe and Khan (2009) is an ecocritical analysis of the Zimbabwe National Anthem "One of the distinctive features of 'Simudzai Mureza weZimbabwe' is its conscious evocation of the natural flora and fauna of Zimbabwe'. Thus they (Vambe and Khan) dissect the Zimbabwe National Anthem from the name Zimbabwe itself "the house of stone" to the anthem's reference to 'rain' ('mvura ngainaye minda ipe mbesa') to crop production due to the abundant rain. What is most striking about this article is the importance they place on the land which is the important resource in the lives of Africans. The analysis is hailed for its exhaustive handling of the ecocritical implications of the Zimbabwe National Anthem and its opening of unexplored avenues in Zimbabwe's literary field. It is , however , not a prose analysis and it also goes beyond ecocriticism as it also looks at the Anthem as a political biography of the country.

Muchemwa (2010) studied new and old fictions with particular emphasis on rearranging geographies of urban space identities in post 2006 Zimbabwean fiction. The focus of this study is on the Zimbabwean post colony as it places emphasis almost entirely on limitations for authors who purport to write about Zimbabwe yet they do not live in Zimbabwe. It however, alludes to other issues such as violence – state violence in selected novels on the urban space. Thus from the literature reviewed on Zimbabwe it is clear that none is on the representation of the environment in novels as this study proposes to do.

The publication of the book *Ecocritical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes* (2013) is commendable. Poetry, fiction and film are accounted for. Be that as it may, this one publication is not exhaustive of the rich reservoirs of African (and Zimbabwean) literature. Zimbabwe as a country is also represented in fiction and film(Chapter 18 by Urther Rwafa on the Zimbabwean war film *Flame*). Notable is the first chapter which features analysis of Mungoshi(1972) and Chinodya(1989) by Maurice T Vambe. Vambe, however, concentrates on the land as the environment, stifling other environmental features as the vegetation and other landforms and how these affect and are affected by human beings as this is the prerogative of ecocriticism-the relationship between the physical environment and human beings. Thus this paper finds a gap in this fact that Vambe's (2013) analysis portrays the land as the only environmental feature. The publication of the above (2013) is a milestone for African Ecocriticism. However, Zimbabwe needs its own collection as it is a very rich repository of literary works.

Theoretical Framework

The key theory that informs this study is Ecocriticism. Theories are proposed explanations as to why certain patterns of events occur as they do. Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) assert that theories are explanations constructed by human beings and by extensions which are virtually tentative. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and its relationship to the environment, to consider environmental situations and think of possible solutions for correction of the contemporary environmental situations. Glotfelty's (1996:xvii) working definition of ecocriticism is that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". Buell (1998:639) defines ecocriticism "as(a)study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in the spirit of commitment to environmental praxis". Thus roughly defined Ecocriticism is concerned with environmental representations in literature. Rueckert may have been the first person to use the term "ecocriticism" in 1978 when he published an essay "*Literature and ecology:An experiment in ecocriticism*". Gomides (2006) has offered an operational definition that is broad and says Ecocriticism is ; 'the field of enquiry that analyses and promotes works of art and raises moral questions about human interactions with nature while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations"(p16).All the above definitions have one focus –literature and the environment and thus the researcher finds anchorage in the theory.

Ecocriticism also tries , according to Wylie in Muponde and Primorac (2005) to unearth from behind the omissions and rifts of the work itself , evidence of unspoken or recognized ecological dynamics not in a merely historicist or scientific mode , but as a means of explaining the cultural values , limitations and effects of the work's aesthetic itself. Ecocritics ask the following questions " How is nature represented in this sonnet?" , " What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this novel?" , " Are the values expressed in this novel or play consistent with ecological wisdom" , the above goes hand in hand with this study's goals.

Ecocriticism has borrowed methodologies and theoretically informed approaches liberally from other fields of literary, social and scientific study. This makes it too broad and at times confusing but this study shall, however, look at the literary field exhuming the presence of the natural world in works which do not explicitly feature "ecology" or the ecological crisis as such. Another weakness of ecocriticism is that as Cohen (2004) observes it has a praise-song school of criticism. All ecocritics share an environmentalist motivation of some sort whereas the majority are "nature endorsing"as Soper puts it in,(1998),some are " nature skeptical". This brings to the fore the problem of the way nature has been used to legitimize gender, sexual and racial norms. Estok (2001) has noted , however ,that Ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debates notwithstanding , firstly by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study and secondly by its commitment to making connections.

Bones (1988) and the Environment

The novel *Bones* (1988) presents Hove's ecological sensitivity at its highest level from the very first pages as he demonstrates the inseparability of the African and his environment. The main theme in the novel is that of land alienation of the blacks stemming from the Land Apportionment Act of 1931. After the coming of the whiteman to Zimbabwe, Africans (Zimbabweans) lost their fertile ancestral lands after the 1893 Anglo- Ndebele war. This war culminated in the creation of the first native reserves of Gwaai and Shangani in 1894. These reserves were characterised by poor, sandy soil and poor rainfall patterns, This forced many blacks to flock into white owned farms to find jobs to be able to sustain their families .The situation was worsened by the Land Appointment Act of 1931 which saw the whole country being divided into Native areas, White areas, Native purchase areas as well as Undesignated areas.

The native areas, like the first African reserves were unfit for human settlement "the reserves are not even good for donkeys to live on "(*Bones*, 1988:20) thus Murume (Marita's husband) declares that, "I am not going to that reserve where dogs and people eat from one plate" (*Bones*, 1988:20). Thus this is the opening of Hove (1988). The results of the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 are visible through the Africans working at Manyepo's (a white farmer given a Shona nickname) farm because they have no other choice as staying in the Africans' designated reserves is tantamount to suicide. Thus land alienation is at the centre of Hove's (1988) novel.

Much as the land issue which has been commented on (Veit-Wild 1992,1993, Zhuwarara 1996,Engelke 1998,Primorac 2006) to mention just a few, is the central theme of the novel, Hove demonstrates ecological sensitivity through giving voice to other environmental phenomena such as trees, mountains rivers, animals etc besides the land as it is this paper's mandate to establish.

The environmental imagery used by Hove stretches from human beings to animals to landforms in the first chapter of the novel *Bones* (1988). He (Hove) uses the mother earth image in describing Marita's failure to conceive "the man (Murume- Marita's husband) planted his seed in me but the soil inside me did not make it grow to a plant" (*Bones*,1988:28). Thus the woman's (Marita's) womb is given an earthly image as an incubator of seeds which will grow into plants (children). This poetic language of Hove is not surprising and it runs throughout his novels *Bones* (1988) and *Ancestors* (1993). It is not surprising as he is credited with a number of poetry anthologies --*Up in Arms* (1982),*Red Hills of Home* (1985), *Rainbows in the Dust* (1998) and *Blind Moon* (2003).

The mother earth image is also symbolic of the oneness of the Africans and their land as its loss is not just about losing an agricultural base. The African is one with land "she (Marita), is part of Manyepo's soil. She seems to be talking with the soil... (p15)

In Hove (1988) the environment- rivers, mountains, forests, are habitat to animals and these serve both positive and negative purposes in human lives. Animal activity signals changes in seasons/ the weather as exemplified, "the rains are near. Can you not see the birds flying in circles up there in the sky? When you see ants moving in a long row like this, that is rain near us"(p.18).

The landforms are also natural treasures and historical repositories as one is instructed to "let your words be like mountains which I found the same age when I was born and still are full of power, standing there all the time doing the same things" (p.36). The forest is the home of the freedom fighters as chapter 6 of the novel is dedicated to their activities .The forest thus becomes a strong weapon in the war of liberation that is 'hinted at ' in the novel. Hence a very useful environmental phenomena in the lives of blacks.

Animal imagery is also used to portray the negative as when Marita is warned not to go to the city. "How could you go to the forest of lions alone Marita?" (p.19). The city is seen as a lion, a devourer of the innocent. It is also seen as a scary and unfriendly forest. The forest thus plays a dual role,both positive and negative.

Chapter seven, the same as chapter eleven, is introduced by a picture of a vulture, a symbol of death. Death has come to the Africans through land alienation which has been likened to "disease (that) comes like a swarm of locusts covering the trees breaking the branches with their weight"(p.51).Locusts are thus portrayed as destructive forces-the whites who came to conquer and to destroy black lives.

The rise of nationalism is also marked by ecological undertones, "in my sleep I saw many clouds drifting from the place of the sunset to the place of the sunrise "(p.52).It is as if the environment is one with the people as "mothers, children, trees, insects, birds, animals they all joined in the war songs on the hills"(p52).

Each chapter in *Bones* (1988) is introduced by some ecological phenomena, notably chapter seven with a picture of a vulture; chapter ten a picture of an emaciated tree, devoid of leaves, chapter eleven the picture of a vulture with a worm on its mouth, chapter twelve ends with the picture of dying plants as well as chapter thirteen which ends with the picture of an emaciated plant. Chapter fourteen is introduced by the picture of an almost leafless tree and it appears to be windy. The same picture is found on pages six, sixty six, and one hundred and two. The vulture is symbolic of the death that surrounds the people as the war of liberation rages on, albeit silently in Hove (1988) as well as signalling the deaths of Marita and the Unknown Woman .The emaciated tree devoid of leaves is representative of the hunger and dryness in the Native reserves.

Hove (1988) touches on all aspects of the environment- negative and positive. When things are going well nature celebrates- "Marita, your son has come back...now that he is here, all the insects can sing their songs and run after the scent of the flowers"(p110).The return of Marita's son marks the attainment of Zimbabwe's independence and the euphoria that gripped the country as symbolised by the 'celebrating 'insects .The new independence is referred to as "The young sun"(p111). The sun brings warmth, radiance-even though there are still some "bones scattered over the plains",(p111).

Bones (1988) thus is a skilful portrayal of the oneness of the African (Zimbabwean) and his land. When the land suffers, the Zimbabwean suffers. When it celebrates, the African (Zimbabwean) celebrates. The same is true of *Ancestors* (1996).

Ancestors-A Brief Background

Ancestors (1993), like *Bones* (1988) has among many other themes –migration, oppression of women the issue of missionaries and the land issue at the centre. It is loss of land which most critics (Primorac 2006, Abbott and Wallace 2003, Engelke, 1998) have focused on. This researcher however, shall look at the land issue in *Ancestors* (1993) simply as the foundation of Hove's excellent ecological sensibilities. This will be done through analysis of how the ecological environment and environmental phenomena is portrayed in Hove's novel

There are panoramic descriptions of the rural landscape and the sensibilities to an African countryside in *Ancestors*. *Ancestors* is characterised by various strands of narrative in one narrative. In the first strand- 1850-entitled 'Birth of a Deaf and Dumb child', Mucha the narrator tells his story and the story of his family as it moves from the Tribal Trust Land (TTLs) to the Native Purchase Areas. Again land is at the centre of the novel. Mucha's family is one of the few African families that were able to earn enough in the TTLs to be able to purchase better land in the Native Purchase areas. This paper, however, also looks at other environmental phenomena besides the land. The land, however, is important as all the other landforms-vegetation, water sources, animals and humans depend on and live on the land.

The migration of Mucha's family from the unnamed Tribal Trust Land to the Native Purchase area of Gotami puts into the limelight part of the Rhodesian Land Tenure System. Hove dramatises that exercise casually but illuminating very typical images of land use and governance of land in Rhodesia.

The Land Tenure Act of 1930 excluded Africans from about half of the country's land surface area which made up the best family lands. Native reserves covered about 29 million acres, Native purchase areas 8 million acres, European areas 49 million acres, forests 3 million acres and Undesignated areas covered about 6 million acres. Blacks then were 1, 1 million in number compared to 50 000 whites (Ranger (1985). The glaring disparities bear testimony to the unfairness of the colonial land policies in Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia). In Hove (1996) a whiteman arrives in the land of Gotami with this pronouncement to the chief: "This land no longer belongs to you. By next week when the moon shines, your people and you must move beyond those smoke blue hills in the distance"(p.39). No considerations were made about the link between the Africans and their ancestors who were buried in the land they had to leave or of where exactly they had to go. They were just to move 'beyond those smoke blue hills'.

Mucha's village, like the villages in *Bones* (1988) was "not even good enough for donkeys to live in" it was a zone where "people and dogs eat from one plate". In contrast the European areas are in very fertile territories that received heavy rains and are most suitable for all types of commercial farming activities. A situation reminiscent of Mungoshi's (1972) Hampshire Estates versus Manyene Tribal Trustlands. This is also seen in *Bones* where Manyepo's fields, according to Chisaga the cook were "stretching forever as if they were the sky "(p.33). It is also the same scenario in Mungoshi (1972) where "the rolling ranches of the Hampshire Estates" versus the dry "nothing between here and there" lands of Manyene Tribal Trust Lands which capture Lucifer's attention. Land thus becomes the bedrock upon which many environmental activities are based as will be seen in the next section.

Human-Environmental Connections in Ancestors

Hove's environmental sensibility in this novel starts from the cover. A picture of two trees on a piece of dry land adorns the cover. This picture is evidence of a country where life is no longer rosy for the African. The illustration of dry land and only two trees attests to deforestation and poor rainfall patterns in African areas. This then moves into the novel in a double narrative that goes 'carelessly' across the ages and generations from 1850 to 1989 to 1960 to 1920 then to 1970...creating a complex maze. It is in this complex maze whose main focus is on land, women's issues etc and in language that has very strong echoes to the Shona language (literal translation from Shona to English most times) that Hove displays an astonishing sensitivity to human-animal-environmental relationships. Part one of the novel-'The hearer hears of Fathers' has a kaleidoscope of human-animal-vegetative meanderings and inter-connections.

The birth of a deaf and dumb child is heralded by the "burning of leaves and roots to show all was not well "(Hove, 1996:9). Thus the medicinal purpose of trees is brought out.

Ancestors reveals the fact that the non-human world provides the material support base for the human world in so many ways. The environment thus becomes part of the cultural construction of the text. This non-human world, however, with land as the base, has been so violated that it reacts both positively and negatively as will be seen.

In *Ancestors* disruption of the landscape is tied to political corruption (Slaymaker, 2007) and the 1931 Land Apportionment Act leads to more deforestation and devastation of the environment. This scenario links with the Land Development Officer's 'belly of the purse' doctrine which is simply exploitation of the land for money. This rubs off on Mucha's father who now feels a detachment from the soil in the Tribal Trust Lands which is no longer profitable:

In the field he steps on the soil he has grown to love for so many Years. He now feels detachment from the soil under his feet. It is No longer an intimate piece of earth as it was from the time of his Birth. He now despises it like an unwanted child... 'pitiful sand, sand Sand...an ocean of sand without end (*Ancestors*, p22.)

The fact that the soil in the Native areas is just 'an endless ocean of sand' is a direct result of the crooked colonial land policies that saw Africans being crowded in small pieces of land with poor rainfall, rocky and sandy soils which are unfavourable to farming activities-both for subsistence and for commercial purposes. African efforts to eke out a living from such soils marks dramatic depletion of natural resources (land, water, forests etc) with no effort to replenish them. This brews a deep revulsion against such unprofitable land in Mucha's father who is said to have been "drowned by the river of the Whiteman's religion" (p23) so much so that he subscribes to the LDO's 'belly of the purse' doctrine and saves enough money to be one of the few Africans to purchase land in the Native Purchase Areas (Gotami) and move away from the 'pitiful sand'. It is evident thus, that in some cases those characters who contribute to the environment's sustenance on one hand deplete it on the other either by commission or omission. The whiteman, through the LDO, preach against soil erosion and other evils against the soil, yet through their failure to distribute soil equitably between whites and blacks contribute to its depletion as overcrowding in native areas results in rampant soil erosion and other disasters.

The land, which is the bedrock of the environment, is home to a plethora of flora and fauna. Each of these is revered for various purposes in the lives of the African people as revealed in Hove (1996). Birds become a source of comfort "Birds, those wild birds which spill music into our hearts, soothing us when burdens of the heart outweigh our souls" (p12). The animals (birds in particular) also work hand in glove with weather patterns as it is said of 'Haya the rain bird' "The song of this bird is the song of the rains" (p56). When humans hear the sound of this bird they start preparing their fields and other necessities for the planting season. It is this comfort, this harmony between man and the other worlds that the coming of the whiteman disrupted as: "the boom booms of their guns were heard as they hunted lions and elephants, killing the giant animals as if they were powerless rats, one after another" (p19). Thus, because of man's sense of capitalist consumerism, the environment and its non-human inhabitants suffer. Humans (in this case the coloniser) continue to reduce the environment to a mere item of exploitation.

The natural world in the African set up (*Ancestors*) however, does not take all the abuse by the capitalists lying down. It reacts in astounding ways. A case in point is when the narrator says: "If you despise Gotami and defile his people's soil because of their backwardness, if you insult their trees and hills, their animals, the honey bird too, gets angry and lead you to a cave where an angry black mamba waits for you with its sharp fangs" (p). African metaphysics thus come into play. The forest that can be a source of comfort and protection at one time, can become harsh and inhabitable if mistreated. The environment is thus not docile, it fights back! The hills and the rivers can also harbour witches and hyenas as well as the various birds like 'nhengure' also the vultures like in *Bones* (1988).

Each chapter in *Ancestors* has a number of segments and each is divided by a picture of three leaves-it is an environmentally sensitive novel, the environment, the basis of African livelihood. Three leaves mark the end of the novel.

Conclusion

What has emerged in Hove (1988) and (1996) is the fact that literature, even though critics may not and have not been paying particular attention to the environmental factors in many cases, is not and cannot be divorced from the environment. Hove's writings (1988, 1996) are applauded for paying heed to the ecological environment in minute detail. Hove does not 'talk' about the land in isolation. He pays attention to the flora and fauna that lives on and depends on the land for survival and how the land and these in turn support and shape human existence.

Bones (1988) is a novel that articulates the results of the colonial land policies that result in many Africans-the likes of Marita having to work for exploitative white farmers-Manyepo. *Ancestors* (1996) is mainly about a wronged ancestor, yet in articulating all this, Hove addresses the land issue and its consequences on the land's dependants. Hove excellently captures these burning issues.

Recommendations

What has emerged is the fact that there is still need for more scholarship on literature and the environment even though this paper and the book edited by Okuyade (2013) are very welcome moves towards an eco-friendly universe.

There is also need for every African (Zimbabwean) to work tirelessly for the maintenance and sustenance of the environment.

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