

When Ecocriticism and Rhetoric Meet: Environmental Persuasion in *Terrorists of The Aberdare*

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Summary

This article demonstrates the criticism of eco-activist literature through rhetoric theory by experimenting with such a method in an analysis of Nganga Mbugua's *Terrorists of the Aberdare* (2009). In this work, I take eco-criticism to mean the ecologically informed criticism of literary works, and ecocriticism as an umbrella term generally concerned with humanities-based studies of environmental representation. I argue that since eco-criticism reads eco-activist literature as a tool of influencing audiences concerning human relations with the nonhuman, eco-criticism can incorporate rhetoric theory as a methodological support for textual analysis, and a step towards theorising literary eco-activism. I assert that a theory of persuasion, if employed in literary analysis, can enrich interpretation and eventually enable a set of eco-persuasive literary devices to emerge in line with the political purpose of ecocriticism. The first part of the article discusses eco-literary activism as a point of convergence between the two fields, ecocriticism and rhetoric, while the second part demonstrates how a rhetorical literary analysis may proceed, pointing out the possible benefits of such a method.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel demonstreer die kritiek van eko-aktiwis literatuur deur retoriese teorie, en eksperimenteer voorts met sodanige metode in 'n ontleding van Nganga Mbugua se *Terrorists of the Aberdare* (2009). In hierdie studie gebruik ek "eko-kritiek" vir die ekologiesgefundeerde kritiek van literêre werke, en "ekokritiek" die oorkoepelende term vir alle geesteswetenskaplike studies van omgewingsuitbeelding. Ek argumenteer dat aangesien eko-kritiek letterkunde as 'n instrument beskou om lesers se opvatting oor die verhouding tussen die mens en die nie-mens te beïnvloed, eko-kritiek retoriese teorie kan inkorporeer as metodologiese steunmiddel vir die ontleding van tekste en 'n treë nader gee aan die teoretisering van literêre eko-aktiwisme. Ek voer aan dat die retorieka as 'n oorredingsteorie, indien dit in literêre ontleding gebruik word, interpretasie kan verryk en uiteindelik 'n stel eko-oorredende literêre tegnieke kan voortbring in ooreenstemming met die politieke oogmerk van die ekokritiek. Die eerste deel van die artikel bespreek eko-literêre aktiwisme as 'n punt van konvergensie tussen die twee velde, eko-kritiek en die retorika, terwyl die tweede deel demonstreer hoe retoriese literêre ontleding aangepak kan word, met verwysing na die moontlike voordele van sodanige metode.

Introduction

Environmentally sensitive literary criticism is interested in the different ways in which works inform, and in turn are informed by particular socio-environmental issues in their respective settings. This commitment to contemporary relevancy draws environmental literature parallel to environmental activism. Moreover, it seems generally accepted that eco-activism is not only, in Serpil Oppermann's words, "the moral impetus behind eco-criticism" (2014: 305) but that ecocriticism is actually activist (Estok 2009: 205). It constitutes a situation when: "something is shared with other people that may evoke change". Estok explains that activism constitutes "things that seek to change the status quo" (2014: 267), not limited to action, but including attitude. This broad definition enables the conception of a textual mode of activism which in turn requires special tools of analysis. In my observation, much work in ecocritical scholarship has been engaged with literary works either as representations of environmental activism, or as textual modes of activism. However, the debate has been dominated by "what the objects of study should be, rather than being about how these objects ought to be studied" (Murphy 2014: 292). Against this backdrop, this work concerns itself with how an eco-activist text may be studied.

The notion of textual activism, for eco-criticism, introduces new expectations for literature and entails rethinking critical methodology. Simon Estok's definition above suggests that analysis of an activist text would scrutinise the content for ideas questioning or seeking to destabilise the current state of affairs. But the term "evoke" in that definition underscores the potential of the text to influence the audience. This impact on the audience may be through emotions or reason, but its ultimate manifestation registers in attitudes of members of the audience, which Estok hopes may result in outward action that brings positive change. In other words, Estok suggests that messages, whether oral or shared through literary texts have the capacity to influence change. In this light, apart from focusing on the message itself it becomes equally important for critical efforts to attend to how, the text "do[es] things with words" (Austin 1975) in order to induce action, communicate or change attitude, or induce action. Thus, environmental activism constitutes one of the grounds on which eco-criticism and rhetoric theories meet.

The fact that eco-activist literature blends motives to please and to persuade complicates analysis. Towards addressing this challenge, Edward P. Murphy has made a substantial contribution in his key article; "The question of aesthetic praxis: if literature and art are propaganda, what is ecocritical analysis?" (2014). Murphy suggests the incorporation of theories of propaganda and agitation developed by Frederic Engels and V.I. Lenin into eco-critical analysis. Drawing on the work of Allan Locke, Murphy rightly asserts that if art aims to contribute to (environmental) ideology, the target ideas need to be properly and beautifully woven into the aesthetic fabric of a

text. I extensively quote his thought on the nature of an activist text, which I think informs critical methodology. In his view, the author:

Need not reveal his own intentions or position on the environmental issues, the attitudes of characters toward the more-than-human world, or the actions taken to address a specific crisis or event, but neither does he or she need to provide a call to action in order to be encouraging action. The text suffices to be progressively propagandistic if it only serves to expose, reveal, and draw attention to the reality of the current human environmental predicament.

(Murphy 2014: 294)

From a critical perspective, two important points emerge from this expression: first, the text must encourage action without appearing to do so, with ideas expressed subtly or wrapped up in figurative language. Secondly, the exposition of environmental issues as evidence of socio-political commitment is in itself activism. Read through these lenses, much of the literature on environmental issues in specified contexts is activist and demands a duo critical focus on style and on persuasive devices. It is noteworthy though that the two processes, rhetorical and literary criticism, are not necessarily independent of each other. Rather style as one of the five "canons" of rhetoric (Aristotle) serves different functions in each of the two fields. It is thus surprising that studies on activist literature have not engaged deeply with the practical persuasive significance of style. Even Murphy's discussion referred to above comments in detail on exposition and style in several eco-activist texts, but it does not explain how the persuasive motive should be pursued so as to remain subtle but effective, or how it can be evaluated.

While Murphy's work opens the discussion on critical methods for activist literature, Rob Nixon offers illuminative insight on which such critical tools may be built. For Nixon, the "writer activist" should frame the text "to bring emotionally to life" and to render imperceptible environmental issues "apprehensible to emotions", so as to attract the attention of policy makers (Nixon 2011: 14). But Nixon draws attention to the term "apprehension," emphasising that it "draws together the domains of perception, emotion, and action" (14). In other words, he identifies three processes through which literature can perform activism: to reveal and raise consciousness in harmony with Murphy's idea of exposition, to influence attitude through emotional engagement, and finally to solicit cooperation in practical ways. In the last two segments of this thought, Nixon draws textual activism beyond the boundaries envisioned by Murphy above, and explicitly grounds the notion of persuasion into the milieu of eco-literature production and criticism. Against such a background, this paper seeks to explore the processes through which an activist text performs persuasion, by drawing on Aristotle's concept of "means of persuasion" (Aristotle 1991) and Kenneth Burke's "persuasion to attitude" (Burke 1969). These concepts enable one to engage with the form-

message-audience relationship which I believe is key to any attempts to theorise textual activism.

Aristotle's thought on the means of persuasion is explicated in detail in his *Rhetoric* and discussed in a vast body of works, so to claim to squeeze it into the limited space of this paper would be a great disservice. What I can afford here is to summarise only a few of his ideas which are crucial to the present argument. Key in this process are the three "means of persuasion": the personality of the speaker (*ethos*), emotion (*pathos*) and the proof or apparent proof of the very argument made (*logos*) (*Rhetoric* 1, III, 1358a & 1, III, 37-b2). This concept does not denote method or even process of persuasion as may be implied. Rather, it seems to refer to factors determining the persuasive potential of the facts presented. In what can be considered a summarising statement of his philosophy on persuasion made in *Rhetoric* Book III, 1, Aristotle remarks: "In making a speech one must study three points: first, the means of producing persuasion; second, the style, or language, to be used; third, the proper arrangement of the various parts of the speech" (Aristotle 1991: 137). This clearly indicates that the "means" are not independent but work with style and structure. Aristotle's subsequent discussion shows that by style he refers to language devices, while delivery includes arrangement of the different parts of the text, the actual voice - the volume of sound, the pitch and rhythm. In literary critical practice the elements of style and delivery identified by Aristotle are usually classified under form and structure, making literary criticism a subset of rhetorical criticism. It can also be deduced that aspects of form and style can enhance the persuasive potential of the facts directly, or indirectly through promoting the three means; *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*.

While Aristotle's thought on persuasion is more attuned to oral texts, Kenneth Burke brings it into the realm of the literary. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Burke 1969) he asserts: "the study of lyrical devices might be classed under the head of rhetoric, when these devices are considered for their power to induce or communicate states of mind to readers even though the kinds of assent evoked have no overt, practical outcome" (50). For Burke, literary rhetoric is "persuasion to attitude", as opposed to persuasion to action which is the objective of oratory. I find this thought resonant with the kind of activism in Mbugua's *Terrorists of the Aberdare*, where there is no explicit call to action and yet the choice of subject, setting, events and the implicit ideas gesture towards the desirable change in addressing human-nonhuman conflicts. In the next section, I comment on the ways in which the capacity of the text to influence attitudes of the audience is enhanced by persuasive personality, emotional and logical appeal in alliance with various literary devices.

Ethos and Point of View in *Terrorists of the Aberdare*

Terrorists of the Aberdare (2009), a novel featuring conflicts between humans and elephants, distinguishes itself from literary works in which representation is an end in itself, and aligns itself with practical persuasion. The novel is based on historical happenings on the fringes of the Aberdare Game Reserve in present day Kenya. Kinangop, the actual micro setting of the story, and the surrounding areas of Samburu and Tanu are in a migration tract of elephants between Simba Hills Forest Reserve, Mwaluganje Forest and Tsavo National Park (Mwanyanya 2005). As such, elephants often migrate through settled areas and cause damage to property. Reports from the Kenya Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources reveal that human-elephant conflicts have remained a challenge in the Laikipia region for a long time (Ministry of Environment 2015). For instance, press reports indicate that several people sustain injuries from attacks by elephants every year in the area (Murithi 2015). By explicitly locating itself in a particular context, this novel then becomes a fertile example of an eco-literary rhetorical text, for it conforms to views that postcolonial eco-critical study needs to work with a specified social context (Vital 88). Moreover, the text suggests solutions to the issues it explores, which can be interpreted in terms of the primary context.

Set at the burial ceremony of one Sonko Wakadosi who has been killed by elephants, the novel explicitly tables the debate whether to protect the animals at the expense of human survival or vice versa. The situation in the story calls to mind the human-animal conflict in Amitav Gosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2000). Just like the tide country, the Kinangop settlement is an encroachment on the Aberdare game reserve and due to protracted droughts, humans and animals compete over food crops. Elephants, like terrorists, attack humans and destroy their food crops but the Area Member of Parliament asserts human culpability in this situation. The plot represents this dilemma and traces the change of attitude of the narrator as a strategy to persuade the audience. At the beginning of the story, Madirari the narrator is convinced that the people of Kinangop should just kill all the elephants which attack them. However, when the area Member of Parliament gives his assessment of the situation, Madirari changes his attitude towards the elephants. Although the novel ends with the killing of the elephant suspected to have killed Sonko Wakadosi, the narrator condemns this act. The persuasive potential of the message is unleashed thorough persuasive personality, emotional and logical appeals, as I discuss below.

Persuasion by personality (ethos), to begin with, demands that a speaker fashions him/herself out as a credible person within the speech itself through exhibition of prudence and moral excellence. In addition, one has to show that they have the audience's interests at heart or take an appropriate "stance" (Cockcroft & Cockcroft 2014: 30). Unlike the single persuasion channel in oral texts, persuasion in written texts may follow the author-audience

relationship and/or the relationship between the characters in the world of the text and the audience. In the first case, “the audience naturally constructs an image of the figure behind” the work (Richardson 1988: 206) to whom they attribute the ideas communicated. In *Terrorists of the Aberdare* for instance, the audience relates with a stylised image of Mbugua fully retrievable from the text itself. This is what I refer to as the author persona in the rest of this discussion. But there are cases when one or more characters emerge as the author’s mouth piece, and the audience are expected to identify with them. In both these cases, persuasive personality and stance is constructed through the speaking voice, for instance in poetry, or the narrative voice in the novel or drama. Hence, a literary criticism interested in persuasion remains attentive to features like point of view, tone and diction, as I demonstrate later.

As already noted, Aristotle’s conception of ethos is slightly challenged in the literary context. While Aristotle envisions a single rhetor/persuader, the persuasive situation in the novel enables the meeting of several personalities whose virtues all merge to advance the effect of the message on the audience. In *Terrorists of the Aberdare*, Mbugua attempts to enhance the persuasive potential of his message through three persons: the author persona, the main character and narrator, Madirari, and the person (for lack of a better term) of the elephant nicknamed Kanywaji. The following few paragraphs discuss the strategies through which each of these persons is constructed to strengthen the author’s proposal to protect the animals despite conflicting human needs. I point out the different ways in which point of view enhances ethos as well as enriches the message directly.

Unlike most narratives, the author persona in this novel announces his presence in the body of the work, which sets good background for later identification. This is done through a prologue where, clearly, the narrator is neither Sonko Wakadosi’s ghost nor Madirari, the character who narrates the rest of the story. In this section, the author persona reports on the drought that has heightened human-nonhuman conflicts in the area through a conversation between three people killed by wild animals. This foreshadowed adverse impact of the drought on both human and nonhuman lives introduces an evaluative perspective to the rest of the narration in which Madirari presents the elephants as a threat to human survival. It also reveals a commendable stance (opinion towards the subject) on part of the author persona. Robert Cockcroft and Susan Cockcroft (2005) explain that Aristotle’s concept of *ethos* can be divided into two aspects: personality and stance. While personality is the rhetor’s/persuader’s “image” or “identity” which comes across through voice and language in the text, stance is the expressed attitude or opinion of the persuader towards the subject (30). By drawing attention to the inevitability of the humans-animal conflict right in the prologue, Mbugua points to the futility of human hostility towards the animals. In turn, his image, constructible from the psychological, ideological and perceptual position

which implicitly directs the narration (Uspensky 1973: 80), greatly benefits from this stance.

In the story proper, the author persona continues to indicate his stance by taking an ironical position towards the narrator, Madirari. The author's conviction that humans should do their best to protect animals mostly emerges not from the narrator's words but from situations presented. Madirari, for instance, narrates an incident when a herd of elephants camps on Mategwa's farm and destroys his avocado harvest. Although Mategwa has a gun, he does not shoot any elephants but calls the Wild Life Authority officials. Ironically, Madirari uncritically uses this scene to advance his long argument to the effect that the terrorising elephants should be shot dead (Mbugua 1999: 50). Madirari's blindness to this contradiction indicates that he speaks from an ideological and psychological position distinct from that of the author persona. This critical position also paints the author persona as objective and democratic because he seems to grant Madirari an independent voice.

On the other hand, Madirari's persuasive personality (ethos) is greatly enhanced by the communication situation in the novel. In his narration, Madirari assumes an internal listener or group of listeners to whom he reports directly about the proceedings of the burial ceremony. This internal audience is constructed in detail: Notably, they are not on the scene, which aligns them with the secondary audience, the reader, as indicated by the mode of Madirari's speech. He remarks: "I can now see the priest preparing to give his sermon. He is carrying ..." (19). Later he reports: "'Brothers and sisters', the preacher is saying ..." (28), "he is now posing for effect" (31). To make it even more real, Madirari at one point gets emotionally overcome, says: "excuse me ..." (68) and takes a break. To the audience, Madirari strategically relinquishes his authority to guide the interpretation of story: He admits his emotional instability and acknowledges the fact that he has limited knowledge about the Internet (62), and on issues concerning climate change (22). Such a position conceals the author persona's objective to persuade through the narrator, yet it enables Madirari's image to emerge as sincere and trustworthy.

This calculated position Madirari adopts has more than one advantage. In the first place, the external audience, the reader, is enabled to experience the events as they unfold and to interpret them independently of the narrator's perspective. From another angle, the audience can also be drawn along the narrator's line of discovery as the events of the story unfold. Secondly, it opens the audience to other points of view. In this case, attention is drawn towards the views of the area Member of Parliament through whom the author persona channels his main argument. So, without discrediting his narrator, the author persona sets ground for his message concerning human tolerance towards the nonhuman, to emerge convincingly. This strategy is of paramount significance in the context of activist literature, because it enables the author's message to come across in such subtlety that does not violate aesthetic commitment. Not only does Mbugua use the ethos of human characters to

persuade, but he also enables an elephant character to persuade on its own. This strategy in turn draws the discussion into some of the current debates on nonhuman representations in literature. The next sub-section attempts to trace the connection between the concept of ethos and animal agency in narration.

Nonhuman Subjectification as Ethos and as Humanisation

One of the items on Buell's checklist of an environmental text is that: the nonhuman should be present in the text, not "as a framing device", but as "a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (1995: 7). In other words, the non-human must be presented as commanding agency. This seems to be what Murphy has in mind when he insists that society should "allow nonhuman others to participate in aesthetic memory", "as subjects rather than objects of attention" (2011: 157). I should point out that the representation of a particular elephant as an individual entity who feels and expresses his feelings, in Mbugua's novel, enables the construction of a positive image of not only that particular elephant, but of all its kind. This in turn facilitates human identification with the elephants. In addition, the inter-actions between the elephant and the villagers on such occasions as when it eats Shufa Nandefe's tomatoes (44), the encounter with the poachers (52-54), and twice in Mama Pima's compound (47, 91), reveals the peaceful, courageous, yet loving and caring nature of the elephant.

Kanywaji as a persuasive "personality" is represented more in adherence to natural history than otherwise, but at one point the narration tilts towards what Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (2012) refer to as humanisation. I attend to naturalist representation first, and will comment on the humanisation later. The elephant the audience encounters in *Kanywaji* is an impressively intelligent animal. One first Saturday of the month, Kanywaji charges into Mama Pima's compound and drinks her porridge-like fermented drink called *busheshe*. This elephant makes it a habit to come to the same place on the same day every month (48-49). Here Mbugua seemingly draws on scientific research that points out the intelligence of elephants and their exceptional memory (Eltringham 1982: 17). In fact, Mbugua's elephants do not depart from Cynthia Moss's account of elephant families in Amboseli National Park in Kenya. For instance, in her life writing *Elephant Memories* (1988) Moss narrates an incident when a family of elephants, using their strong sense of smell, singled out some delicacies in their camp kitchen, broke into it and ate all they found (Moss 2012: 178-180). It is this similar sense that enables Kanywaji to single out the *busheshe*. This mode of characterisation has the advantage of revealing the natural attributes of elephants and to promote human identification with them which in turn may improve their protection.

Aristotle's concept of ethos, in literary texts, has a lot to do with mode of representation. In the context of the novel, Mbugua does not explicitly

humanise Kanywaji the elephant. Rather the animal participates in the plot in its own right in resonance with the idea of letting nature, as text, speak on its own (Iovino & Oppermann above). Drawing on Jane Bennett's notion of agentic matter (Bennett 2010), Iovino and Oppermann advance that matter, a broad category consisting literally of all things, possesses agentic vitality which is not "a fixed essence or property of things" (Iovino & Oppermann 2012: 80), but which consists in "a generative becoming" (77). The reader for instance learns of the caring and unaggressive nature of elephants through Kanywaji's behaviour referred to earlier, as well as that of the other elephants at Muteywa's farm. Similarly, Madirari 'reads' the trumpeting of the elephant he hears after the death of Kanywaji and remarks: "there was a note of sorrow in its song. Deep down, I knew what that sad song meant. After all, it was the song of my heart" (Mbugua 100). So, Madirari identifies with the elephants by "responding to them on their own terms" as Katharine Rogers puts it in her disparaging of anthropomorphism (Rogers 1999: iv).

Letting nature speak on its own requires special strategies. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, have argued that strict adherence to natural history in animal representations "destabilizes" narrative structure (2010: 157), perhaps in the sense that it does not allow the kind of interiority consonant with the novel as a genre. Mbugua, seemingly aware of this, does not give narrator position to Kanywaji. Rather he avoids what Buell discourages as "dense mimesis" (Buell 1995: 97) by maintaining an ontological space between the human narrator and the elephant. Likewise, unlike Moss referred to earlier, Mbugua does not give a factual story of a particular elephant family in the Aberdare, but a fictional one which remains accountable to natural history. This seems a way of admitting the limitations of human perceptions, at a grand scale. Notably, while Buell advocates for naturalistic representations arguing that literature as "science's less systematic but more versatile complement", is valuable in "reanimating and redirecting the readers' transactions with nature" (Buell 1995: 94), he also admits that such representation regulates "imagination's free play" (97). Yet allowing animal interiority in narration presents conceptual challenges not easily overcome as will be explained later.

Mbugua's attempt to let the elephant reveal itself and assert its agency calls into view Bakhtin's ideas of transgression and self-objectification (Bakhtin 1990: 157), which Murphy rightly connects to ecocentric representation of the nonhuman. For Murphy, the author's taking "a position outside himself" (Bakhtin above) should be a conscious step of, "self-objectification" in order to facilitate "another-subjectification" (Murphy 2011: 157), the others being the nonhuman. Murphy's discussion reveals that the kind of self-objectification he endorses is where a narrator as an observer acknowledges their limitation and steps back from a self-centred point of view to allow other voices. But the challenges involved in this mode of representation demand more attention. As already noted, there is no doubt that Mbugua is committed to representing the agency of the elephant, however, the narratorial point of

view in the text draws the story close to an anthropocentric position disparaged by ecocriticism, as I demonstrate below.

Mbugua seems to suggest that another-subjectification entails engaging with the perspective of the another as far as the ontological divide between the two categories enables. His narrative seeks to enlist empathy for the elephant through a kind of interiority as indicated in the following excerpt:

Kanywaji tried every trick he knew to save his mother but there was little he could do. He trumpeted furiously hoping that his uncles and other elephants would hear and come to his mother's rescue. Sure enough, the elephants in Kanywaji's immediate family understood the distress call and came to help ... it was a sad day for that elephant family. But none of the elephants was as sad as Kanywaji. He loved his mother passionately. To him, she was a pillar of strength. He had always believed he was safe he was safe by her side. Now his belief had been shattered.

(52, 53)

In these lines the narrator attempts to render the elephant's feelings like fury, sadness, distress, passionate love and thoughts of hope, fear, belief in the mother's strength and disappointment. This stimulates some questions, for instance: To what extent has the narrator objectified himself in this move? How much of Kanywaji's consciousness comes through in this rendition or How does the narration reflect power relations between the narrator and the object of narration? These questions cannot be answered easily, considering the limitations of human understanding of the animal mind. But what is remarkable about Mbugua's strategy here is that even as this internal narrator mode seems to project human centeredness, he checks the subject power of his narrator. Madirari does not, for instance, venture to report Kanywaji's stream of thought which could read like: "I have tried all the tricks I know of! I hope uncle ... will hear me and come to help us ... All along mum has been my pillar of strength! What I am I to do?" Mbugua's sense of another subjectification becomes more pronounced in Madirari's narration of the death of Kanywaji. About the look of death on Kanywaji's face, Madirari remarks: "He stares in hopeless anguish as he waits to breathe his last, thinking about the *busheshe* he had thirsted for, for so long" (94). This brief account of what goes on in the mind of the dying elephant is confined to contextual ideas on part of the narrator, and claims no insight into animal thought processes. In other words, the narrator can still claim to be a respectful outsider to the self-autonomous Kanywaji.

The hazy boundary between animal subjectivity and the disparaged mode of anthropomorphism and personification threatens the principle of agentic representations of the nonhuman. Mbugua, despite attempts not to humanise the elephants, appears to be projecting human categories and conceptions on them. The narrator claims that Kanywaji's appeals for help are addressed to his "uncles" and that the death of her mother is "traumatise[ing]" to the young

elephant. He also states that Kanywaji "loved his mother passionately" and that her pain at this incident "was so acute and it was peppered with anguish, grief and anger" (52-53). Madirari also assumes that Kanywaji's death cry is answered by his "cousins" in the national park, and that "the fear in Kanywaji's eyes ... reflects their own fear" (93). Much as this partial humanisation remains suspect of promoting, at least unconsciously, a dominative human agency, it enables the reader to reflect on the prospect of articulating animal subjectivities independent of a human world view, and the possibility of eliciting human empathy for the nonhuman without employing forms of humanisation.

The contradictory position of humanising representations is fully acknowledged, which complicates the debate. Iovino and Opperman's idea of matter as text, referred to earlier, is presented side by side with their endorsement of humanisation, which may seem contradictory. These scholars assert also that humanisations that do not focus on "categorical divides" but point out "similarities and symmetries" between human and the nonhuman are not anthropocentric (82). This view holds much water. For instance, Madirari's use of human conceptions concerning the elephant does communicate his sense of kinship, a step towards ethical considerations. Yet Huggan and Tiffin also assert, in respect of Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone*, that "representation of elephant language is both necessary in humanising the animals, yet dangerous in inviting infantilisation or ridicule. Still without a voice, without some direct speech, the readers' inhabitation of the elephants' world would be strictly limited" (Huggan & Tiffin 2010: 156). Huggan and Tiffin advance no solution for the paradoxical status of the humanisation, but one wonders whether nonhuman agency necessarily has to be fashioned on humans. While it is indisputable that representations of the nonhuman as narrative characters, owing to the limitations of human knowledge on the cognitive and sensual operations of those entities, and human language as a medium, inevitably involve some form of projection of human agency, nonhuman subjectification is crucial to all claims of eco-activism. One also needs to keep in mind the fact that anthropomorphism violates aesthetic verisimilitude and may thus undermine the persuasive potential of environmental writing.

Appeal to Emotion and Semantic Associations

Terrorist of the Aberdare offers an interesting dimension to emotional appeal. While Aristotle envisions a direct relationship between an emotion and its effect on the audience, Mbugua's novel provides for the possibility of using negative emotions to evoke positive attitudes towards a subject. This is facilitated by the narrative situation created, characterisation and the internal structure of the narrative. Mbugua seeks to call attention to human responsibility to protect elephants in particular and perhaps wild animals in

general, notwithstanding the escalating conflict over resources. But the setting of the story at a burial ceremony, the descriptions of the mourning as Peninah, the lady whose love had led the deceased man to work very hard and to prepare to fight the elephants, is weeping (25, 34) and the grim circumstances of his father's family as narrated (70-73) are all calculated to arouse anger against the killer elephants, and pity for the bereaved family. Yet by the end of the novel the proposal to protect the elephants has become almost irresistible. How this is achieved is what I explain below.

Emotion as a means of persuasion draws together both literary and rhetorical devices. But the persuader needs to calculate what kinds of emotion to arouse to their advantage. According to Aristotle, for one to be able to excite a particular emotion they need to have the following information: the state of mind attendant to the target emotion, the likely objects of the emotion or the kinds of people to whom such an emotion is directed, and the situations in which such an emotion is excited (Aristotle 1991: 70). Mbugua seems to appropriately attend to the angry minds of his audience through parallel plots. From the stories of people killed by animals in the prologue emerges an under story of the drought struck animals which have to scratch for food in unfamiliar places. The old Maasai man, killed by a lion tells of an incident when a hyena charges into his hut in search for food and adds: "there was hardly anything for man or beast to eat. The earth was hot, the rivers had dried up and the sun had burnt the savannah grass dry ... I have never seen anything like before all my life" (8). Sonko Wakadosi, now in spirit, recognises the situation as similar to that in Kinangop. In the main story Madirari narrates an incident when a young elephant comes near the road probably in search of food too, and luckily finds Shufa Nandefe's tomatoes. Later the audience becomes aware of a thirsty elephant Kanywaji which comes to drink mama Pima's brew. She is quoted saying: "so when I looked into the elephant's beady eyes and sweaty face, I knew at once that its throat was parched" (48). It is on such a mission that Kanywaji the elephant is killed by the villagers. This plot ends with a lonely trumpeting of the elephant about which Madirari remarks: "there was a note of sorrow in its song. Deep down, I knew what that sad song meant. After all, it was the song of my heart" (100). By Madirari's identification with the elephant Mbugua tacitly plays on what humans share with elephants to arouse feelings of pity in the audience and which in turn produce a positive attitude towards the animals.

Not only that, but Mbugua's descriptive diction especially concerning elephant human-inflicted pain greatly contributes to the potential of the novel to influence attitude towards human obligation to protect the elephants. I refer here to the description of the trapping and eventual killing of Kanywaji's mother by poachers, and of Kanywaji by the villagers. Concerning the latter incident, the narrator recounts:

"Today we shall feast!" The people shout as each cuts a piece from the flunk, the belly, and wherever their long knives can find meat. Kanywaji is being skinned alive. He tries to hit back with his trunk but he is overwhelmed by the blows. He stares in hopeless anguish as he waits to breathe his last.

(94)

Given that in the structure of the plot Kanywaji emerges as a particular "personality" capable of enjoying the approval of the audience, this image of him dying commands great emotive power. While the description draws attention to the brutality of humans, it also highlights the importance of extending some ethical consideration to the nonhuman. It is particularly very inhuman to skin the animal and share its meat while it is still alive. In addition, Mbugua also appeals to the audience's sense of justice when the narrator remarks that Kanywaji: "found the hunters skinning his mother From that day on ... Kanywaji identified man as his enemy number one (54)". These voices are likely to vilify the human community, evoking pity for the elephants, and thus boost the persuasive potential of the main message in the text.

Logos, Structure and Discursive Proofs

Logical soundness in the Aristotelian model of persuasion is established by dialectical argumentation where arguments are built from what is certain (non-artistic proof like laws and customs), and structured by way of proposition, reason and conclusion (syllogism or its subcategory enthymeme) (Watson 1902: book V Ch. X). While it is important for environmental activist literature to be focused on local issues and to draw on known socio-political facts, it may not adhere to the dialectic structure of argumentation. On the other hand, the literary text is governed, not by an argumentative structure but by a sequential order itself determined by temporal logic. As such, criticism should attend to the ways in which the plot is shaped by thematic content, for the purpose of persuasion. But perhaps I am moving ahead of myself. As already noted, there are two grounds on which Aristotle's mode of argument is expected to be judged: the nature of proofs, and the structure of the argument. I will first attend to the former. What Aristotle refers to as "proof" is not evidence, but only "material on which the speaker draws" (Gagarin 1990: 24) to fashion the argument. In contemporary situations, this material ranges from media reports both local and inter-national, government documents, sensory experiences, historical records and discursive facts from scholarly discourse. Thus information in environmental literature gains substance as what Northrop Frye has referred to as "hypothetical reality" (1957: 74) and becomes persuasive in itself. Besides being believable, the content must be organised in a logical way.

On the point of structure, literary discourse departs from Aristotle's prescribed process of persuasion at two levels: it is story based and expansive, and its propositions and conclusions are only implicitly indicated. In that case literary arguments, if I may refer to the conflicts therein as such, cannot be judged by breaking down statements into proposition, reason and conclusion. Yet they are not entirely free from rules of structure. Hence my comments on logical appeal in *Terrorists of the Aberdare* concentrate more on the way Mbugua employs non-artistic proof and other elements of style and structure to support and gesture towards specific themes and ideas, and thus be seen to perform activism. I acknowledge Rimmon-Kenan's idea that theme is "a construct put together from discontinuous elements in the text" (Rimmon-Kenan 1995: 11), but build on it to suggest that theme is in a way a culmination of the ideas implied through the sum total of all the elements in a work of art. As such, theme inhabits the different aspects of the plot, characterisation, language, and setting. Rheme or idea, which is the building block for theme, seems to emerge from the imaginary incidents as facilitated by information or historical experience accessible to an audience. In that case, logical appeal in the literary sense is more dependent on the non-artistic proof mentioned above than on structural strategies.

Mbugua appeals to reason by featuring events close to what is historically true about life in Kinangop. Media reports quoted earlier in this article confirm the seriousness of human-nonhuman conflicts in the geographical setting of the novel. In this respect, the novel can be read allegorically. This relationship between the fictional and the historical validates solutions suggested by the author narrator, as well as enabling the transference of meaning. In the fictional world of the novel, the area Member of Parliament argues that the hostility of the elephants has been caused by the reduction in natural vegetation and the drying up of rivers, and that humans are responsible for the situation because they have continued to cut down trees, to encroach on the forest reserve land and to cultivate in river beds. Since this situation is not only true of Kinangop but also of many parts of Africa, the novel has the potential to influence attitudes and practices at a grand scale. Thus, Madirari's confession: "it is difficult to argue with what he is saying. It sounds so logical" (83) correctly represents the attitude of the primary audience, and shapes the response of the wider audience to the message.

The structure of the novel also supports the facts. The ideas on which the MP builds his argument are planted into the mind of the audience right in the prologue through the conversation between Sonko Wakadosi and the Maasai man. The debate whether to protect the elephants at the expense of human survival or vice versa, remains plot-driven throughout. Madirari's climactic declaration quoted here naturally develops from the plot, which mediates its tone as a moralistic opinion. Madirari asserts: "You would miss the point if you argue that "Are the animals more important than we are?"" He wisely adds: "The point is that if we preserve the natural environment, we too will

be preserved" (84). The logical soundness of this thought is also technically enhanced by the resolution of the major conflict in the novel. Through a dream, Madirari understands that the elephants are not to blame for killing Sonko Wakadosi. The latter over-reacts because of his misguided passion for Penina. In other words, Madirari's conviction that elephants are evil and humans need to defend themselves by killing them, on which the whole narrative is constructed, is completely shattered. In the final chapter of the novel, it becomes clear that there is no actual conflict between the elephants and humans. Rather, the two communities must find sustainable ways of co-habiting, of sharing resources.

Conclusion

It appears that the audience is persuaded not by explicit efforts of the author persona or the narrator, but by engaging with the events, issues and ideas from various points of view. Mbugua's novel demonstrates that personality, emotional engagement and logical soundness all work together to advance environmental communication, which in turn support activism. His astute construction of Madirari's character for instance yields a structural advantage in creating a persuasively effective, seemingly free space for audience engagement. Noteworthy is the fact that the notion of persuasion by personality, calls into view issues of representation, and in the case of the nonhuman, stimulates more thought around the key issue of anthropocentrism versus eco-centrism. Nonhuman representations invites us to rethink what a person is and how to construct the personhood of the nonhuman without the subordinating stance of anthropomorphism. As indicated in the study, environmental activist literature needs to provide for nonhuman persuaders/rhetors but at the same time negotiate around structural demands of the stories. This is more so in attempts at emotional appeals which seem to be entrenched between human centeredness and a humanising subjectification. It becomes important to respect the ontological difference between the human and the non-human, without using it as a ground of domination.

How can a rhetorical approach benefit eco-critical analysis? This question cannot be answered in a single study, but the approach may illuminate some of the fundamental issues in eco-criticism. A novel read as a rhetorical situation would be judged on the basis of the extent to which the narrative personality lends him/herself credible and trustworthy, the extent to which the narrative engages the emotions of the audience, and how the actual argument it raises appeals to reason. This structuring of the analysis gives primacy to the narrative voice because that is the space in which the character of the narrator takes shape. In addition, such an approach prioritises language and stylistic devices through which emotions are accessed, and the thought structure through which the logicity of the message solidifies. As such, a

rhetorically informed analysis leads us to examine not only the thematic and aesthetic unity, but also the potential of a work to affect, however indirectly, the extratextual world. Poetic strategies (in a broad sense) are then appreciated for their significance in enlisting audience cooperation for the author and for facilitating the transmission of ideas and opinions in given contexts. All in all, a rheto-literary analysis turns out to be more comprehensive and, with its focus on the effect of the message, re-thinks literature as a medium of communication, and a source of functional information.

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