



Ecological Stakes in *The Crabs of Bangui* by Linus T. Asong

By

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Abstract

The ecosystem is rapidly degrading and that is a serious call for concern as the survival of all its elements including man is threatened. People of all walks of life, writers inclusive, put in efforts to redress this situation and that is why this article analyses Linus Asong's ecological vision in his novel *The Crabs of Bangui*. The study sets out to examine the environmental dimension of the text. The question that guides the work is: how does Linus Asong represent man's relationship with nature in *The Crabs of Bangui*? Using Ecocriticism according to Michael Cohen and Ecopoetics as outlined by Sarah Nolan, the work is based on the premise that the novelist depicts the environment with calls for more protection using a wide range of stylistic elements.

Key words: Environment, Degradation, Endangerment, Protection, Awareness, Ecocriticism, ecopoetics, Fiction

Introduction

The ecosystem is under threat due to a good number of factors; and this threat, which is so daunting that it has aptly been referred to as a crisis, has raised great concerns among people in all corners of the globe. This environmental menace has become so serious that if nothing significant is done urgently, man's existence on earth is under threat. Tosic (2006:44) confirms this when he says "[...] man feels *vital*ly threatened in the ecologically degraded world. Overexploitation of natural resources and man's disregard of the air, water and soil that sustain him have given rise to the question of the survival of both man and the planet (Earth)." Glotfelty and Fromm (1996:xx-xxi) equally share the opinion that the earth is under profound threat and

go ahead to say that man needs to do something to preserve the environment and by extension secure his own survival. They opine that:

[...] we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support system. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face a global catastrophe, destroying much beauty or exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse [...] If we are not part of the solution, we're part of the problem.

Therefore, all efforts that can help rescue the situation need to be exploited. Since literature is an interpretation of reality from an artistic perspective, it is also concerned with environmental issues. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate that *The Crabs of Bangui* (2008) by Linus T. Asong handles ecological concerns. The following research question will guide the work: what is Linus Asong's vision of man's relationship with the environment in *The Crabs of Bangui*? The corresponding hypothesis is based on the premise that *The Crabs of Bangui* by Linus Asong raises ecological awareness.

To investigate this, Ecocriticism and Ecopoetics are used. Ecocriticism whose proponents like William Reuckert, Lawrence Buell and John Bate unanimously consider as the study of literature and nature from an interdisciplinary perspective is the focal theory. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996:xviii) say: "Simply put, Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [...] ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies". On his part, Tosic (2006:44) says it "[...] is concerned with the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that environment. By analogy, ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature." The Ecocritical views of Michael Cohen were exploited. Such views are highlighted in the statement; "Ecocriticism focuses on literary (and artistic) expression of human experience primarily in a naturally and consequently in a culturally shaped world: the joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hopes for harmonious existence, and fears of loss and disaster".(Cohen 2004: 10). Since Ecocriticism is centered on themes and does not look at stylistic elements used in ecological literature, Ecopoetics will be used to substantiate Asong's use of style in bringing out his ecological vision. In this light, the Ecopoetic perspectives of Sarah Nolan who says "Specifically, unnatural ecopoetics offers a critical lens that focuses on the methods by which poets express nonmaterial cultural, historical, political, and personal elements of environmental experience alongside material objects and spaces through self-reflexive language and experimental forms [...]" (Nolan 2015: 8) was leant on. Thus an ecocritical/ecopoetic analysis of

The Crabs of Bangui will be done to bring out the collective patterns of human behavior that shape their relationship with nature as well as the style used in presenting them.

1. Representation of Nature Endangerment Motifs

The relationship between man and nature in *The Crabs of Bangui* hinges on economic, traditional, cultural and social factors. Commenting on the economic motif for environmental degradation, Jelica Tosic(2006:47) states: “Immoderate economic schemes and constant economic growth are the reason why man often destroys the world in which he lives”. Asong shares Tosic’s opinion and that is why in the text there are economic motivations that push man to destroy the environment. To begin with, Hansel says scientists and engineers have discovered that the soil around Lake Bangui “[...] contains a rare substance called Maleabutoris Ductilus” (p. 103). This substance is used in the manufacture of a product called Potabromide Cholocarbonate which in turn is important in the fabrication of different forms of chinaware, home and church decorations, trinkets and ornaments. Instead of being protected, the “rare” substance is exploited gradually to extinction. When Hansel becomes rich by being a shareholder in the company that deals in this substance, the newspapers describe him as a man who is going to make the wealth of Alhaji Djaguda, a renowned billionaire cattle dealer in the extreme north of the country. This indicates that natural elements like cattle and *maleabutoris Ductilus* are exploited for economic benefits. A similar note is sounded when we see that “They (men) spent long hours out of home in beer parlours and in chicken parlours” (p. 36). Here, beer and chicken are produced at the expense of natural items like maize and fowls. Unfortunately, Hansel himself says their economic activities will expand “[...] since we would sooner or later set up plant in Cameroon soil, in Limbe, Barombi Lake, Lakes Oku, and Bambili” (p. 184) The geographical allusion to Limbe, Oku, Barombi and Bambili make artistic verisimilitude and reinforce the fact that the economic threat to the ecosystem is real. Similarly, when a member of Hansel’s club sees him unusually drinking alcohol, ignorant of Hansel’s new found wealth, he asks “Which Fulani man has sold cows and is giving drinks to the extent that even my old friend Hansel is also drinking?”(p. 96) This highlights the fact that natural items like cattle can be a source of untold wealth provided man does not harm them. Farming is another rewarding human activity related to the environment. Hansel gives Marion all she needs in terms of finances to have a comfortable life “But that did not deter her from her farming. She would pack her farming tools in the boot and drive the boys off to the farm every Saturday morning.”(p. 131) All these show how economic interest conditions the destruction of nature.

Tradition and culture are also reasons for which man endangers the ecosystem as several practices which put the ecosystem under menace are performed. For example, “There was a picture in which Ta’ata Bolingo stood with Sebastien. The old man was pointing at Sebastien and handing over to him a buffalo horn”(p.55) The use of the horn as a symbol of succession shows that for traditional reasons the cows are potentially endangered. Equally, Lord Casford throws down a fan, claps his hands together high above his head to show the audience that they were bare, and then closes them firmly. He throws them open and a swallow jumps out and perches on the roof top. Casford stretches his hand and beckons to the swallow. It flows to his hands and he turns it round for some time and the villagers discover that it has turned to an egg. He throws the egg into the air and holds a bowl in the air as if to catch the egg in it. Instead, the bowl is filled with grains of peanuts which he distributes to the children who eat with much excitement. Here, nature is endangered for human entertainment. The same situation is repeated when “Casford palmed a two headed snake which circled the priest twice, almost knocking him down with fright. Then he turned the snake into a walking stick and finally into a black wand which he held under his armpit. The old man crackled with laughter, the children screamed with excitement.”(p. 65) Here again, natural elements are implicated victims in man’s activities as the snake is used and ends up disappearing. Also, tradition demands that a titled man be buried in a particular forest when he dies. The narrator says “Pa Bolingo was a Ta’ata, a title holder in in Akamanang-Ntang and people with that title are usually buried only in the sacred grove in the village.”(p. 55) The grove is, therefore, disfigured for the burial of title holders. In the same dimension, Hansel tells his club members, “When I went home, Pa, for my father’s funeral my people spoiled me with a traditional title, ’he was talking and pointing to a black raffia cap on his head with a red feather, probably of some fowl, and two spikes of a porcupine stuck to it: ‘I was forced to become my father’s successor. My father was a Ta’ata, and I am that now.’”(p. 94) The raffia cap and the porcupine spikes for this traditional rite are all gotten by destroying the raffia and the porcupine respectively. The pouring of water on Hansel’s new car by Club 49 members as a known way of blessing it and rejoicing with him highlights the role of nature in culture. Another instance where water is used for a cultural / traditional reason is in the quarrel between Madam Genevieve and her husband, Mr. John Efa. When Hansel dupes Madam Genevieve of her money, her superstitious beliefs make her accuse her husband of being the cause of her ill luck. She insists that he should follow her to the shrine of Alhaji Baba the soothsayer for the truth to be revealed. As soon as they enter the shrine, “[...].Alhadji Baba brought a basin of water[...]”(p. 205) which he uses mystically to prove Mr. Efa innocent.

Environmental stakes also lean on social issues in the text. The Chinese shop is described thus: “The left section was a display box with a wide variety of collectables, memorabilia, sea shells, corals as well as volcanic rocks”.(p. 59) Here, it is clear that man destroys elements of the ecosystem in order to decorate his surrounding as seen in the numerous natural items used in decorating the shop. Similarly, in the morning when Hansel is going to St Katherine, the weather is too bad as evident in the serious rain and thundering winds and “NO umbrella was good enough, and those who had raincoats of any sort and even shattered umbrellas joined some who had nothing but coco yam and plantain leaves, and they could be seen clung together for warmth in verandas”(p. 6) Cocoa yam and plantain leaves are natural umbrellas which succeed in protecting man when artificial ones fail. Such protection is what king, the dog, provides as Hansel asks the following rhetorical question while reminding his wife of the dog’s importance in their new lives “Do you know how many times we would have been robbed in this house if we didn’t have king (the dog) guarding us?”(p. 50) Natural elements also play a role in nomenclature. First of all, the name of the fictitious company for which Hansel works owes its name to nature- “CRABS AND SHELLS INTERNATIONAL, AVENUE DES GRANDS AMBITIONS, 1561, BANGUI. REPUBLIC OF CENTRAL AFRICA”(p. 60) “Crab” and “shell” which are the key words in the title are all natural creatures. Similarly, roads and streets are also named using names of natural elements. We come across “Open Apple Boulevard, Hong Kong, 22879112, Republic of China”(p. 60) “Apple” used in this name is obviously a natural element. So too is “lion” in the name “LIONS CLUB”(p. 110). Thus, as long as man maintains a good relationship with nature, one of the ways it will help him will be in terms of nomenclature and predictably if a natural creation is extinct, future generations will not be able to use it for naming.

Furthermore, the narrator brings out the untold damage man does to nature by mentioning a good number of items men possess which are made from other ecosystem elements. For instance, the Central Committee men carry black leather brief cases. Hansel’s office has an imposing rotating chair covered with black leather and each chair has huge sea shells. In each of these cases, animals are killed before the wool, skin, fur or shell is obtained. Man’s disregard for other creatures is epitomized in the following utterance made by Hansel’s child; “No, daddy was inside the big hall playing with the fishes in the glass box”(p. 133) The fish in the box serving as an instrument of man’s pleasure shows how man imprisons nature. Other things which owe their origin to nature include the “casingo” (cane) Mamy Casingo keeps to whip men who do not satisfy her sexually, the kola nuts she rewards elderly men with if they do well and the sweets younger men get for a good sexual performance. The “boukaro” (hut) in

the Ayaba Hotel where some club members sit and the raffia hat and brown “jumpa” (male gown) Ta’ata Bolingo is wearing are other items with origins in nature. So is the case with the basket mass boys carry around during offering and the piece of plywood Jesus of Akamanang-Ntang always fans himself with while speaking.

2. Ecopoetic Discourse on Man’s Conflicting Relationship with Nature

Asong uses stylistic elements to bring out his ecological vision. His ecopoetics dimension underscores both the endangerment of nature and its protection by man. The writer leans on proverbs, adages, and idioms to tell us how negatively human beings regard animals in particular and nature generally. This is because in most proverbs, adages and idiomatic expressions used, animals are made to represent evil, terror, horror, nuisance and other elements that can be viewed as negative and undesirable.

When the shareholders of The Crabs company travel to their supposed Bangui headquarter and start realizing that the whole business was Hansel’s plan to deceive them and take their money, the narrator says “One or two persons had begun to smell a dead rat.”(p. 196) The metaphorical comparison of Hansel’s dubious ways to a dead rat means that animals are regarded with disdain. This is intensified by the simile in which Hansel’s negative behavior make him likened to a cat thus: “But Hansel was so catlike in his behavior.”(p. 157) When it becomes clear that they have been duped, the shareholders who travelled to Bangui do not know how they will explain what has happened to them without looking stupid; and the way they express their concerns reflect negative mind sets as far as animals are concerned. Godfred Mukulu Foso asks “How do I narrate the story without looking like a swine”(p. 207) This simile in which he is likened to a pig and the rhetorical question clearly bring out the fact that in his opinion, pigs are associated with negativity. He further laments “Look at the sort of rats that are making a fool of me.”(p. 208) Here again, Mukulu Foso uses metaphor to associate rats to evil. In the same vein, when Marion discovers Hansel’s extra marital affairs and his illegitimate children and confronts him on the subject, the narrator says “He felt himself exasperated, like a cornered animal with nowhere whatever to go.”(p. 145) In this simile, animals are presented as helpless victims of man’s aggression and this reflects, in the bigger picture, the poor concern man has for other creatures. In an attempt to justify or defend himself, the strongest point of Hansel’s explanation is that the person who has revealed his unfaithfulness to her has closed the door to her happy marriage and “[...] has opened a can of warms, a veritable chamber of horrors”(p. 147) This metaphor links warms to horror and projects the fact that man views living creatures like warms from a negative perspective. In continuation, when Marion decides to

confront her husband's mistress, Salomey, we are told "That day she decided to take the bull by the horns"(p. 139) and she tells Salomey that if she does not stop seeing her husband, she will be reported to "[...]the women who want to protect and own their husbands against vipers like you"(p. 141). The metaphor in which Salomey is referred to as a bull and the simile in which she is likened to a viper in the respective expressions above reiterate the negative view man has of animals by linking them to negative and unwanted things. Similarly, when in December 1997 Salomey gives birth to a pair of twins, we are told that Hansel, the babies' father, has "[...]killed two birds with one stone"(p. 162) Despite the fact that the delivery is perceived as a good thing, the metaphor speaks only negatively of birds. In the same dimension, the situation of King, Hansel's dog, reveals much pathetic treatment laid on it by man. We realize that King is a huge dog, the result of a cross breed between a German shepherd and some another foreign specie. As if that was not enough, king has been castrated. This vivid description of king's condition is meant to expose to us man's vicious behaviour towards animals. Cross breeding the animal is changing the natural course of nature to suit human needs and, worst of all, by castrating the dog, man deprives it of its natural drive for sex as well as reproduction. This is certainly the apex of human cruelty towards animals. Man's relationship with animals is projected with man doing a good number of things that harm animals and threaten their survival. The narrator says:

Here, a lucky butcher was seen with two gigantic cane-rats, two fruit bats, a wriggling, bleeding, headless python strapped to a pole which he carried over his injured shoulders[...]an old woman passed with a basin of snails she had collected from under the coffee and cocoa trees, she kept pushing them back into the basin with a piece of wet stick as they continued to crawl to the edge of the basin in the vain hope of finding some escape (p. 6)

The adjectives "wriggling", "bleeding" and "headless" in reference to the python evoke the suffering of animals in the hands of man. Furthermore, the unsuccessful and restrained attempts by the snails to escape indicate man's imprisonment of animals for his selfish interest.

Equally, in Douala, "Rats bigger than pussycat could be seen fighting with dogs over some decaying foodstuff."(p. 80) People trying to hunt them are armed with sticks and cutlasses as if they are going to fight lions. If the rat is hurt it "[...] would cry like a child, shedding tears in the process"(Idem) The contrast in which rats that live freely are bigger than domesticated cats indicates the degree to which man neglects animals he controls and exploits. When wounded rats cry like human children, this simile is the writer's desire to raise awareness in humans that animals particularly and nature generally should be treated with tenderness in the same way human babies are treated. Similarly, there is a hungry, scrawny dog rummaging the rubbish pile, competing in the process with bony pigs with which they fiercely fight over food remnants. The

pathos evoked in the description of dog and pigs depict the helpless state of animals indicating man's neglect or maltreatment of the domesticated animals.

Equally, the narrator presents the abusive and extravagant consumption of animals to decry man's negative behavior towards them. Hansel's team to Bangui, which constitutes less than ten people, order two goats to be slaughtered and a wide variety of African and European fruits and dishes. This shows that man exaggeratedly destroys the nature for his stomach. This point is stretched further when Hansel announces to the other members "Instead of the dead fish in the hotel, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to treat you to a live show. A place where the fish dies only in your belly." (p. 188) This hyperbole implies that fish are kept for customers to choose which one they want to eat before it is killed. After these, "The rest of the nights were spent tracking down and killing mosquitoes." (Idem: 138) The hyperbole in which the killing of mosquitoes takes the whole night reveals that man destroys all aspects of nature that do not serve his interest. In another social gathering in Ayaba Hotel, Limen Isodore intentionally misquotes the idiom "cut your coat according to your size" and says "CUT YOUR GOAT ACCORDING TO YOUR SIZE". (p. 122) This misquotation indexes the goat as the victim.

As with animals, the narrator presents many instances where plants are neglected or mistreated by man. In this light, when Pa Bolingo visits his son Hansel, he is not at all happy at the way Hansel's wife, Marion, wastes resources, most of which are plants. In a mimicry, the old man disapprovingly says "Tomato, shaaaa" (he was imitating the sound of the frying pan!), fish, shaaaah, meat, shaaaah, chicken, shaaaah, everything shaaaaaaah." (p. 54) Asong uses the onomatopoeia "shaaaaaa" to relate man's abusive use of plants and other natural elements.

Comparisons also prove that man is callous about plants. To begin with, when Hansel visits St Catherine, he is not impressed by the physical looks of Sister Angela MacDonald. In describing her, he says her legs are "a pair of continuous yam-like lumps" (p. 15) without any distinct section that can be called a knee. The simile in which Hansel describes Sister Angela's knee which he finds disgusting as "yam-like" implies that in his view, yams are disgusting. We are further told that Sister Angela reminds Hansel of a rural science mistress who taught them in Primary School whom they nicknamed yam. The use of flashback coupled with the above simile indicates that man's disregard for nature is deep into man's DNA since it started long ago.

Equally, when Hansel tells his people that he has been offered a lucrative job as the Management Director of the Crabs Company, his family members see their poverty ended as one of them says "when your person is up the plum tree, you can be sure that you will eat the blackest and the best one." (p. 130) The metaphor in which trees and plums are used to portray a

societal vice like corruption is indicative of the negative image they have of nature as a whole and plants particularly. Another instance where nature is used to explain an undesirable social conduct is seen when the narrator says that if Hansel showed any love for the shareholders of Crabs, “it was like a farmer fertilizing his farm, not out of love for the soil, but so that it should give him more food.”(p. 179) Here again, nature is used to explain deceit and scamming which are serious social vices. Also, a member of the Crabs Company does not find Madam Genevieve’s sexually promiscuous life as a life worth living. He tells her that when the young men who are loitering with her will see that she no longer has anything material to offer, they will leave her and like birds jump into another branch and avoid falling with the broken branch.

Dwellings are central in environmental considerations and their states reflect the level of attention its inhabitants have for the environment at large. This is visible when we examine Asong’s representation of places like Douala, Bangui and the transformation centre. When Hansel and his business partners reach Douala to take a plain for Bangui, they have a stop-over at the Deido market. Here, several basins of garri or beans for sale stand on “[...] dead rats, rotten banana peelings.” (p. 79) The narrator says Douala is an extremely muddy city and as Hansel and his men get there, “As usual they were greeted by its gruelling heat, stinking gutters of stagnant water, the breeding ground for mosquitoes, dead dogs and tottering structures [...]”(p. 182) This indicates area, food and noise pollution harmful to the ecosystem and is further highlighted by the personification in which the heat “greet” them. As they enter Bangui, Madam Genevieve’s handbag falls on the dusty veranda of the airport and gets dirty. This shows that man’s neglect of nature comes back to haunt him.

3. Ecological Aesthetics of the Harmony Between Man and Nature

The writer also uses several idiomatic expressions and comparisons which show the worth or importance of animals. Asong presents to the readers the exemplary way man should live with animals through the relationship between Hansel and king, his dog. The narrator says:

Hansel seemed to show more concern for it(king the dog) than he did human beings. He would argue:”You have to continue to show love to this dog even when things are rough because it cannot understand like a child. That’s why I can prefer to feed the dog and let the child starve. I can tell the child what I will do for him tomorrow or the next week. For a dog it Has no such understanding”. And, based on that philosophy he stopped short of dressing a dog up and asking it to sit at table with the rest of the family. Whenever he returned from work the first question after greeting was: ”Has king had something to eat?” If by some error Marion had forgotten the way she usually did, he would give all his food to the dog.(p. 49)

When Hansel is dismissed from work he comes home holding only one parcel and it is the dog’s bones; meaning that there was no bread for the children. Through the irony in which Hansel

cares for dogs more than human beings and the subsequent ethical concern, highlights of the need for the protection of animals are visible.

Also, describing Hansel's strategy to bring in more worthy shareholders into his crabs business, Hansel tells potential shareholders the story of a man who owned a goose that laid golden eggs every morning. This analogy depicts the importance of the goose in particular and nature more generally. Similarly, when Hansel tumbles into wealth, he feels the best way to let people know his new status is by having a luxurious car. Showing the great value of the car, Asong uses animal images as he says "It stood like a rhinoceros, or even an African elephant, huge, imposing, scary at the same time"(p. 87) The simile that uses the might of the rhinoceros or the African elephant to show how great the car is indicates that natural elements constitute the apex of greatness. This is further highlighted by the use of the personification where the car is said to stand and the geographical allusion to Africa adds more reality to it. In addition, Gwendolyn's grandmother, in a bid to impress Hansel who wants to marry her granddaughter, says "Gwendolyn is from a family that delivers like ants."(p. 19) Asong uses simile to liken the rate of Gwendolyn's family's ability to deliver to that of ants; thereby approvingly showing ants as representing the height of the much needed procreation. A similar valorization of animals is raised in the metaphor where, comparing man to fish for a positive value, the writer says "For this reason, he (Hansel) never stopped looking for the kind of big fish whose presence was bound to attract more members."(p. 108) In the same dimension, talking about discipline, Asong still turns to nature. He observes that "He (Hansel) knew that the Principal of girl's colleges are notorious for guarding their students with the jealousy of a mother hen over her kids"(p. 25) Here, the novelist valorizes the bird by showing an outstanding positive quality they possess-that of appropriately looking over their younger ones; a quality only a few human beings like the girls' college principals possess. With regards to the flora, the narrator says:

A grass lawn spanned the entire length of the frontage along a fence that ran parallel to the main road....The inside of the fence was lined with cypress trees trimmed to take level with the height of the iron work which added another metre to the height. Apparently competing with the passing trains in loudness, there were two busy lawn mowers, one on each side of the entrance, keeping the grass low. Each lawn had a large flowerbed of carefully selected and sweet smelling varieties. Each of the flowerbeds carried a message meticulously shaped into letters of the alphabet: WELCOME TO ST. KATHERINE, GOD IS KING, NO PIDGIN ENGLISH, CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS, and the like (p. 13)

In this vivid description, there are many obvious instances where plants are given due worth. The adjective "busy" qualifying the lawn cleaner indicates the constant and endless efforts to keep the environment neat and attractive; while the compound adjective "sweet smelling varieties"

referring to flowers portray the worth and beautiful face of nature. Again, the planting of flowers and juxtaposition of cleanliness and godliness are great attempts valorize proper dwelling and protect flowers. We are further told that there is a circular lawn at the centre of which rises an iron pole on which hangs the national flag. At the base of the pole on the side facing the road some ixora flowers have been tendered and trimmed to form the words “WELCOME TO ST. KATHERINE”(p. 14). Facing the way that leads to the entrance into the principal’s office is another flowery message, “IN GOD WE TRUST.”(Idem) This vivid description shows how useful nature-plants and flowers- can be when we take good care of them. Thus the writer describes the friendly manner in which man relates to nature. With all this, St Katherine symbolizes environmental protection.

There are also great efforts put in place by Pastor Casford of Akamanang village for the villagers to up their hygienic and environmental conditions. When Casford settles in Akamanan village, he changes their attitude towards the environment as he says “I caused them to sweep their compounds, to keep the cooking pots away from dust. As a result, sickness has greatly reduced. The small ill-tended gardens that had yielded barely enough for immediate needs have, with time, been enlarged, drained and weeded, and surplus crops can now be stored against future use.”(p. 67) This contrast between the nasty surrounding and poor harvest of the past and the present clean setup and abundant output indicate the worth of protecting nature.

Hansel as an individual does a lot consciously to protect flowers and could be described as the author’s mouthpiece on environmental protection. One of the most significant things Hansel tells Salomey about his secondary school is that they were clearing their portions every Saturday. This is an example of the constant care man should give his environment especially when we consider that the cleaning is done regularly. The grown up Hansel does not neglect the environment. The description of his residence proves that his environmental consciousness has not changed. We are told that “In the front yard were two beautiful gardens in which he planted flowers of countless species. He loved flowers with a passion and whenever the weather was good and he was not going out you could hear him whistling among the flowers, his dog barking and capering round and round in amusement. He had flowers in his veranda, in the parlour and in his bedroom, which gave the whole environment a very special aroma.”(p. 38) Here, Asong uses positive adjectives like “beautiful”, “countless” and “special” to qualify flowers and this indicates that natural elements, in this case flowers, are being valorized. The hyperbole in which he is said to have flowers everywhere including his bedroom reinforces this view and presents an ideal situation where man takes nature with him everywhere; both mentally and physically.

The Nirvana hotel is also a symbol of man's love for nature. The hotel is surrounded by "the most beautiful flowers and plants"(p. 41). Its owner and manager is a botanist/horticulturist. The adjective "beautiful" qualifying flowers and plants and expressed in the superlative simply tell of the importance and worth attached to such flowers and plants. The choice of ownership or the fact that it is owned by a botanist/horticulturalist indicates Asong's wish that all people, like botanists, put in effort to produce good environments.

The repetitive appearance of the green colour gives the text a natural dimension. When the shareholders of the crab business hold their first meeting, the guest of honour, Hansel, arrives in a dark green suit, green coat and dark green painted shoes. Equally, the international director of the business, Lee Ping Yung, tells his Cameroonian colleagues that they will easily identify the Chinese delegation the day of their general assembly because they all put on green baseball caps. Equally, Salomey is said to have accepted Mr. Lawrence's proposal only because she wants to have a "green card". This constancy of 'green' is an effort to keep nature in the background of the reader's mind since green is a symbol of nature and environmental protection.

In proverbial sayings, idiomatic expressions and adages, nature is also praised. Asong says "Salomey would have to wait, with all her charm, whistling in the dark, like the beautiful flower in the elegy poem which blooms and blushes unseen in the air, withers and dies even when there's nobody to see it."(p. 159) The simile where flowers are used to portray Salomey's worth is directly telling us the importance Asong attaches to flower, compounded by the use of the adjective "beautiful". Also, when Cranford is saying how financially rewarding his shares in the crabs business have been to him, he says "We have been enjoying the fruits of our investment from day one."(p. 194) The metaphorical comparison of the huge financial rewards to fruits is proof of the high esteem Asong wants to transmit of fruits.

Equally, when Marion confronts Hansel about his marital unfaithfulness, Hansel makes Biblical allusion to the Book of Genesis that talk about fruits to defend himself. He says God created man and put him in the Garden of Eden; giving him the right to eat all fruits except fruits from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When man disobeyed god and ate from the forbidden tree, Hansel says, he was punished by God. This Biblical allusion indicates that there is a limit to which man uses natural resources or exploits nature even if it is for an understandable or good reason. When the red line is crossed punishment awaits the defaulter either from the authorities, from God or nature itself. This biblical allusion continues in conjunction with simile to valorize nature as we are told that as a result of confusion from his wife's discovery, "Hansel was pulling at a stray strand of hair below his Adam apple which

stood like some fruit that was stuck in his throat”(p: 58) This signifies that when man abuses nature, he should put it in order or else face the consequences.

Conclusion

This work set out to demonstrate that there is an ecological vision in *The Crabs of Bangui* by Linus Asong. First of all, it brings out the various reasons for man’s anti-environmental attitude from the economic, traditional/cultural, and social perspectives. Secondly, it brings to the lamplight the various stylistic elements used in presenting man’s anti-ecological behavior. Thus, air pollution, destruction of wildlife, living in untidy dwellings, destruction of plants, endangerment of animals, neglect of basic hygienic conditions and the destruction of micro organisms are presented from an aesthetics perspective. Finally, it presents the things man does that preserve the ecosystem and the elements of style used to bring them out. Here, the consistent cleaning of habitation, protection of animals and plants, valorization of living organisms and characters sensitizing others to live environmentally friendly lives are highlighted with focus on the style involved. Thus the writer raises ecological awareness in the reader using a wide variety of stylistic devices.

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