

Ecological Perspectives in Linus T. Asong's *No Way to Die*

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ABSTRACT

Given the environmental crisis plaguing the world, this paper investigates the manner in which Linus Asong represents man's link with nature in the novel *No Way to Die*. It attempts to provide an answer to the following question: how does Linus Asong portray the contact between man and nature? The work is based on the premise that the Cameroonian author depicts the relationship between human beings and other elements of the ecosystem with perspectives for improvement for the benefit of both man and nature. Second Wave Ecocriticism as outlined by Lawrence Buell is used to bring out novelist's ecological vision which posits that human beings need to improve their relationship with, or treatment of, other elements of nature so that the rapidly degrading ecosystem is saved.

Keywords: Environment, Fiction, Ecocriticism, Degradation, Protection, Vision

INTRODUCTION

The environment in which man lives is degrading at a rapid speed and many stake holders have put in efforts to try to prevent or reduce this environmental degradation because the ecosystem's continuous existence is also vital for man's survival on earth. Human action is directly responsible for this situation and he has to become more environmentally responsible or face his own doom with the destruction of the ecosystem. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996: xx-xxxi) share this opinion as they say:

[...] 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.

Literature can play a great role in environmental protection, albeit through the sensitization of readers, and this is exactly what this paper is out to demonstrate. Handley (2007: 27) affirms that literature can help in ameliorating our relationship with the environment as he opines that "[...] we need environmentally oriented literature more than ever, especially if it can remind us, as Jonathan Bate suggests, that "Although we make sense of things by way of words, we do not live apart from the world".

The study delves on the ecological crisis and the manner in which Linus Asong represents it in his works. It seeks to answer the question: how does Linus Asong delineate the intersection between man and nature? Specifically, this paper set out to argue that the Cameroonian writer raises ecological concerns in his novel *No Way to Die* in line with the holism that characterizes the African ecological thought by bringing out the manner in which man's actions harm the ecosystem, instances in which he lives in harmony with nature and the worth of nature to man. Second Wave Ecocriticism as developed by Lawrence Buell was used to bring

out the environmental issues in the text. The work presents the author's faunal narratives, gives his floral visions, highlights his ecological discourse on weather and seasons and ends with his description of dwelling.

Faunal Narratives

Man's relation with, and treatment of, animals in Asong's *No Way to Die*¹ leaves much to desire. The narrator presents this in the flashback in which he is talking about Dennis's school days in GS Bonalikondo. When Dennis begins school, Mr. Ayomba announces "You will begin your first day with a Sheep and goat test...If you pass you will sit on the "A" side. You become the Sheep of this class. You fail, you sit on "B" side. You become Goats. You mistake your side, twelve strokes of the cat-of-nine-nails". (NWTD:6) The writer uses the contrast between the "sheep" and the "goat" to present the fact that man has come up with a classification of animals by levels of importance depending on man's value judgment based on their worth to him. By this, some animals such as the goat are categorized as inferior and are liable to mistreatment.

Another way the narrator indicates man's maltreatment of animals is by revealing things made using animal parts. Dennis says he sees in Max's house eight big armchairs made from a substance he does not know because each is meticulously and sumptuously covered with a kind of dark brown wool or fur. This indicates that man is killing animals for wool, skin or fur.

Furthermore, through the proverbs, adages, similes, metaphors and idiomatic expressions, animals are painted negatively. For example, one of the cards Belinda, Max's daughter, brandishes to Dennis reads "GIVE NOT THAT WHICH IS HOLY UNTO THE DOGS, NEITHER CAST YE PEARLS BEFORE SWINE, LEST THEY TRAMPLE THEM UNDER THEIR FEET, AND TURN AGAIN AND REND YOU" (NWTD: 109) This metaphor in which things with qualities perceived as undesirable are compared to animals is Asong's intention to enlighten the readers on how negatively people view animals. Dennis to whom the card is brandished is deeply convinced that it is the girl's mother who engineered the girl to show him that card and he pathetically concludes "Surely, in their view, I was a swine." (NWTD: 110)

Also, when Dennis comes back from the medicine man's house and tells his family that his father Pa Ste has died, his uncle, Pa Andre, says "You have at last killed and buried my brother like a fowl, not so, you this empty thing?" (NWTD: 72) The simile in which Pa Ste is compared to a fowl when improper burial is being evoked implies that fowls have no right to a proper treatment when alive and when dead. Pa Ste's anger for the presumed shameful burial of his brother offends him so badly that he asks the rest of the family to permit him to beat up Dennis as he says they should give him the green light "To beat sense into the head of the goat" (NWTD: 55) Pa Andre's use of metaphor to compare the much-detested Dennis to a goat implies that goats, as well as other animals, are viewed with disrespect or hatred. Pa Andre in his fuming anger states that "I, Andre cannot become a dog because of a bone" (NWTD: 82) when implying that he cannot beg for anything from someone like Dennis. By metaphorically linking dogs to attitudes generally perceived as degrading like begging, Pa Andre is used by the writer to illustrate the disregard man has for animals. Even the medicine man to whose shrine Dennis takes the sick father before he dies proudly declares "This sickness is as a jigger to me. I will take it out in no time." (NWTD: 43) The metaphor implies that jiggers are likened to trivial, minor or insignificant things in life; and hardly tell of any good relationship between man and them.

¹ Henceforth NWTD

On his part, when Max discovers the disrespect his wife has for his friend Dennis and the dehumanizing treatment she subjects him to, he becomes furious and expresses his anger by saying “[...] I knew him, lived with him and played with him long before I ever heard that a viper, a vampire, a witch, a devil like yourself had been thrown out of hell into the world” (NWTD: 214). The simile and metaphor in which people considered evil are referred to as viper among other things highlight man’s disregard for animals and reflect his thought that he is far above other creatures in worth and value.

Relating to his father’s illness, Dennis says “Before Pa was brought to Mokap about two months ago the medicine man had asked for his spittle in the white shell of a snail.” (NWTD:43) The said shell is part of a snail and is vital for its survival and so this act represents a danger to the ecosystem. Asong brings out the theme of superstition which is at the origin of the destruction of natural and environmental elements.

However, there are several instances in the text where man protects living organisms. Animals are admired, loved, respected and protected as seen in the way Asong presents man’s relationship with animals. We are given the first hint of this when Max says as he is going to see Dennis, he drives slowly to avoid running over children, goats, pigs and dogs which keep jumping from one corner of the narrow dirty street to another. The fact that Max consciously drives at low speed to avoid hurting or killing animals is an indication that animals should be protected. The use of the adverb “low” relating to his driving speed even when he is in a great haste to see Dennis indicates the need for nature to be protected.

The great love man should have for animals in particular and nature in general is echoed in Dennis’s thoughts when he is leaving Mbongo to Menako. Dennis says:

But that morning I discovered that Mbongo had become part of me. Driving out of there was like pulling a fish out of water. The sight of the giant mahoganies and irokos, of bamboo huts, of skeletal dogs and sickly-looking children; the stench of uncovered latrine, of pigs, dead and alive, the endless croaking of frogs under the stones that supported my crumbling house. All these had become the very arteries through which my lifeblood flowed. The more I heard those sounds, smelt those smells, and saw those sights, the more secure I seem to feel among my never-ending worries...every inch away seemed to give me the feeling of a sharp knife cutting into and severing the umbilical cord of my very existence (*No Way to Die* : 93-94).

Through the use of simile, we are made to understand how difficult it is for Dennis to leave his environment and all the natural elements therein. Leaving the natural sights, sounds and smells of Mbongo is as hurting and risky as when a fish is taken out of water which is its natural and only habitat. These natural elements are raised to the status of vital body organs as indicated by the metaphor in which Dennis’s separation from his natural environment is said to equal the destruction of a human being’s artery. It is for this reason that Asong thinks nature should be freed from human control and imprisonment as symbolized by the rats that escape when Mr Verkomze pulls an empty box.

Again, when fowls fall from a speeding taxi, the police man in control rescues them and then removes a note book and pen from his pocket and painstakingly looks at the direction of the car; probably to book the driver. When the driver comes back to collect the birds, the police man charges him with the transportation of animals without a veterinary certificate which is risky because disease can be spread to other animals in other areas; and the driver stands the risk of paying much money. This deed by the policeman shows government protection of animals.

Asong equally valorizes animals through the proverbs, idiomatic expressions and adages that present animals positively. Max, in a bid to acquaint Dennis with the great authority he has in the University Teaching

Hospital declares that even if a man can successfully operate on a fly the man still needs his authorization to practice. The hyperbole in which someone is said to operate on a fly indicates that even the tiniest natural creature should be given all the attention and treatment it deserves. Similarly, commenting, though with some sarcasm, about Dennis's newfound hygienic and dressing standards, Gertrude tells Dennis that he now changes clothes like a chameleon. This comparison indicates that natural elements, especially animals, are attractive and worth imitating. This is confirmed as Dennis says "The colours the chameleon changed were its own colours, not borrowed. I, Dennis, owned nothing." (NWTD: 132)

Floral Visions

As is the case with animals, Asong presents many instances where plants are mistreated by man. The first glimpse of this is when Dennis leaves Mbongo to Menako and says "The very first thing I noticed about the town was the general absence of natural vegetation. In Fousap the vegetation was thin, but occasionally we saw clumps of trees, virgin forests and the like [...] The streets were very wide, very well tarred and there were no signs of stray animals anywhere". (NWTD: 102) The expression "the vegetation was thin" indicates the fact that man neglects the flora as he does nothing to promote its growth; the reason why it is almost inexistent especially in a town where most of the disregard for the environment and nature occurs. Even before getting to town, Dennis realizes that as contrasted to the village, "The vegetation was much thinner; there were trees quite all right, but these seemed to grow only along the river valleys. The rest of it was just plain Sahel." (NWTD: 95) This reiterates the fact the no conscious effort is made by man to promote the growth and/or survival of plants.

Here again, Asong through the proverbs and idiomatic expressions used acquaint us with the negative view man has of plants particularly and nature generally. In most of such usages, nature epitomizes negative things. For example, when Manda and the rest of the people are anxiously waiting for Max and the latter passes without noticing or recognizing them, Manda who was the most pompous of them says "I stood, almost turning into a stone with shame because all eyes were on me" (NWTD: 62) The metaphorical reference to the humiliated Manda as a stone indicates that stones are worthless and valueless. Similarly, when Dennis announces that his father has died and Pa Andre asked if Dennis has buried him, Dennis gives no answer. Pa Andre, fuming with anger, asks "Am I talking to a stick? Are there stones in your ears?" (NWTD: 72) The metaphors in which the detested Dennis is referred to as a stick and as a stone indicates the low esteem Pa Andre has for plants and nature generally.

Like the fauna, the flora is equally given a sense of importance in the text. This is because the writer presents several steps taken by man to protect plants and also uses a great deal of stylistic and linguistic devices to valorize plants. As a case in point, talking about how the central Cooperative came to existence, Verkomze vividly narrates that the introduction of fertilizers among other improvements in agriculture, added to the improvements of the soils in the other nearby areas encouraged businessmen to return and reestablish themselves in Mbongo. (NWTD :26) The Central Cooperative Agency that stores and distributes fertilizers from the government to farmers in the more interior villages then came to existence. In this flashback, the fact that the introduction of fertilizers coincides with other improvements in agriculture and soils indicates that man can successfully improve nature to his advantage.

In the same vein, Max says the road to Dennis's house showed him by Mossah leads from the centre of the town toward very tall trees at the village outskirts. Here, the narrator clearly indicates the fact that nature

does well especially when unperturbed by man. Max equally tells Dennis “We left the bush into the city [...] Whatever tree you find here is planted. Nothing wild. Menako tames nature.” (NWTD: 102) This implies that in the bush or village people do nothing consciously to grow trees or develop nature, as contrasted to the town where people plant the few trees, crops and other plants therein to beautify the environment. This explains why “Towards the G.R.A. artfully trimmed hedges of some unknown species of flowers lined both sides.” (NWTD: 102-103) The adverb ‘artfully’ in relation to the trimming of flowers indicates that time and effort have been sacrificed to give the environment and nature an attractive look.

Idiomatic expressions and adages that valorize plants are also used in the text. Mr Ayomba tells his graduating pupil “You are all going out into the world that lies before you like an unpathed ocean of water.” (NWTD: 8) The simile where the unexplored world before the children is likened to untainted ocean water indicates that the graduates, as well as the opportunities before them, are as good as an unpolluted body of water. He adds “Let the sky be your limit [...] that you have the moral obligation as fruits of this noble institution, to leave your footsteps in the sands of time”. (NWTD) The metaphorical reference to the pupil as fruits implying good ambassadors indicates the worth attached to nature; and their footsteps in the sands of time means leaving an everlasting and timeless impact on society.

Equally, positive paintings of nature and natural landscape indicate the valorization of nature. In a flashback, Dennis states that in the month of April 1964 there was a Provincial Arts and Crafts Exhibition in Bonalikondo. He exhibited five paintings of the local landscape and tribal dances which won 250,000francs as first prize. Dennis shows how rewarding it is to project nature and for this to be done, nature needs to be in good shape so that its presentation can merit attention and deserve awards. The fact that the paintings of landscape earn him the first prize and the sum of 250,000frs as financial reward symbolize the importance of nature.

Furthermore, when Max goes to Dennis’s house to find out why the latter is doing so poorly in studies and medicine specifically, he realizes that Dennis has an insurmountable interest in painting; and most of his painting project the environment and nature at large. Max says “There were some two large papers on which Dennis had drawn and painted something on them. One of them was hanging over the side of the cupboard so that you could see what looked like the branch of a tree. It also looked like a hand with very long fingers.” (NWTD: 145). The branch of a tree and the hand with long fingers are all elements of nature at various levels. Dennis could have painted something artificial like a house or a car. But the fact that he chooses to draw a natural element is a conscious attempt to valorize it. The fact that the painting seems ambiguous to Max as he says, “I did not understand it. But I can see a man’s hand, an eye, a palm tree...” (NWTD: 192) symbolize the fact that human beings have limited knowledge of nature and the environment; the reason why they fail to protect it and even end up endangering it. Elton Moore, unlike Max, understands the portrait of nature with more insight and represents the small proportion of mankind that really understands the need to protect the ecosystem.

Equally, referring to their headmaster, Mr Ayomba, the young Dennis says “Under his armpit, he carried his usual ‘casingo’, a cane which he brandished as he spoke.” (NWTD:6) Dennis later says “The cat-of-nine-tails would finish me.”(NWTD: 7) The neologism in the word ‘casingo’ and the compound noun “cat-of-nine tails” refer to a cane used to punish recalcitrant pupils and consequently symbolize discipline and order.

Nature equally acts as a shade both at the literal and literary levels. Dr Max parks his car under a tree and it is under a tree that Dennis takes refuge when thinking about Max's offer to help him out of poverty. The tree here symbolizes protection and thus the fact that both the car and Dennis find comfort under a tree signify the idea that nature provides protection for man as long as he lives in harmony with it.

Ecological Discourse on Weather and Seasons

Weather and atmospheric conditions are parts of Asong's environmental narrative. Most often, they epitomize negativity. For instance, Manda, who sees signs that rain will surely fall and knows the damage it will cause on their ramshackle house, says "I looked over the trees at the sky, the eye of God, as my father would call it. What I saw was not rain clouds but a dark wicked frown. A portion of the clouds that rose over our little corner of the village stood like a big eyelid about to squeeze out a tear of sadness. And why, I wondered angrily, would any God who had eyes to look at us not weep?" (NWTD: 15) The rain that is about to fall is a major source of concern for Manda and others. The simile in which the nimbus cloud is likened to an eye that is about to drop tears represents the tears that the occupants of Dennis's house in which each rainfall always brings tears is about to drop with the forthcoming rain. The personification of the rain and the rhetorical question in which Asong asks why God should not weep is symbolic in the sense that God weeps for the poor way in which man treats nature.

When the much-dreaded rain finally falls, the narrator says "... the cruel wind, like the breath of God panting in annoyance" (Idem) is attacking the house from all sides, angrily reducing the house into several pieces and depositing it in the black bush surrounding Dennis's house and is ready to swallow everything. The adjective "cruel" used in qualifying the wind means that the wind and nature at large are seen negatively. The use of simile in which the wind and God's breath are likened coupled with the personification as we are told the annoying wind attacks angrily indicate that the wind represents a danger to mankind since only unwanted things come out of anger. While all this is happening, Dennis is standing under a tree behind the house, with his arms folded and his head held down; showing no concern about the rain and storm that are threatening his house. Dennis's escapist tendency as evident in the fact that he stands idle while his house made up of natural elements is being threatened symbolizes man's abandonment of nature and the fact that human beings are not fully conscious of the environmental stakes and the danger he stands to face if the ecosystem is damaged.

Heat or high temperatures are also negativity connoted. Immediately Dennis leaves Mbongo and goes to Menako, his first observation concerns not studies that take him there but the temperature. Addressing Max, he says "It is so hot in this place. Do you have rains here?" (NWTD: 110) The contrast between the village, Mbongo, and the town, Menako, is reminiscent of the global warming whose origin is in the towns. The unwanted heat that welcomes Dennis to Menako and which he obviously dislikes is symbolic of his stay in town which will be troublesome. This explains why when Dennis accepts the fate that his stay in town is doomed to fail, he no longer bothers about the heat. This is seen clearly as Max declares that he enters Dennis's room which is heating up and is forced to take off his coat, undo his tie and unbutton his shirt because of the heat in the room while Dennis does not seem to bother about the excruciating heat. The ever increasing heat in Dennis's house symbolizes the increasing difficulties that Dennis faces in Max's house and Dennis's indifference is reminiscent of the fact that some people are insensitive to elements of nature such as global warming.

The portrayal of weather and natural elements as representing negative elements like failure and danger is even more glaring. At the very beginning of the novel, there is a glimpse of how devastating rain can be. After threatening the whole town for three successive days the rain finally falls with all fury as if it would never stop. The rain starts gradually with a gentle quiet breeze that blows throughout the night, as if the sprawling city, a veritable god, lay in unquiet slumber while a million invisible spirits fanned him with as many palm fronds while he slept. Early in the morning, a dangerous mixture of rain and storm devastates the entire neighbourhood. Asong uses a good number of stylistic devices to represent the weather as potentially harmful to man. The personification of rain due to the fact that it is awarded a fury fused with the metaphor in which it is referred to as a god as well as the hyperbole in which we are told the wind blows as if a million unseen hands fan the god highlight the danger the rain and wind represent to man and indicate the anger of nature against man's destruction.

Time and season are other natural elements which Asong presents from a negative perspective. This is because they foretell misfortune for some characters. Night or darkness symbolizes ill-luck since most of the undesirable things happen only at night. To begin with, when Max sends a letter to Dennis expressing his desire to help Dennis out of poverty, Dennis does not like the wordings of the letter and refuses to accept the offer; which puts him and his wife at loggerheads. Big Mama tells Max that "They were not talking nicely in the night" (NWTD: 31) The fact that the conflict explodes at night means that the night carries a negative connotation. As a result of this conflict, Manda leaves Dennis's house and it is the night that Asong chooses for this to be revealed. Dennis states that from a distance he sees no light in the house since it is at night and when he opens the door, he discovers that Manda and the children have left him. This absence of light in his house symbolizes the departure of the only light in his life- his wife.

The darkness that symbolizes negativity in Dennis's life follows him from the village to Mbongo. Dennis declares that the very first night he spends in Max's house, it looks very much as if it is Gertrude's character he has come to study and not his books. The night, in this case, symbolizes Gertrude's troubles to Dennis which partly contribute to his failure in Menako. In addition, Max tells us this when he enters Dennis's room; "Total darkness everywhere [...] I paused for a whole minute to get acquainted with the darkness, to get my bearing right" (NWTD: 164) The repetition of the word "darkness" symbolizes Dennis's attitudes that shock Max and not physical darkness. The darkness echoes Dennis's inability to have a focus, isolation and lack of self-confidence and esteem. To corroborate this, Dennis himself says "There was no light in the room, yes. But was I not seeing the world? Was it the room that was dark or my mind?" (NWTD: 167) Using the rhetorical question, Dennis lets us understand that darkness is mental and psychological and not physical. Equally, it is not a simple coincidence that Dennis's wife, Manda, and their two children Dieudonne and Felix arrive Menako after midnight. The fact that this is the night Dennis attempts suicide implies that the night or darkness is a bearer of doom.

On the other hand, there are instances in which Asong uses time/season to paint a positive image of nature. In this connection, daylight or bright day, the sky, the sun and the stars symbolize good, success and anything positive. In line with this, it is during the day, in the morning, that Max arrives Dennis' house with the aim of helping him out of his dehumanizing poverty as "At 9 o'clock that morning Max arrived." (NWTD: 90) His arrival in the morning symbolizes the dawn of a new promising period in the poverty-ridden life of Dennis and the other members of his family. This is because Max has come to rescue his old friend from poverty as he earlier indicated in his letter that he wants to raise Dennis from nothing to something great. In the same vein, it is in the morning that Dennis who has been vehemently objected to the idea of receiving Max

in his house or even seeing him gives hopes to his relations especially his wife, who sees Max as a saviour, when he insists he would be there to see Max. in the text, we see that "That morning, especially, he kept telling me that they would return in good time to see Dr. Essemu" (NWTD: 53) The use of the adverb "especially" implies that probably Dennis had indicated that he would receive Max but that morning he seemed to have been more serious to the satisfaction of all and the morning, therefore, symbolizes hope and potential success.

The sky also used in the text symbolizes success or greatness. Dennis says. "It was true that Max had reached the sky that was once promised me, Dennis." (NWTD: 35) Dennis uses this combination of contrast and flashback to bring forth the symbolic nature of the sky as a sign of success. Dennis is echoing the words of Mr Ayomba, his primary school teacher, who said during their graduation that the sky would be their limit. Since Dennis was by far the most intelligent in his badge, it was assumed he was the 1st person referred to. Max who was one of the dullest pupils finally reaches the sky-success, riches, wealth and fame while Dennis is worthless. In this case, the sky symbolizes success, riches, fame and everything considered good.

Nature is also presented as a symbol of fame and success when Pa Andre, Dennis' uncle, is appreciating Max for coming to help their son Dennis out of abject poverty. He tells Max "It is so because He had made people like you who are the sun, moon and stars" (NWTD: 6) In this context, the sun, the moon and the stars signify success, fame and wealth, for these are the values engulfed in Max as far as Pa Andre is concerned.

The Presentation of Dwelling

Dwellings are very central as far as environmental considerations are concerned and their states reflect the level of care its inhabitants have for the environment at large. Asong brings out a good number of incidents that indicate man's negative attitude towards the ecosystem through their interaction with their dwelling. Dennis's residence is a case in point. Dennis himself refers to his house as "All dust, swimming pool for the fowls." (NWTD:1) He laments if there is anything he has not done to stop the house from leaking except buying zinc; a thing he says he cannot afford money for except he steals which he can never do. He then becomes a passive observer as his house deteriorates and is menaced by the impending win. With his hands clasped behind, he says "My hands clasped behind me. Hands indeed. Fleshless hands" (NWTD: 1) Asong uses the metaphor "swimming pool for the fowls" to illustrate how neglected and unhygienic the house is, and this symbolizes the deplorable state of the environment since residence is the core nucleus of society. Furthermore, Dennis's hands clasped behind symbolize the fact that man has given up on his surrounding and prefers to be a passive observer rather than putting in conscious efforts to make it better. Max says

I even began to feel that I had been led to the wrong place because the house did not look in the least habitable. It was a tasteless, dilapidated hut of sun-dried bricks and thatches which stood almost alone at the end of an abandoned road that was once used by the defunct Coast Timber company for exploiting forest produce. When I went up to the termite-ridden door and tried to shake it, it looked as if the whole thing would collapse (NWTD: 30)

The adjectives used like "tasteless", "dilapidated" and "termite-ridden" are indicative of how neglected Dennis's house is. This is further intensified by the fact that the house stands alone in an abandoned street which symbolizes the abandonment of the environment.

Manda, for instance, tells Dennis "Look at the spider web you call the house" (NWTD: 39) and adds "Go in and look at the pigsty sticks we lie on, calling it our bed." (NWTD: 40) The metaphorical comparison

of the house and a spider's web and the bed with a pigsty respectively, both negative metaphors, indicating that the surrounding is in very bad shape.

Another dwelling presented negatively from an environmental perspective is G.S Bonalikondo. Dennis in a flashback tells us about his first day in GS Bonalikondo as he says "I saw myself on the first day at school, bare-footed, jiggers all over my toes, my small 'jumpa' cut and stitched from my mother's old loincloth. Otherwise, I would be naked" (NWTD: 6) Asong's use of hyperbole in the expression "jiggers all over my toes" imply that the school premises is filthy since only unclean areas normally contain jiggers. On its part, the Central Cooperative in Mbongo also shows enormous signs of dilapidation. Max tells us, when one looks at the Central Cooperative building from a distance, "the whole structure looked like a half-interred, gigantic coffin on the crest of an enormous grave" (NWTD: 19) The use of simile in the expression "the whole structure looked like a half-interred, gigantic coffin" implies that the building has been abandoned on its own and the situation where the structure is compared to a coffin is Asong's use of symbolism to indicate that the environment is almost at its own grave due to human action. When Max enters the main office, he sees an old newspaper lying open on the table with the remnants of groundnuts Mr Verkomze has been eating and when the latter pulls out a box from one corner of the office, two big rats flee from the box. The presence of rats in the box and their escape when the basket is touched symbolizes the imprisonment of nature through human acts.

A great deal of effort is put in place to preserve the environment as far as the habitation is concerned. Dennis seems to be quite aware of what man gains from his peaceful coexistence with nature. This is probably why he glorifies nature as he says "When as we drove away, I waved out of the window, I was not waving to Manda and the relatives, as Max did. I was waving to the sights and smells of Mbongo jungle: dogs, the stench, the broken houses, the gutters reeking with excrement and the trees through whose dark canopies the rays of the sun have never shone". (NWTD: 94)

The writer equally highlights the important role natural elements play in man's life as part of the ecosystem further enlightening on the need for man to protect such natural elements even for his own good. In order to solve Dennis' presumed mental disorder, Pa Andre fuming with anger declares "We will tie his hands and feet and take him to the medicine man and pay him to wash him with cleansing herbs" (NWTD:53). The adjective "cleansing" used to describe herbs implies that herbs play a vital part in solving human health problems, one of which is madness, provided the herbs are protected and not extinct by man.

"Max ordered a whole chicken for himself and then a plate of rice, salad and some potato chips" (NWTD: 96) when they stop to eat. The theme of gluttony as brought out here especially through the use of the adjective "whole" which hints a note of exaggeration implies that man wastes away natural elements unnecessarily.

Dennis's children, Dieudonne and Felix, go down the stream to look for crabs. When Asong chooses little children to be the ones to go and look for crabs in the river it is to let us understand that the crabs are easily accessible; probably because they are in abundance since man lives in harmony with them. We also see Dennis sleeping and Manda is cracking 'egusi' for soup the following day.

Also, the proverbs Asong uses indicate what humans gain by living harmoniously with nature. For example, Big Mama tells Dennis when he is leaving for Menako; "My son, do not come out of the river without a tadpole in your mouth."(NWTD: 90) The metaphorical comparison of Max's rich household to a river and

the wealth Dennis can get from there to a tadpole is Asong's valorization of nature and indication of the benefits man gets from living in harmony with nature.

Conclusion

Asong's *No Way to Die* is pregnant with ecological visions as the author presents man's conflicting relationship with nature, his harmonious ties with it and the conscious steps he takes to protect the environment in order to continue enjoying the highlighted benefits he gets from it as part of the ecosystem. Thus, Asong in the said text passes across his environmental view which is based on the fact that man needs to do more to protect nature which is in line with the traditional African ecological belief that preaches the protection of living organisms as such elements and man cohabit in a context of mutual sustainability.

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