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**THE REPRESENTATION OF AN ECO-COMMUNITY IN TIMOTHY WANGUSA'S
SELECTED POETRY.**

By

WEGOYI JAFAL

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DECLARATION

I WEGOYI JAFAL, hereby declare that this dissertation is an original work and has never been submitted for a degree in this or any other University or institution of higher learning.

Signature 

Wegoyi Jafal

Date..... 02 / 12 / 2025

APPROVAL

I hereby affirm that this thesis, titled: "*The Representation of an Eco-Community in Timothy Wangusa's selected poetry*", has been duly compiled under my supervision and is hereby forwarded for examination with my approval.

Approved



Dr. Eve Nabulya

Date.....

02/12/2025

DEDICATION

To my sister Kagoya Fatuma and all my nephews and nieces.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the representation of an eco-community in Timothy Wangusa's selected poetry. It explores how the poet articulates ecological consciousness and communal identity through imaginative and linguistic strategies rooted in African cosmology and cultural heritage. The research is framed around three central themes that together shape an eco-poetic vision: the tripartite connection between humans, the landscape, and animals; the human-nature-spirit connection; and language as a tool for mapping interconnectivity from an eco-linguistic perspective.

First, the study examines the tripartite connection between humans, the landscape, and animals, arguing that Wangusa constructs a vision of an eco-community where these entities coexist in reciprocal and interdependent relationships. The landscape, particularly elements like "mountains, soil, and rivers," are depicted not merely as physical features but as living entities that hold memory, sustains life, and interacts meaningfully with humans and non-human creatures. Animals, in Wangusa's poetry are not passive subjects but active participants in the ecosystem, reflecting the world view that challenges anthropocentric models and embraces holistic interdependence.

Secondly, the study explores the human-nature-spirit connection, showing how Wangusa blurs the boundaries between the physical and metaphysical. Nature is portrayed as both material and spiritual, acting as a mediator between the living and the ancestral realm. Through his poetic imagination, Wangusa presents natural elements as sacred repositories of memory, origin, and identity. This connection affirms the belief in nature's animacy and its role in embodying cultural and spiritual values. It also reflects how traditional African ecological thought recognises the sacredness of the land and its centrality to personal and communal being.

The study will focus on language and the representation of connectivity, drawing from eco-linguistics to examine how Wangusa employs language as both a cultural and ecological tool. His use of indigenous terms, bilingual expressions, and poetic narrative techniques localises his poetry and situates the environment within the lived experiences of the community. This linguistic rootedness reinforces ecological meaning by showing that language itself reflects relationships with the land. It further reveals how communication between humans and nature is culturally constructed and symbolically powerful.

The study is grounded in ecocriticism, particularly drawing on the Biophilia Hypothesis theory developed by Kellert and Wilson (1993), which suggests an innate human affinity with nature. It also incorporates Lawrence Buell's concept of environmental representation to examine how ecological relationships are constructed in literary texts. The research employs a qualitative, library-based approach using textual analysis. It involves close reading of Wangusa's selected poems, focusing on both thematic and structural elements, to explore intertextuality and the construction of ecological awareness.

Overall, this study argues that Wangusa's poetry offers a compelling ecological vision grounded in the African experience. His poetic strategies do more than celebrate nature for they challenge dominant discourses by presenting interconnectedness as a cultural, spiritual, and ecological truth. In doing so, Wangusa contributes to the broader field of African eco-poetics by emphasising the need to view humans, landscapes, and non-human beings as part of one coexistent system.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This study examines Wangusa's representation of an eco-community in his selected poetry. It analyses how his poetic vision reflects and celebrates the complex dynamics between humans and the various elements of the landscape including mountains, lakes, rivers, hills and valleys plus the vegetation cover. Studies on Wangusa's work usually focus on his symbolic representation of the mountain but pay little attention to the nuanced ways in which he portrays the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals to create an eco-community.

The Bagisu people, also known as Bamasaba (descendants of Masaba), are a Bantu ethnic group predominantly found in the eastern region of Uganda, particularly around the slopes of Mount Elgon, locally known as Masaba. According to oral tradition and historical accounts, their ancestral father, Masaba, is believed to have emerged from the caves of Mount Elgon. This myth of origin forms a vital part of the Bagisu's collective identity and is supported by various anthropological and cultural studies.

Among the Bagisu, cultural practices are strongly tied to their environment, with the "Imbalu" circumcision ceremony standing out as one of the most defining traditions. This ritual, making the initiation of boys into manhood, is not only a rite of passage but also a reflection of communal values such as bravery, unity, and continuity. The ceremony reinforces the Bagisu's identity and has earned them widespread recognition for maintaining a culturally rich and resilient community.

One of the most prominent literary voices from this community is Timothy Wangusa, a celebrated Ugandan poet, novelist, and scholar who himself a **Mumasaba** (member of the Bagisu). Wangusa's literary works are deeply rooted in his cultural background and landscape. In his poetry,

he draws heavily on the traditions, language, and ecological realities of his people, making his writing both culturally expressive and environmentally significant. This research focuses on Wangusa's selected poems to explore how the concept of an eco-community is constructed and communicated. His poetry not only reflects the cultural and spiritual values of the Bamasaba but also engages with the natural environment in ways that reveal deep interconnectedness between humans, the land, and nonhuman life. Through his eco-poetic lens, Wangusa presents the Bagisu landscape not just as a setting but as a living, sacred component of identity and community.

This study therefore explores the representation of an eco-community in the selected poetry of Timothy Wangusa. It examines how Wangusa portrays the tripartite connection between humans, landscapes, and non-human animals; interrogates the depiction of the human-nature-spirit connection as a foundation for communal harmony; and analyses how language is used to construct and reinforce interconnectivity, ultimately presenting a vision of ecological balance and coexistence in his poetry.

I note that Wangusa's representation of the connection between entities gestures towards the fact that humans and non-human form one community.

1.2 Background

Timothy Wangusa is a renowned Ugandan writer, celebrated for his Thought-Provoking Fiction and Poetry. His notable works include the novels, *Upon This Mountain* (1989), *Betwixt Mountains and Wilderness* (2015). Looking at poetry, Wangusa's Poetry is a masterful blend of lyricism, depth, and complexity, offering a rich textured exploration of Ugandan society, culture and politics. Among his poetry anthologies include; *Anthem for Africa* (1995), *A Pattern of Dust* (1965-1990), *Poems of Salute to Mountain Elgon* (2017), and *The State is My Shepherd and Other Poems* (2022).

His poems look into the intricate relationship between identity, culture, history and the natural world, revealing a profound interconnectedness between human experience and the natural landscape yet this has received minimal scholarly attention.

In Contemporary literary studies, there has been a growing shift toward examining how writers imagine, construct, and communicate human relationships with the natural environment. This scholarly development encapsulated in ecocriticism, eco-linguistics and eco-philosophy arises from global concerns over ecological degradation, the erosion of indigenous environmental knowledge, and the need to re-evaluate humanity's embeddedness within ecosystems. African literature, in particular, has increasingly been recognised as a repository of ecological wisdom, where cultural memory, oral traditions, and spiritual cosmologies intertwine to affirm the interconnectedness of humans, nonhumans, and the landscape. Within this intellectual climate, poetry becomes a significant medium through which ecological identities and communal environmental ethics are articulated.

Timothy Wangusa, one of Uganda's most respected poets, contributes greatly to this discourse. A Mumasaba writer from the mountainous region of Elgon, Wangusa's poetry is deeply grounded in the cultural, ecological, and spiritual sensibilities of his people. His work reflects a profound attachment to the land, mountain symbolism, communal living, and ecological reciprocity. Drawing from indigenous cosmologies, oral narratives, and the rhythms of everyday life, Wangusa presents nature not merely as a backdrop but as a living participant in human existence. His linguistic choices, imagery, and the thematic concerns often foreground an eco-community (an interdependent network of humans, animals, plants, ancestral spirits, and the sacred landscape).

Within the broader terrain of African ecocritical inquiry, Wangusa's poetry stands out for its holistic vision of an ecological community life. His poems explore the ethical obligations between

people and their environment, the sacredness of the land, the cultural significance of mountains, and the ecological knowledge embedded in indigenous worldviews. Yet, despite his prominence and the richness of his environmental imagination, scholarly attention to the ecological dimensions of Wangusa's poetry remains limited. Many studies have focused on his linguistic creativity, Christian symbolism, or cultural identity, leaving a gap in understanding how his work represents and theorises an eco-community.

It is against this backdrop that the present study examines the representation of an eco-community in the selected poems of Timothy Wangusa. The study positions his poetry within contemporary ecocritical debates and asserts that his imaginative reconstruction of ecological relationships offers valuable insights into indigenous environmental ethics, communal identity, and harmonious coexistence with nature. Through a close reading of his selected poems, the research seeks to demonstrate how Wangusa conceptualises the environment as a shared, sacred, and interdependent community.

This study therefore aims to understand people's connections with nature through landscape socialization. Timothy Wangusa's selected poetry will be used to discuss various aspects in which nature and humans interrelate with each other, responding to Kellert's views. Through his works, Wangusa provides a unique perspective on the intersections between humans and the natural worlds, one that is deeply rooted in his "Bamasaba" heritage and cultural context.

On Eco criticism and Literature

African literature has attracted many ecocritical readings since the emergence of the field in the late 20th century, but the representation of ecological identity has received limited attention. Regardless of this, ecocriticism has emerged as a prominent theoretical framework within literary

studies, emphasising the interconnectedness between literature and the environment. Scholars such as Lawrence Buell (2005) and Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) have played key roles in defining and advancing the field of Ecocriticism, contributing foundation works that explore ecological dimensions of literature. Buell's seminal work, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) provides a comprehensive overview of the development of Ecocriticism and its potential implications for literary theory and environmental advocacy. Buell argues that literature has a crucial role to play in shaping environmental consciousness and fostering sustainable attitudes towards nature. Buell's insights underscore the transformative potential of literature in addressing pressing environmental concerns, positioning ecocriticism as a vital tool for both literary theory and environmental advocacy.

Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) in, "The Ecocriticism Reader," brings together diverse perspectives on the intersection of literature and the environment, he highlights the interdisciplinary nature of ecocritical inquiry. Due to its wide topics ranging from wilderness literature to eco feminism, Glotfelty's compilation serves as an invaluable resource for scholars to seek and explore the rich diversity of ecocritical thought.

Sarah D. Gray (2011) looks at the ecological dimensions of African texts in the article, "Ecocriticism and African Culture". Gray examines how African writers engage with environmental issues and culture, shading light on the unique perspectives and concerns that shape African ecocritical discourse. By far, there are growing African voices within the broader critical conversation, and Wangusa's works expand the scope of ecocriticism to encompass diverse cultural contexts and literary traditions.

Landscape is often perceived as a mere physical environment, but it is also a profound reflection of the identity of its inhabitants. The natural surroundings that shape our daily lives, from the

majestic mountains to the serene lakes, hence influencing our values, beliefs and behaviours. Therefore, the landscape is not just a physical environment, but is also a reflection of identity of its inhabitants. As Edward Relph (1976,p.43) argues, a place is a fundamental aspect of human existence and it plays a crucial role in shaping our sense of self. This reflects the community of Timothy Wangusa, where Mount Masaba is not only considered a physical environment but regarded as a symbol of identity and life. The mountain embodies ancestral heritage, spiritual practices, cultural values, and connection to the land. Pointing to the above, one can mention that landscapes not only reflect identity but also shape it. According to Yi-Fu Taun (1977,p.9), the physical environment influences our experiences, perceptions and understanding of the world, which in turn shapes our identity.

Similarly, Buell (2005) asserts that the landscape is not just a backdrop for human experience but an active participant in shaping our sense of self. It is important to note that poetry employs landscape as a metaphor for identity, exploring the complex relationship between the physical environment and the self. Poetry frequently explores the concept of place and belonging, highlighting the ways in which landscape shapes our sense of identity and community as Relph (1976) notes that place is a fundamental aspect of human existence, and our experiences of place are essential to our sense of self. Poetry often reflects the complex relationship between landscape, culture, and identity. This research aims to show how Timothy Wangusa's poetry reflects and shapes ecological identity and environmental consciousness among the Bagisu. As Helen Tiffin (2007,p.19) argues, landscape is not just a physical environment, but a cultural construct that reflects the values, beliefs and practices of a particular community.

1.3 Statement of The Problem

Scholarship on African poetry has generally acknowledged the use of elements of the environment as a symbol for various ideas. Scholars such as Okpewho (1992), Finnegan (1970), and Jonathan Bate (1991) emphasize nature's role in representing communal values. In recent studies for instance Ojaide (1999), Nwagbara (2010), and Kahinde (2011) have explored the natural environment in line with environmental activism and as a backdrop in African poetry.

However, none of these works pays attention to the representation of connections between different entities, which highlight that nature is an active participant in an interconnected ecological system. The concept of a balanced eco-community where humans, animals, and the landscape co-exist and co-creat meaning has not been sufficiently explored in African poetic studies.

Wangusa's poetry has attracted substantial critical engagement in recent times. However, much of these studies including Alfred Okello's (2005) analysis on the style and form in Wangusa's poetry, Arinitwe's (2023) analysis of graphological deviation in Timothy Wangusa's poetry and Danson Kahyana (2024), who points out that Wangusa sings against guns and goons as a way of defending communal dignity against elites who occupy the lofty peaks of authority yet abandon citizens on barren foothills. It is clear that these scholars concentrate on matters of theme and style but not on Wangusa's representation of human - non-human relations.

This study seeks to address that gap by analysing how Wangusa's poetry constructs an ecocommunitarian vision of human-nature relations grounded in interdependence and mutual belonging.

1.4 General Objective

To critically examine how Timothy Wangusa's selected poems represent the concept of an eco-community, highlighting the ecological relationships, cultural worldviews, and environmental consciousness embedded in his poetic imagination.

1.5 Specific Objectives

- a) To examine the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and non-human animals in the selected poetry of Timothy Wangusa.
- b) To interrogate the representation of the human-nature-spirit-connection in the selected poetry.
- c) To analyse the role of language in reimagining an eco-community in Wangusa's selected poems.

1.6 Research Questions

1. How is the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals represented in the selected poems of Timothy Wangusa?
2. How do the selected poems represent the human-nature-spirit connection?
3. How does Wangusa use language to reimagine an eco-community ?

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Representation: This refers to the way in which something is portrayed or depicted. In this context, this means how Timothy Wangusa's poetry shows the relationship between humans and the natural environment. In context of the study, it refers to how Timothy Wangusa uses poetic language and imagery to depict the concept of an eco-community, illustrating the relationship between people, nonhuman animals, and the natural environment.

Human Relations: Refers to the interactions, connections and dynamics between people and the world around them. In this study, it is about how people interact with and relate to the natural environment.

Ecocriticism: Is a literary and cultural theory that examines the relationship between literature and the natural environment. It looks at how literature reflects and shapes attitudes towards nature, environmental issues, and ecological concerns. Ecocriticism often analyses how human interactions with the environment are portrayed in literature, as well as how literary texts engage with ecological themes such as sustainability, environmental degradation, biodiversity and the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Poetry: is a form of literary expression characterised by the use of rhythm, metre, sound devices, and figurative language to evoke emotions, convey ideas and create aesthetic experiences. It often employs techniques such as imagery, metaphors, and symbolism to communicate complex meaning in a condensed and heightened language. Poetry can take various forms including sonnets, Free verse and epic poems and it encompasses a wide range of themes and subjects ranging from love to nature to politics and social justice. At its core, poetry invites readers to engage with language in a deeply imaginative and emotive way, offering unique insights into the human experience. Poetry is important in this study because it provides a creative and expressive medium through which Timothy Wangusa explores and communicates the interconnectedness of humans, nature, and culture, effectively capturing the essence of an eco-community through imagery, and symbolism .

Interconnectedness:

Refers to the state of being interconnected or interrelated, where various elements, entities or systems are connected and influence each other. It emphasises the idea that everything in the world

is interconnected and part of a larger, complex network. Interconnectedness can manifest in various domains, such as social relationships, ecological systems, technological networks and philosophical or spiritual concepts. It highlights the interdependence and mutual influence among different components, emphasizing the importance of considering the broader context and relationships when analysing or addressing issues.

Environment:

The term refers to the external surroundings, or conditions in which an organism, individual, or system operates and interacts. It encompasses both natural elements such as air, water, land and ecosystems that humans interact with. The environment plays a crucial role in shaping and sustaining life on earth providing resources, habitats, and support systems for various organisms and human societies. It includes both biotic factors (living organisms) and abiotic factors (non-living elements), and it is subject to dynamic changes influenced by natural processes and human activities.

Intertextuality:

Refers to the relationship and interactions between texts. Through intertextuality, Wangusa blends indigenous knowledge, folklore, and cultural practices reinforcing how eco-community is rooted in collective memory and shared traditions. Intertextual references allows comparative reading, which strengthens the ecocritical approach by situating Wangusa's poetry within a larger environmental discourse.

Post-colonialism:

Refers to the period beyond the colonial era as well as the deconstruction. It provides a lens to understand how Wangusa critiques colonial disruptions to indigenous relationships with nature and how eco-community values are restored through poetry rooted in local experience.

Culture:

These are established beliefs, customs and values of a given group of people. Poets write attaching a sense of belonging in their writing. Culture shapes the values, beliefs, and practices of people and in Wangusa's poetry, it informs how humans relate to their environment, especially through rituals, language, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Biophilia:

This concept, which suggests that humans have an innate connection to nature, helps to explain the emotional and spiritual bond portrayed in Wangusa's poems between humans and the natural world.

Eco:

The prefix "eco" from ecology frames the study's focus on environmental relationships, highlighting how ecological awareness is central to the poetic representation of community and survival.

Community:

It is used in reference to ecology as a group or association of populations of two or more different species occupying the same geographical area at the same time. The term underlines the interconnectedness of human beings, animals, and nature in Wangusa's work. His eco-community vision is based on mutual respect and interdependence.

Ecopoetry:

This is the literary genre through which Wangusa articulates ecological consciousness. It allows critical engagement with environmental themes, showing how poetry can shape eco-awareness and responsibility.

Environmental Imagination:

Capacity to perceive and represent the natural world in all its complexity and beauty.

Backdrop:

Has been used in this study mean the background scenery or setting.

Human -Nature-Spirit Connection:

Refers to the idea that humans, the natural environment, and spiritual forces are interconnected and interdependent forming a continuous and inseparable bond.

Tripartite Connection:

Refers to the three-way relationship between humans, landscape (natural environment), and nonhuman animals.

Physical:

In this study, physical refers to the tangible, material aspects of the natural world - landscape features like mountains, soil, rivers, animals, plants, and humans.

Metaphysical:

It has been used to refer to the intangible, spiritual, or symbolic dimensions.

1.8 Significance of the Study

By exploring Timothy Wangusa's poetry through an ecocritical lens, this study aims to contribute to the growing field of ecocriticism and humanities. It seeks to enhance the understanding of the human-nature relationship in Africa, deepen environmental education and support sustainability initiatives. Through literary analysis, the study fosters a deeper appreciation of the natural world and the interconnectedness of humans and the landscape. Developing a sense of environmental awareness is essential for promoting sustainable behaviours and cultivating a renewed relationship between humans and the environment, one that works towards creating a more harmonious ecological community.

1.9 Theoretical Frame work

This analysis of Timothy Wangusa will draw on ecocriticism particularly, on the Biophilia hypothesis theory, a concept developed by Kellert and Wilson (1993), and Lawrence Buell's notion of environmental representation. The biophilia theory suggests that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature. This affinity for nature can manifest in various forms, including emotional and behavioural connections. Emotional connections involve experiencing emotional bonds with nature, such as a feeling of awe, wonder and tranquility. Behavioural connections involve engaging in behaviours that promote interconnections with nature, such as outdoor recreation, conservation efforts and environmental stewardship. I employ Kellert's insight to interpret the connection between humans and the mountain, humans and the rivers, and humans with the vegetation cover in this study. I also demonstrate how Wangusa weaves the connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals through the use of symbolism and imagery. This connects to the idea of a meta-community, which Eve Nabulya (2018, p.13) refers to as "ecocommunitarianism."

The research also draws on the ideas of environmental representation (Buell). He proposes four tenets of how to view the environment, starting with the notion that non-human environment is present, not just a backdrop for human stories but an active participant in the narrative. It suggests that human history is intertwined with natural history. The second assumption is that human interest is not the only legitimate interest and acknowledges the intrinsic value of the non-human world and its right to exist independently of the human concerns.

The third view suggests that environmental understanding is a process. The environment in this case is not static but a dynamic ever-changing system. Texts should reflect this understanding by portraying the environment as a process rather than a constant or a given. The fourth view suggests accountability of human action. Looks at literature through its representation of the environment, should engage readers to consider the ethical implications of human action on the environment and foster a sense of responsibility.

These ideas help me to understand the relationship between humans, landscapes, and nonhuman entities. I will use them in this study to explain the symbolic use of the mountain as a source of life, and to explain the role of poetry particularly the use of language and figurative expressions in the representation of the human -nature connection. This study therefore will apply the biophilia theory and Lawrence Buell's ideas on environmental imagination which suggests that literature has the capacity to envision the natural world as a presence that matters, not to be looked at as a mere backdrop for human activity.

The research will examine how Wangusa's poetry represents human -nature connections and the way these construct a kind of eco-community. By analysing Wangusa's portrayal of emotional, and behavioural connections between humans and nature, the study aims to illuminate the ways in which poetry, particularly its language, imagery reflects the complex relationship between

landscapes and humans. Examining the linguistic and literary devices employed by Wangusa, the study aims to demonstrate how poetry can serve as a powerful tool for exploring and expressing human-nonhuman connections.

Ultimately, this research aims to examine how Wangusa's poetry reconfigures the human -nature relationship, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living beings.

1.10 Scope

The scope of the study is described in terms of sample size, content not forgetting the depth and breadth of investigation. The study uses the primary data used is Timothy Wangusa's poetry collections: *The State is My Shepherd and other selected poems* (2022), *Poems of Salute to Mt. Elgon* (Bilomelele - 2017), plus *A Pattern of Dust* (selected poems 1965 - 1990) and *Anthem for Africa* (1995). These contain vast knowledge of the natural landscape, significant symbols and portrays how man interacts with the environment. This is craftily embedded in the oral forms as well as in the deeds of the speaking voices and other characters. Key symbols like the mountain, the well, the granary, the beads, animal skins among others stand to represent both ecological and cultural identity and the way of living hence cultural practices and nature are strongly interconnected and some of the practices have negative effects on the environment.

1.11 Justification

This study arises from the need to explore how human relationships with the natural environment are represented in the selected poetry of Timothy Wangusa, an area that remains underexplored in current research. Wangusa's poetry, through its rich exploration of themes such as nature, culture and the human condition, offers a unique lens for examining human-nature relations. In today's context, where environmental issues and sustainability are of increasing concern, engaging with

the concept of ecocommunitarianism becomes essential. This study, therefore, contributes meaningfully to the growing field of ecocriticism and environmental literature.

1.12 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on textual analysis to explore the representation of an eco-community in Timothy Wangusa's selected poetry. While existing studies have explored Wangusa's work from post-colonial and cultural perspectives, there remains a notable gap in ecocritical analysis of his poetry, particularly in relation to the tripartite connection between humans, the landscape and non-human animals, the human-nature-spirit connection and how language is used in the interconnectivity of entities.

The study adopts a library-based research design and rely on both primary and secondary sources. The primary data source consist of selected poems by Timothy Wangusa. These Poems are analysed as textual data through close reading, focusing on both thematic and structural elements. The analysis explores how ecological consciousness, spiritual ties to nature, and environmental identity are constructed in the poetic texts. Secondary sources include relevant literary journals, critical essays and theoretical texts on post-colonial ecocriticism. These materials provide scholarly perspectives and support intertextual analysis to deepen the interpretation of Wangusa's poetry.

The analysis is guided by the theoretical framework of post-colonial ecocriticism, which is used to identify and interpret the underlying principles in the construction of poetic style and form, tone and mood. The study uses literary analysis (textual analysis) as the primary method of inquiry. This involves the analysis of themes, identifying and analysing the themes related to human-nature relationship in Wangusa's poetry as well as examining the poetic structures such as imagery,

metaphor, and symbolism used to represent the human relations with the natural environment. The stylistic analysis involving the analysis of linguistic and literary devices which are employed and these are used to create the tone and mood in the poems. The results of all the findings and evaluations are summarized in chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The study findings are validated and justified through triangulation, which includes using multiple sources namely, the primary and secondary texts to confirm the findings.

All the methods mentioned contribute to the understanding the representation of human relations with the natural environment through the lens of post-colonial ecocriticism, providing insights into the representation of ecocommunitarianism using the poetic style, form, voices, tone and mood in Timothy Wangusa's poems.

1.13 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.13.1 Ecocriticism in African Poetry

African poetry has long been recognized for its deep rooted connection to oral tradition, community consciousness, and ecological awareness. Various scholars have highlighted the ways in which African poets engage with nature as a central theme in their work. However, much of this scholarship tends to treat nature majorly as symbolic often overlooking the possibility of a fully integrated ecological vision that treats humans, animals, and landscapes as interconnected members of an eco-community. It is in this context that Timothy Wangusa's poetry offers a unique contribution, providing an imaginative framework that depicts the environment not as a passive backdrop but as an active, relational force within cultural and ecological systems.

Isidore Okpewho (1992,p.14) emphasizes the oral foundations of African poetry, arguing that it retains the rhythms and metaphors of oral tradition, reflecting a communal worldview. His work

points to the cultural functions of poetry, where nature is often used to express societal values, ancestral knowledge, and moral instruction. However, Okpewho does not fully explore the ecological dimensions of these natural elements, how they function as living, and interacting systems with humans and animals.

Ruth Finnegan (1970,p.110-112) also looks at the importance of performance and orality, noting that African poetry is "deeply tied in rituals, proverbs, and oral narratives." For Finnegan, natural imagery is part of a larger cultural performance, but again, there is limited attention to how these images form an ecological network involving real environmental interdependence.

Tanure Ojaide (1990,p.1-16) takes a step further by addressing environmental degradation and the poet's role in responding to it. He asserts that African poetry reflects "environmental awareness rooted in indigenous spirituality and land-centered identity." Ojaide highlights nature's symbolic and spiritual role, particularly in post-colonial protest poetry, yet his focus remains largely on symbolic resistance and not on nature as a co-actor in a shared ecological space. Close to that, Kahinde and Egbe (2011) contribute to ecocritical discourse by recognizing that African poets reveal "a keen sensitivity to the interconnectedness between man and environment." Their view brings in ecological consciousness, but the emphasis tends to be on the human experience of environmental change, rather than a balanced portrayal of human-animal-landscape relationships.

Another scholar, Austin Uzoma Nwagbara, (2010) views African poetry as a tool of environmental resistance and advocacy. He notes that it exposes "the ecological crises of postcolonial Africa," and calls for a literature that champions environmental justice. While important, this perspective also tends to prioritize environmental activism over the cultural and imaginative bonding of humans with the land and the other living entities.

African poets have for long employed landscape as a symbolic medium to explore themes of identity, memory, and cultural resistance. Manduakor (1986) observes that in the poetry of Okigbo, Soyinka, and J.P. Clark, the landscape functions as a symbolic mirror of cultural depth and spirituality, often tied to mythic and historical memory. However, well the landscape plays a central role, there is little to no attention given to the interconnectedness between humans, landscape and non-human animals. This lack of ecological wholeness especially the exclusion of animals as part of the community creates a gap in the representation of this tripartite bond.

Timothy Morton's (2016) concept of "dark ecology" challenges traditional distinctions between nature and culture by asserting that humans are intrinsically entangled in the ecological systems. In **Dark Ecology :For a Logic of Future Coexistence**, Morton states that "ecological awareness begins in darkness" (p.5), emphasising that true environmental thought involves confronting the discomfort and strangeness of our embeddedness in nature. He introduces the idea of the "mesh" as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of all beings (human and non-human) without privileging one over the other (p.8). Similarly, Ursula Heise (2008) tickets for a sense of "eco-cosmopolitanism" that expands ecological imagination beyond the human (p.10), while Greg Garrard (2012) underscores the need for literature to reflect ecological interdependence rather than romantised nature (p.33). However, these frame works often overlook localised, indigenous representations of ecological relationships. This study addresses that gap by analysing Wangusa's poetry, showing how his work reflects an ecologically grounded community shaped by African cultural values and bioregional consciousness.

Niyi Osundare (1986,p.18), particularly in "The Eye of the Earth" critiques environmental degradation and uses landscape and natural imagery to protest against ecological injustice. Though his poetry is grounded in environmental activism, it tends to focus on human nature interaction

with a framework of exploitation and loss. Anyokwu C. (2023) confirms this argument as he asserts that, "Osundare intergrates nature both as a central metaphor and as an ideological tool for critiquing materialism, industrialisation, and environmental degradation." (p.112). In "The Eye of the Earth," Osundare celebrates rain, "the giver and sustainer of life. As agent of difference between plenty and famine, life and death, the rain occupied a godlike place in the consciousness of Ikere's agrarian people." (Ngumoha, 2011, p.124). What remains underdeveloped in his work is a vision of an inclusive eco-community, one that sees nature not only as a victim or resource but as co-existent with humans and non-human animals.

Similarly, in Tanure Ojaide's ecopoetry, particularly works focused on the Niger Delta, nature is frequently depicted as a violated entity and as a symbol of cultural identity, displacement and resistance. His poetry draws heavily on the environmental degradation caused by oil exploitation, using nature as a medium for articulating social-political protest and the loss of indigenous livelihood. Scholars like Ede (2014) and Egya (2016) have praised Ojaide for raising ecological consciousness and advocating for environmental justice through poetry. However, despite the strength, his ecopoetry tends to remain largely anthropocentric, prioritizing human experiences over non-human perspectives. The symbolic presence of animals and the portrayal of nature as a coexistence, sentient agent within an interconnected ecological system is often under developed. This limited ecocentric framing leaves the critical Gap in representing nature as an active participant in ecological narratives. It is this Gap that's the presents that the sixth to address by turning to Wangusa's poetry, which moves beyond anthropocentrism to portray an Eco community of humans, animals, and the natural world as interdependent agents.

Building on this, although Ojaide's ecological concerns are robust, they do not exhaustively engage with the idea of an ecological community in which humans, nonhuman animals and the

environment are mutually interacting. For example, Egya observes that this poetry "seeks to draw attention to the fate of both humans and non-humans in the face of all exploration and its negative consequences" (Egya,2016,p.2) but he also highlights that despite such concern the relational dynamics between humans, animals and the land remain underdeveloped. This gap becomes critical when addressing eco-community as a concept. It is this very gap, the limited representation of non-human agency and interconnected ecological networks that the present study seeks to address through the poetry of Timothy Wangusa, which strives to portray such interdependence more fully.

After clear insights about Ojaide's work, it is evident that in African literature, Poetry has been used as a form of protest against environmental degradation, colonialism and social injustice. Ojaide (1999) notes that African poets do not treat nature as a passive backdrop, but as a living presence with which human-beings interact, respect, and sometimes conflict. He asserts that African poetry often reflects the harmonies and tensions in human- environment relations, particularly in the face of exploitation and degradation caused by modernization and neocolonial forces. He writes:

The African poet treats the environment
as a living organism, part of the extended self,
not something to dominate but to coexist with (Ojaide,1999, P.74)

I acknowledge that Ojaide comes close to Wangusa's views. While he emphasises spiritual and cultural ties to nature, his focus often centres on environmental degradation and political ecology, particularly in rich-oil regions like the Niger Delta. His poetry critiques environmental injustices more than it explores into species -connections or a tripartite continuum involving humans, animals, and the landscape. This aspect is richly explored in Timothy Wangusa's poetry, which

integrates animals and other entities as spiritual and ancestral links within the community. Recent studies such as Nfah-Abbenyi (2020), observe that African ecopoetry has evolved to include more nuanced expressions of ecological kinship. Additionally, scholars like Irele (2021) and Madu (2022) argue that the inclusion of animals and landscape as co-agents in meaning-making marks a shift from anthropocentrism to eco-relationality in African poetry. What has not been adequately addressed, however, is the unique way Wangusa frames this interconnectedness as rooted in indigenous cosmologies, blending ecological vision with spiritual epistemology.

1.13.2 Poetry and the Landscape

Landscape and poetry have a deeply intertwined relationship. Poets often draw inspiration from the natural world, using landscapes as a backdrop to explore themes, emotions and ideas. Bate (2000, P. 12). In fact, landscape poetry is a distinct genre that emphasizes emotional and psychological impact of landscapes on the human experience. Poets like William Wordsworth (1807) and Walt Whitman (1855) are known for their landscape poetry, which explores the relationship between nature and the human condition. Wordsworth's "I wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a classic example of landscape poetry, where the natural world is used to explore themes of beauty, memory and the human experience.

The role of imagination is also crucial in landscape poetry, where poets use descriptive language to create vivid images of natural environments. As Snyder.G (1990) observes, poetic imagination "re-awakens the mind of the more-than-human world" (p.28), enabling readers to visualise ecological spaces as alive, dynamic, and interconnected. This argument resonates with Jonathan Bate's (2000) ecocritical view that poetry "restores the reader's sensory relationship with place" (p.75), suggesting that imaginative representation is central to how poets cultivate ecological awareness.

In "Song of the Earth," Jonathan Bate (2000) posits that poetry plays a pivotal role in shaping our ecological imagination, influencing our relationship with the natural world, and inspiring ecological awareness and action. He contends that poetry has unique abilities to express the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the complex interconnectedness between human culture and environment. This perspective is reinforced by Gary (1990), who argues that poetry can serve as a powerful tool for rein-habiting and reconnecting with the natural world hence promoting a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the environment.

The two scholars above (Bate, 2000; Gary, 1990), emphasize the role of literature, particularly poetry in shaping ecological awareness by exploring the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, primarily through the the lens of human culture and environment. While it acknowledges the power of poetry to promote reconnection with nature and highlights landscape and environment as key elements of poetic reflection, it largely focuses on a dual relationship (humans and the natural environment). Building on these insights, the study aims to examine how the intrinsic connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals is imaginatively represented to form an eco-community in Wangusa's selected poems.

1.13.3 The Poetic Imagination in Human- Nature Relations

The relationship between humans and nature has been a profound and enduring theme in literature, particularly in poetry. The intersection of ecology, and poetry has garnered significant attention, with scholars exploring how individuals and communities relate to the natural world through poetic expressions.

Leonard M.Scigaj, (1999) argues that ecopoetry seeks to redefine the relationship between humans and the natural world by challenging dominant cultural narratives and promoting more sustainable ways of living. He emphasises that poetry possesses the capacity to reshape human understanding of nature and our place within it, thereby foregrounding the significance of eco-poetic perspectives in fostering environmental awareness (Scigaj,1999,p.32). Similarly, Bryson (2005) observes that ecopoetry "cultivates a renewed ethical vision of nature" and encourages readers to reconsider their ecological responsibilities (p.18). However, while these scholars highlight the transformative potential of ecopoetry, their work does not fully address the tripartite relationship between humans, nature, and non-human animals. This gap makes it necessary to investigate how such relationships are represented in the ecopoetry of Timothy Wangusa. In this study, the term ecopoetry refers to poetry that examines and reimagines the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world, offering insights into ecological coexistence and community.

Buell (1995) argues that ecopoetry has the potential to shape ecological consciousness and promote environmental awareness. According to Lawrence Buell, the environmental imagination is a capacity to perceive and represent the natural world in all its complexity and beauty. His work emphasizes the importance of considering the environmental context in literary analysis, highlighting the ways in which nature is represented and perceived in literature. This view is supported by Kerridge (1998) in the work, "Ecological theory and practice." Wangusa's poetry goes beyond Buell and Kerridge's view to bring to the fore the tripartite connection between humans, landscapes, and nonhuman animals.

Glofelty (1996) asserts that ecopoetry plays a crucial role in reshaping human perceptions of the natural world by foregrounding the environment as a central concern in literary interpretation. She

argues that literature can "enlarge our ecological awareness" by revealing the complex interrelations between humans and non-human worlds (p.xix). Her work highlights the need for critics to examine how nature is represented, imagined, and valued within poetic texts. This view is strengthened by Slovic (2008), who maintains that ecopoetry is capable of generating deeper environmental consciousness through its emotional and imaginative engagement with ecological realities. Slovic emphasises that poetry's reflective nature encourages readers to confront their relationship with the environment and to recognise the ethical responsibilities embedded in that relationship (p.24). Wangusa's poetry expands on the insights of Glofelty and Slovic by bringing to the fore the three-way relationship between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals.

Scholarly views on poetry and ecocriticism have also shed light on the significance of ecological identity. Nixon (2011,p.5) highlights the activist potential of environmental literature, stressing that poetry can educate, inspire, and mobilise collective action. Despite this contribution, his analysis primarily focusses on activism and ecological crisis, with out sufficient attention to how poetry imagines ecological communities rooted in interconnectedness, a key feature in Wangusa's work.

Jay parini (1993p.3), in **The Poems for a Small Planet**, argues that contemporary poetry has moved beyond the idyllic portrayals of nature found in Romanticism, becoming a site of political urgency. He frames nature in poetry as "a question of survival," particularly in post-colonial contexts where environmental degradation is deeply entangled with histories of exploitation. This view supports the argument that the environmental crisis in Africa is a legacy of colonial disruption. Colonial powers, as Nfah-Abbenyi (2007,p.148) also observes, exploited Africa's natural resources and justified ecological destruction under the guise of civilisation. In response, African poets have

turned to poetry to reconstruct harmonious relationships between humans and the environment, drawing on indigenous knowledge systems and spiritual connections to the land.

1.13.4 Situating Wangusa within Eco-poetic Discourse

The research gap in understanding how African poetry, specifically Timothy Wangusa's Works represent the human relations with the natural environment is evident in the lack of an in-depth analysis on this topic. While there are studies on Wangusa's poetry, such as Arineitwe's analysis of graphological deviation in Timothy Wangusa's poetry, (2023), Alfredo Okello's (2005) analysis on the style and form in Wangusa's Poetry, there is still need for a comprehensive examination of how Wangusa in his poetry weaves together themes of the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals, the human-nature-spirit continuum, and language and interconnectivity of entities aiming at achieving the representation of human relations with the natural environment.

Though a Modern African Poet, Timothy Wangusa's poetry is deeply rooted in his cultural traditions and practices. This cultural grounding explains the strong interaction between environment themes and indigenous heritage present in his work. Danson Kahyana (2024), notes that Wangusa's poetic voice rises against "guns and goons" as a symbolic defense of communal dignity, critiquing the social-political elites who "occupy the lofty peaks of authority yet abandon citizens on barren foothills" (p.8-10). Such resistance in his poetry reflects a broader concern with environmental degradation and social justice, situating his work within the growing field of eco-poetry that blends ecological awareness with African communal ethics and cultural memory.

Okello Alfredo (2005), in his master's dissertation **Style and Form in Timothy Wangusa's Poetry: Originality, Traditionality, or Adaptation** (Makerere University,2005), provides a

foundational formalistic reading of Wangusa's poetry. He interrogates whether Wangusa's style is original, or adapted from western and African poetic traditions, highlighting the poet's negotiation between classical English forms and his African heritage. While Okello's work illuminates Wangusa's technique, it remains largely focused on issues of poetics and intertextual influence rather than ecological meaning. This focus resembles broader formalist scholarship in African literature, which often emphasises literary lineage and aesthetic innovation (Gikandi, 2003; Goatley, 2010), yet misses how environmental contexts may shape a poetic community. Therefore, Okello's contribution is critical for understanding Wangusa's formal identity, but it does not address how his landscapes or natural imagery give rise to a sense of ecological belonging or a shared community.

Namiyingo (2014), in her master's thesis **A critique of governance in Ugandan poetry: a study of selected poems of Henry Barlow, Timothy Wangusa and Susan Kiguli** (Kyambogo University), foregrounds sociopolitical critique in Wangusa's poetry. Using new criticism, she explores how Wangusa and his contemporaries use figures of speech, register, and graphological deviation to depict corruption, dictatorship, and political neglect. Namiyingo's work aligns with Danson Sylvester Kahyana's (2024) reading of Wangusa, where Kahyana interprets poems such as "The Walking Stick", "National Skulls Exhibition", and "The State is My Shepherd" through the lenses of necropolitics and Fanon's critique of postcolonial power. While Namiyingo's analysis powerfully captures how Wangusa engages with governance, her focus on political discourse means the ecological dimensions of his imagery remain unexplored: her reading does not ask how governance metaphors might tie into environmental or community-based metaphors, or how Wangusa's poetic critics of the state might also be critics of ecological degradation or champions of communal ecological ethics.

Arineitwe (2023), in his MA dissertation **Linguistic Deviation and Parallelism in Timothy Wangusa's Poetry** (Bishop Stewart University), probes deeply into the poets use of morphological and graphological deviation for example non-standard morphemes, unusual line breaks, visual layout) to create foregrounding, defamiliarization, and estrangement. In his subsequent journal articles, he applies Victor shklovsky's theory of defamiliarization to show how Wangusa disrupts linguistic norms to surprise readers and highlight meaning. Arineitwe 's scholarship enriches our understanding of Wangusa's linguistic boldness, but predominantly under formalistic and cognitive-stylistic frames. This emphasis resonates with broader studies of foregrounding literary theory for example (Leech and Short, 1981), but does not engage with how such deviations contribute to ecological or communal readings of Wangusa's landscapes: that is, how linguistic disruption may mirror or articulate a sense of ecological interdependence or a shared environmental identity is not fully addressed in his work.

Wankuma(2023), in his PhD dissertation **Shifting Narrative Styles in the Fiction of Timothy Wangusa and Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi** (Uganda Christian University), traces how Wangusa (alongside Makumbi) transits from Western-influenced prose to a more African-contemporary style using orality, dialogism, and autoethnography. Wankuma draws on Bakhtin's dialogism and Pratt's "contact zone" to demonstrate how Wangusa's fiction is shaped by multiple voices and cultural encounters. Though Wankuma's focus is on fictional prose, not poetry, his insights into orality, dialogical voice , and African narrative style are highly relevant: other Scholars, such as Norah Adeke (2024),similarly examine Wangusa's orality in his novels, showing how oral traditions enliven literariness and ground cultral identity.Yet, even Wankuma's analysis does not dwell on how orality in Wangusa's fiction (or by extension his poetry) might contribute

to an ecological imagination or an eco-community. He does not interrogate how dialogic, oral voices in nature-inflected settings might produce a vision of collective ecological belonging.

Taken together, these dissertations build a robust foundation for understanding Timothy Wangusa's poetic and narrative craft: Okello reveals his stylistic negotiation; Namilyango analyses his socio-political critique; Arineitwe unpacks his linguistic departures; and Wankuma explores his orality and dialogic style in prose. However, none of them explicitly addresses how Wangusa's work conceptualises an eco-community, a communal ecological identity rooted in interdependence between humans, nature, and possibly spiritual forces. While scholarship in African Literature for example (Osundare's ecopoetry, Tanure Ojaide's environmental engagement) show a strong tradition of ecological consciousness in African verse. Wangusa's rich natural imagery hints at a shared ecological vision, but his dimension remains underexplored in his major academic studies.

Therefore, this study fills a critical lacuna by focusing specifically on the representation of an eco-community in selected poetry of Timothy Wangusa. It examines how linguistic deviation, dialogic voice, orality, and symbolic landscapes converge to form a vision of ecological belonging—thereby extending the existing critical discourse beyond form, politics, and narrative style into the realm of ecological and community imagination.

According to Bukenya (2022), Timothy Wangusa's prolific and acclaimed poetic oeuvre can be attributed to four distinct characteristics of his craft, which serve as a paradigm for aspiring writers. These elements, denoted as language, shape, humour and concern define the uniqueness of his craft. This study therefore examines how Wangusa employs language and style to address both human and environmental concerns, particularly the sacredness of nature.

Nilepost News (2022), also highlights that Wangusa's rich literary legacy is anchored in three central concepts: thought, truth, and transcendence. These themes are intricately woven into his poetry, particularly in his symbolic use of the mountain. The article notes that Wangusa employs the image of the mountain not merely as a physical landmark but as a metaphorical space of spiritual striving and reflection. It becomes a place of isolation and revelation, a sacred site where individuals and the wider community can retreat to contemplate life's deeper meanings, confront existential questions, and reconnect with their roots. This vision underscores Wangusa's belief in the mountain as a site for restoring personal and collective identity, as well as re-establishing a sense of purpose grounded in both self-awareness and cultural heritage.

I note that well existing scholarship on African poetry such as that by Ojaide (1999), Nwagbara (2010), and Kahinde (2011) has explored the environment largely through the lenses of environmental activism, symbolism, or as a passive backdrop, there is limited critical attention given to the active interconnectedness among humans, non-human animals, and landscapes as co-creating agents in an ecological system. Furthermore though Timothy Wangusa's poetry has received scholarly engagement, most studies have focused on his style, political commentary, or thematic concerns unrelated to ecological relationships. There remains a significant gap in examining how Wangusa's poetry uniquely represents a tripartite eco-community, where nature is not peripheral but central to human identity, spirituality and interdependence. This study address that gap by foregrounding how Wangusa's poetry constructs an Eco communitarian model rooted in mutual belonging and relational ecology.

1.13.5 Chapter Outline

This thesis contains five chapters. Chapter one covers the definition of key words, an introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives and the research questions. Also,

the chapter looks at the significance of the study, justification of the study, the theoretical framework to be used in the study, the scope, methodology and the literature review.

Chapter two examines how Wangusa presents interconnectedness among humans, elements of the physical landscape like (mountains, rivers, forests and soil), and the nonhuman animals. It explores the significance of this tripartite connection and looks at how the connection create an Eco-community, where no entity exists in isolation. The chapter analyses poems that reflect mutual dependency and respect across these categories.

Chapter three focuses on how Wangusa's poetry merges the spiritual and physical realms through nature. It investigates how natural elements like soil, rivers, and mountains are imbued with ancestral, cultural, and spiritual meaning. The chapter explores how these spiritual associations reinforce ecological consciousness by making nature a sacred force in communal life. It refers to African scholars and other poets such as Micere Mugo, Tanure Ojaide to frame the discussion within indigenous knowledge systems.

Chapter four analyses how Wangusa uses language especially bilingualism, indigenous lexicon, and oral aesthetics to map interconnectedness. It explores the role of linguistic choices in reinforcing ecological awareness and local environmental identities. Drawing from ecolinguistics, it shows how language becomes a tool of resistance, remembrance, and rootedness in landscape.

The final chapter synthesises the key arguments from the preceding chapters. It restates how Wangusa's poetry illustrates the tripartite relationship between humans, landscape, and animals; the human - nature - spirit connection; and the linguistic construction of interconnectedness. It highlights the historical, economic, and political importance of nature as revealed in the poems.

The chapter also reflects on the broader significance of Wangusa's eco-poetic vision for African ecological literature.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRIPARTITE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMANS, THE LANDSCAPE AND ANIMALS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate the significance of the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and animals as portrayed in Wangusa's poetry. It focuses on how his verse constructs a vision of an eco-community. It analyses how Wangusa weaves humans, elements of the landscape and non-human animals into a poetic ecosystem of mutual influence. I argue that Wangusa's depiction of interconnectedness tends towards an eco-community made up of human's elements of the landscape and non-human animals, offering an alternative to modern alienation from nature.

Few scholars like Alfredo (2005) and Kahyana (2024) have explored Timothy Wangusa's poetry but not in line with ecocriticism, yet it offers a holistic ecological imagination rooted in indigenous cosmologies and cultural memory. This gap leaves room for a deeper understanding of how poetic expression can reframe environmental ethics in an African context. This chapter therefore addresses the gap by showing how Wangusa's poetry imaginatively constructs a relational ecology, one that bridges humans, natural landscapes, and nonhuman life, ultimately advocating for a balanced and interconnected existence.

The study will begin with the theoretical foundation, followed by a detailed textual analysis of selected poems by Timothy Wangusa. These poems include: "I Long to Return to Butiru," "Spirit of Maji Maji," " Ethiopian Riddle," " Dance of Granaries (2022, p.31), "The Head (p.73)," " Children to the Mountain," " Salute to Mount Masaba (2022 p.27)," and " Anthem for Africa" (1995, p.60). The researcher will then apply a poem-per-poem analysis in this chapter to explore the

tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman animals through close reading and ecocritical interpretation of relevant poems, revealing the insights developed in each poem.

Lawrence Buell's ideas on environmental representation (2005) are used in this study, his view highlights that environmentally, literature often reshapes how readers perceive nature, not as an inert backdrop but as a moral and active presence. Wangusa's poetry similarly gives voice and agency to mountains, animals, and forests, aligning with this ecocritical approach. Buell's ideas on environmental imagination remind us of an earlier insight by Val Plumwood (2002), who critiques anthropocentric dualism that elevates humans above nature. She introduces the idea of the "ecological self," which defines identity not as separate from nature, but as deeply connected to it through mutual dependence. Wangusa's poetic voice reflects this ecological identity, presenting the self as one being among many, coexisting within the broader natural world.

Barry Commoner's first law of ecology (1971) states that everything is connected to everything else. This principle is thematically evident in Wangusa's poems, where no entity exists in isolation. His works reflect an interconnected worldview that aligns with Buell's (1995) ideas on environmental representation. Similarly, Leopold's (1949) concept of a "land ethic" underscores the belief that soils, animals, and plants are members of a shared community. These ecocritical ideas resonate throughout Wangusa's depiction of nature as sacred kin, emphasizing ecological interdependence and spiritual unity.

Ursula Heise (2008) emphasizes the role of literature in cultivating planetary awareness. Wangusa's localized yet universal vision of interconnectedness allows African ecological thought to converse with global environmental ethics. This chapter will examine the tripartite connection between humans, landscape, and nonhuman entities in Wangusa's poetry, highlighting the deep

attachment of humans to the natural world and illustrating how the mountain emerges as a vital source of life.

2.2. Human Attachment to the landscape

Human attachment to the landscape has long been a central concern in literary and ecological discourses, particularly within ecocriticism. This attachment is not merely physical but also emotional, spiritual and symbolic. In African poetic traditions, the landscape is more than a setting. It is an active agent in shaping identity, memory, and belonging. Human attachment to the land is deeply embedded in African cosmology, where the environment is regarded as sacred, communal, and spiritually significant. As Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) asserts, African literature often represents the land as a site of cultural rootedness and emotional resonance, linking personal identity to collective history. This emotional bond with the land reflects a world view where nature is not external to the human, but part of a shared, living connection.

Tanure Ojaide (1999) further observes that African poets consistently show a deep intimacy with the land, viewing it as both nurturer and witness to communal struggles and triumphs. He notes that the landscape in African poetry is not romanticized but rather depicted in its lived, dynamic, and responsive reality interwoven with human destiny. This perspective resonates with Kellert's theory of biophilia, which asserts that humans possess an innate affinity for nature and seek meaningful connections with the natural world. Such alignment reinforces the ecological depth of African poetic traditions and supports the theoretical grounding of this study.

Timothy Wangusa's poetry offers a distinct contribution foregrounding a deep, affective attachment to the land that embodies memory, belonging, and spiritual continuity, framing the environment as an integral part of human existence. In his poem "He Longs to Return to Butiru"

(2017, p. 85) situates the reader in a nostalgic landscape of Butiru, which serves as a metaphor for a shared history and communal identity. When Wangusa says:

Arise, my soul, and let us return to Butiru **(line 1)**
Let us return to Butiru and meet our childhood, **(2)**
And there by the running stream chant to the infant sun **(3)**
As it trembles out of its cradle. **(4)**
To the hill-tops of Nambale let us retrace our steps, **(5)**
In splendid day light greet white egrets among the cows **(6)**
At watering-time listen to the ecstatic cattle-boys **(7)**
Galloping their animals to the stream. **(8)**

Wangusa's use of vivid imagery presents a tripartite connection between humans, the landscape, and animals as a living repository of cultural memory, heritage, and continuity. Nature in this poem is not passive but active, nurturing, and memorial. This is achieved through sensory and symbolic imagery that evokes emotional attachment and a deep sense of belonging. For example, references to "White egrets among the cows" and "cattle-boys galloping their animals to the stream" (lines 6-8) reflect a landscape in which human activity and nature exist in harmony. These images support an ecocritical reading of the poem, which values the interdependence between people and the environment.

The poem's setting, Butiru, a real geographical place in Mbale District, Uganda, with hills, valleys, and flowing streams, is central to Wangusa's poetic memory. It is a rural community where cattle rearing is the main livelihood, and this lifestyle is intricately woven into the poem's imagery. From an ecocritical perspective, the natural elements namely the hills and streams are not merely a backdrop but agents in shaping cultural and emotional attachment. Ecocriticism encourages us to see nature as active in literature, not simply as scenery but as a dynamic force with moral, cultural, and historical value. Wangusa's depiction of Butiru aligns with this view, presenting nature as a vital presence in personal and communal identity. The repeated call to "let us return" (lines 1 and

5) is both a literal and metaphorical longing to re-engage with a place where ecological and cultural roots merge.

Building on the nostalgic longing for Butiru, Wangusa's cultural and ecological homeland, in his other poem, "The African Elephant" (2022, p. 47), he continues this thematic thread by shifting focus from place to creature, using the elephant as a living symbol of Africa's natural and cultural heritage. The poem is a powerful ecocritical text that employs different poetic devices to highlight the tripartite connection between humans, animals, and the natural environment. Set in a richly described African landscape, the poem uses the figure of the elephant to symbolise more than just wildlife. It embodies cultural tradition, ecological integrity, and historical memory. Through vivid imagery, symbolism, tone, and irony, Wangusa positions nature as a cultural homeland, presenting the African landscape as a space where human identity and ecological life are deeply interlinked.

The setting of the poem plays a crucial role in developing the human - nature - animal bond. The African jungle, described as home of matriarchs and bulls of the elephant herd, functions as a lived environment, not just for animals but as a symbolic repository of African culture. Phrases such as "majestic progress on the hoof" and "head for the water hole" evoke not only natural rhythm but cultural familiarity. This environment is where generations interact, where maternal tenderness is observed, and where communal routines like drinking, rolling in mud, and returning to the daily life and naturalised. These scenes mirror human familial structures and routines, establishing a shared existence between humans and animals.

The use of imagery is central, as seen in lines like "rolling in protective, glorious mud" and the "pliable, multi-purpose trunk." These images bridge the animals role in it's ecosystem with human understanding and activity, such as protection, labour, and survival. The trunk is not only a physical organ but also a symbolic tool for living, resonating with traditional human uses of tools

in agrarian life. The elephant's tusks, referred to as a "paradoxical curse," symbolise both beauty and exploitation, linking the natural world to human history, especially the colonial past and the transatlantic slave trade. The ivory trade becomes a metaphor for the commodification of African life and culture.

I note that Wangusa's "The African Elephant" functions as a rich symbol of cultural identity, ecological wisdom, and historical portrayal. The African elephant itself is a cultural icon because of its profound ecological significance and its deep-rooted place in community identity, particularly in groups such as the Bagisu people, a tribe to which Wangusa belongs. Ecologically, the elephant functions as a keystone species whose activities for example creating forest pathways, dispersing seeds, and shaping the structures of grasslands and woodlands sustain the balance, renewal, and health of ecosystems. Its presence therefore becomes a symbol of environmental resilience and continuity of the natural world. Culturally, the elephant's power, longevity, and visible influence on the landscape make it a maker of heritage and belonging, especially with Bagisu cultural structures where the "Badadili clan" uses the elephant as its totem. This totemic association reinforces the elephant's status as a cultural emblem that embodies collective identity, ancestral attachment to the land, and the long-standing ecological wisdom that informs Bagisu relationships with their environment. Through such ecological and cultural functions, the elephant stands as an unmistakable cultural icon across both landscape and lineage.

Both "The African Elephant" and "He Longs to Return to Butiru" emphasise the deep connection between place and belonging. In "The African Elephant," the jungle represents a natural homeland where the elephant thrives in harmony with its environment, symbolising rootedness and cultural identity. Similarly, "He Longs to Return to Butiru," portrays a personal yearning for home, highlighting Butiru as a nurturing, familiar setting tied to the speaker's origin, memory, and identity.

In both poems, place is more than a backdrop, it is central to the characters' sense of belonging, history, and ecological connection. This resonates with Coleridge's perspective in "Poets in Trans-natural Landscape: Coleridge, Nature, Poetry," in which he observes:

“I never find myself alone with the embracement of rocks and hills,
a traveler up an alpine road, but my spirit courses, drives, and eddies,
like a leaf in Autumn: a wild activity, of thoughts, imaginations,
feelings, and impulses of motion, rises up from within me" (2021, p.49).

The quotation demonstrates that when Coleridge is surrounded by mountains, rocks, and other natural features, he never feels alone. His spirit moves and flows freely, like a leaf blown by the autumn wind, and nature stimulates his thoughts, imagination, and emotions. Similarly, Wangusa's imagery of childhood streams and ecstatic cattle-boys reflects this embodiment of cultural rootedness and the interconnection between humans and their environment.

Similarly, Kofi Awoonor (1975) in "The House by the Sea" captures a comparable bond with nature. He portrays the natural world as a space of healing, continuity, and ancestral dialogue, emphasising the human need to return to the land. Wangusa mirrors this perspective by inviting the soul to "return home," reflecting not only spiritual renewal but also ecological and cultural reconnection. In this poem Wangusa presents nature as a cultural homeland that embodies tradition, history, and human belonging. This tripartite connection expressed through poetic imagination, sensory experience, and memory affirms that the landscape nurtures the body, mind, and spirit of the people, reinforcing the intimate relationship between humans and their environment.

While landscapes can unite communities, they also hold personal significance to individuals. People's experiences and interactions with landscapes can be highly subjective, influenced by the

unique perspectives, memories, and emotions (Tuan,1977). Wangusa's poems above paint vivid pictures of the serene idyllic landscape, where the sounds and sights of nature evoke a sense of nostalgia and wonder. The persona's experiences and interactions with the landscape are influenced by unique perspectives and memories. The mention of retracing steps to the hill-tops of Nambaale evokes these nostalgic feelings and sentimental value for the Bagisu people who have personal connection to the land.

This aligns with Buell's idea that environment in literature should be treated as a vital presence intertwined with human history. By evoking a sense of belonging and reverence for nature, the poems demonstrate how literature can powerfully express the interdependence between people and the natural world, encouraging a more intimate and respectful relationship with the environment.

Another poem of Wangusa, "Spirit of Maji Maji" utilising a metaphor as a dominant poetic device facilitates a profound exploration of the cultural significance of landscapes, imbuing them with multifaceted meanings that transcend their geographical connotations. The poem employs landscapes as a metaphorical framework to convey themes of historical and cultural heritage, resistance, and identity and belonging. Wangusa writes:

Spirit of maji maji, that once (1)
Enraged the spears of Mahenge, (2)
Flames of Ngoni hills that ignited (3)
Manhood revolt against the plunderers, (4)
Medicine-men of Wagido that brewed (5)
The spell of immortal waters and seed, (6)
Who threw the land of kitosi into turmoil (7)
And fermented the valleys of Songea- (8)
O incite me with your glinting weapons! (9)

(Wangusa, 2022,p.76)

Wangusa's poem draws on the Maji Maji Rebellion of 1905-1907, one of the most influential anti-colonial uprisings in Tanzania, as a symbolic reservoir through which landscape becomes both a

physical and historical archive. By referencing sites such as Mahenge, Ngoni hills, and the valleys of Songea, the poet situates his work within the broader East African memory-scape shaped by colonial violence and indigenous resistance. These locations are not merely backdrop; they function as mnemonic markers that recall episodes of bravery, loss, and collective action. The opening invocation "spirit of maji maji" immediately signals a return to a defining moment in regional history, where communities relied on both spiritual conviction and communal solidarity to confront German brutality. Wangusa's choice to personify the "spirit" of the uprising signals an attempt to revive its lingering energy and transmit it across generations.

The poem's imagery reinforces this sense of a living past. Phrases such as "flames of Ngoni hills" and "glinting weapons" evoke both literal scenes of the battle and metaphorical representations of awakened courage. The flames signify more than destruction; they stand for the ignition of political consciousness among the Ngoni people, whose reputation for political prowess made them central figures in resisting colonial expansion. Similarly, the "medicine-men of Waigodo" evoke memories of political ritual practice and healing. In context of the 1905-1907 uprising, the sacred maji (water) used by prophet Kinjikitire Ngwale was collected from a natural landscape, river Rufiji. The rebellion was centered in the Matumbi hills, which are located south of the Rufiji river. Though I intend to address the aspect of spirituality in Wangusa's poetry at a later stage, it is important to note that the water from river Rufiji was believed to protect warriors, and Wangusa's reference to "the spell of immortal waters and seed" resonates with these beliefs, underscoring how spirituality served as a form of empowerment rather than mere superstition.

By embedding these historical allusions within the poem, Wangusa underscores the power of cultural memory as a binding force for communities. The landscapes he describes act as repositories of history, carrying within them the echoes of collective sacrifice. In focusing on

specific locations, he demonstrates how place becomes integral to identity formation. The Ngoni hills for example, are remembered not simply for their geographical beauty but for the bravery they fostered; the valleys of Songea are venerated as sites of martyrdom where Ngoni leaders were executed during the rebellion. The poem, therefore, recovers the emotional weight of these places, showing how they continue to shape the contemporary understandings of belonging and national heritage.

Moreover, Wangusa's deployment of the landscape as an animate force - one capable of inciting action amplifies the theme of resistance. The closing plea, "O incite me with your glinting weapons!" positions the speaker as a successor of the earlier generations who fought colonial oppression. The call for incitement suggests an active, ongoing responsibility to uphold the legacy of anti-colonial struggle. In this sense, the poem moves beyond mere commemoration; it transforms memory into a source of contemporary political and moral awakening. The symbolic role of the landscape parallels scholarly arguments that land often functions as a catalyst for revolutionary thought and collective mobilisation. Kohn and McBride's (2011) notion of land as a "revolutionary foundation" is exemplified in Wangusa's work where the earth itself appears to hold the power to inspire resistance. The poem embodies this theoretical position by showing that landscapes do not passively endure historical events; they absorb and reflect them, shaping the aspirations of future generations.

Similarly, in his other poem, "Ethiopian Riddle" Wangusa presents a vision of landscape and humans in dynamic interaction, forming a foundational of eco-community. While the poem emphasizes cultural identity and resistance, it also shows how humans and their environment are co-constitutive, mutually shaping and sustaining one another. He writes:

You land of lofty mountains and sharp riders, (1)

You dominion of dovetailing dales and gorges, (2)
You realm of impenetrable tropical jungle, (3)
You geographical miracle (4)
Of millennial political survival - (5)
You despair of raiders and crusaders (6)
That clashed upon your crimson fields (7)
And surrendered to your conquering mystery - (8)

(Wangusa,2022, p.71)

Here, we clearly see the landscape as active and meaningful. Wangusa does not treat the landscape as passive scenery instead, he uses phrases like "lofty mountains," "dovetailing dales and gorges," "and" impenetrable tropical jungle "to depict the land as powerful and enjoying. These physical features are portrayed as shaping human experience, suggesting that nature is not dormant to history but a participant in its making.

Another important point to observe is that cultural identity is partly rooted in landscapes. The description of the land as a "geographical miracle" and "realm of Millennial political survival" links the survival and resistance of people to the character of their environment. This expresses how landscapes nurture identity, resilience, and cultural continuity, implying a reciprocal bond between people and the place, a key notion of eco-community.

The poem also highlights how the people engage with the land emotionally and politically. The reference to "raiders and crusaders" and "crimson fields" connects human struggle directly to the landscape, showing how the terrain absorbs and reflects human history. The land becomes not just inhabited but honored and defended, reinforcing the bond.

The "Crimson fields," where raiders and crusaders clashed, serve as a poignant reminder of the area's tumultuous history, marked by conflict and struggle. The "conquering mystery" of the land on the other hand, implies a deep - seated resistance and determination of the people, which has enabled them to resist oppressors and maintain their peace. This symbolism invites the reader to

reflect on the intricate relationship between landscapes, humans and nonhuman entities. Feld and Basso's edited volume *Senses of Place*, (1996) holds a similar view about the symbolic importance of landscapes, noting that places often act as cultural anchors that "shield" or protect the people (Basso,1996,p.57).Therefore, the region's unique geography is underscored by its description as a "geographical miracle," which emphasizes its distinctive features and their role in shaping the people's identity. Furthermore, the phrase "Millennial political survival" suggests that the region has a long history of resisting external forces and maintaining its independence, which is a testament to the people's resilience and determination. Said's orientalism (1978,p.12), is in agreement with Wangusa's representation of landscapes in that such geographical and historical contexts play a vital role in shaping the people's identity.

Both "Spirit of Maji Maji" and "Ethiopian Riddle" affirm Timothy Wangusa's ecological vision in which land functions as a reservoir of memory, resistance , and sacred energy. In "Spirit of Maji Maji," the landscape becomes a living archive of historical struggle, holding within it the spiritual force that empowered communities to rise against oppression. Like wise, "Ethiopian Riddle" transforms the natural world into a coded site of ancestral wisdom, where the earth itself speaks through symbolic imagery that preserves cultural identity. In both poems, Wangusa elevates land beyond a physical setting to a metaphysical presence that shapes human consciousness and collective resilience. This shared vision positions him not merely as a national writer rooted in Ugandan or East African experience, but as a universal voice in ecological literature. Wangusa reveals how landscapes carry memory, embody struggle, and radiate the sacred energies that sustain communities across generations.

Through the evocative imagery of harvest, traditional celebrations, and ritual performances, Wangusa illustrates how nature sustains physical life and how it nurtures collective identity and

continuity among the Bagisu tradition. In the poem "Dance of Granaries" (Wangusa, 2022, p.31), The scene is set with carriers returning home, "with sack loads of new millet," and elders in "antique costumes of bark-cloth and goat-skin" dancing to the rhythm of drums and calabashes. This image brings forth the harmony between the land's generosity and the community's joy. The speaker says:

Let drums and calabashes (1)
Now riot in unison (2)
As carriers go song-running home (3)
With sack loads of new millet: (4)
Let ancestors in antique costumes (5)
Of back cloth and goatskin (6)
Dance high and low, (7)
Pushing elbows out and drawing them back, (8)
Raising arms above their heads (9)
And curving them there (10)
Into horns of contentment. (11)

Nature in this poem is presented as an active participant in the celebration of life. The harvest is a symbol of abundance, gratitude, and renewal. By evoking images of traditional dance and ancestral costumes, Wangusa situates the human body in harmony with natural rhythms, echoing the Bagisu traditional rituals like Imbau circumcision and the vibrant harvest rituals that have long reaffirmed the community's identity. The dance becomes a metaphor for the communion between the Bagisu people and the earth, an acknowledgement of the land's central role in cultural survival. Tanure Ojaide (1999,p.20) supports this view, arguing that in African poetry, nature is not a distant entity but a living presence that gives meaning to human ritual and communal life. Therefore, Wangusa's work emphasizes that the interplay between humans, landscape, and culture is essential for sustaining both ecological and social continuity, illustrating how poetry can celebrate and reaffirm these enduring relationships.

Similarly, Niyi Osundare (1986) in "Village voices" aligns with Wangusa's poetic portrayal of the land, emphasising its sacred and cyclical nature. Both poets highlight how the soil and landscape act as "collaborators" in the creation and sustenance of cultural memory. For Osundare, the land is not merely a source of material wealth but a living entity that preserves and sustains a community's identity through its rhythms, dances, and oral traditions. In Wangusa's work, the soil and streams serve as symbols of heritage, ensuring continuity of communal knowledge. By portraying the land as active and participatory, both poets affirm that human life, culture, and memory are inseparably intertwined with the natural environment. This reinforces the ecological and cultural centrality of the land, illustrating how poetry can document, celebrate, and preserve the intricate relationship between humans and the environment.

Chinweizu et al. (1980, p.241) further assert that African poets use the landscape to "recover and transmit communal identity," and Timothy Wangusa's scene of drums echoing, carriers singing, and elders dancing serves this function. Nature enables culture to flourish. The poem reinforces that this human-nature bond is not only spiritual, as latter poems suggest, but also cultural, binding the community through shared rituals that express belonging and heritage.

Wangusa's poem exemplifies the cultural weight of the human-nature bond. Through celebration of the harvest and communal ritual, he reflects an ecocentric view where land is both a nurturer and a keeper of tradition thus Wangusa reminds us that cultural memory, joy, and unity are cultivated not only in the human hearts but in the soil that feeds them. This ultimately creates a tripartite bond between humans, the landscape, and nonhuman entities. Each depending on and enriching the other in a shared, living ecosystem.

In his poem "The Head" Wangusa (1995, p.68) transforms Africa's geography into the anatomy of a human head, metaphorically mapping topographical regions to facial features such as "the

battered head” at the Mediterranean, "the mouth" at the Gulf of Guinea, and "the neck" at Angola. This striking embodiment of Africa as a human head poetically fuses the land, body, and being (abstract entities like memory and destiny), advancing a tripartite connection between humans, nature, and memory. Through this anthropomorphic mapping, Wangusa presents land not as passive space but as a living, sentient entity, reinforcing a communal identity deeply rooted in place. The continent becomes a symbolic self, capable of remembering trauma and expressing agency. This stylistic fusion of poetic form and geographical imagination results in an ecocentric attachment where Africa is seen as both body and homeland. Therefore, the personification of Africa suggests an ecocentric attachment which is emotional and cultural claiming the land as self. It positions the landscape not just as a passive space but as a living entity, complete with facial features and bodily agency. The poetic form itself mimics a human head, reinforcing the idea that geography is intertwined with self-conception, history, and communal memory.

In another poem, " The Gift of a Planet", Wangusa creates a tripartite connection between the body, land, and being by blending physical desire, territorial claim, and spiritual entitlement. This is achieved through vivid imagery and historical allusions that show how humans relate to the land not just materially, but emotionally and ideologically. He writes:

" In every mortal breast the consuming flame

To gather as much of the soil's bounty..."

(Wangusa,1995, p.38)

Here, the body's craving (mortal breast and consuming flame) reflects a deep-seated human drive to possess and benefit from the land. The land becomes more than geography; it is a source of sustenance, power, and legacy which is tied to identity and belonging. By referring to biblical and

colonial language for example, " When Yahweh re-allocated this planet" and " the architects of the Great Trek" Wangusa critiques historical claims to land ownership that sought divine or moral justification. This positions being (the self or identity) as constructed through narratives of land possession and exclusion. In merging these dimensions, the bodily need, land's value, and spiritual /political justification, Wangusa underscores how African poetry embodies an eco- spiritual and historical consciousness, where land is central to both individual and community identity. This fulfills the tripartite model: the land as a living space, the body as a seeker, and the being as the meaning-maker.

Together, "The Head" and "The Gift of a Planet reveal Wangusa's powerful vision of the land as a more than physical terrain. It is a living archive for memory, identity, and struggle. By anastomosing Africa into a human head and portraying the planet as a divinely contested gift, Wangusa fuses geography with body and spirit, illustrating how the land speaks, remembers, and defines belonging. Both poems ultimately affirm the land as central to African being, shaping cultural identity and historical consciousness.

Wangusa's approach reflects what Niyi Osundare (2002) calls " eco-aesthetics," a poetic strategy that recognizes nature as a subject of agency and consciousness. Osundare argues that " the land breathes and bears witness," a sentiment that Wangusa echoes by turning rivers, deserts, and gulfs into facial markers of Africa's lived and battered experience. Supporting this, Obika Gray (1998) posits that in African poetic consciousness, the land often mirrors the political and moral state of the people." Wangusa's poem, through the fragmented anatomy of the African head, also speaks to this drawing attention to historical wounds and the potential for reclamation, especially with the final gesture "To/Azania?" a term symbolizing liberation and re-Africanization. Wangusa therefore, invites readers to see the continent not just as a place, but as a presence (a self) using his

imaginative strategy of merging human form, landscape, and memory to articulate a tripartite communion. Clearly, the land is no longer inert for it feels, speaks, and remembers.

Timothy Wangusa artistically deploys the image of the mountain as a powerful symbol of cultural identity, tracing the people's very roots to this majestic landscape. In his poetry, the mountain is presented as a natural landscape and as a living archive of origin, memory and belonging hence, functions as a source of inspiration and identity across generations. It is an ancestral home that shapes the community's sense of self. By evoking the mountain as a cradle from which the people emerge, Wangusa affirms that cultural identity is deeply grounded in the land, moving into the contours of the heights that have watched over generations. The Persona using the "I" point of view says (Wangusa, 1995, p.60) writes:

Upon the mountain of Muntu I conceived this song **(1)**
Upon the mountain of Masaba I conceived this tale **(2)**
At sunrise the mountain of posterity **(3)**
At noon tide the mountain of my age-mates **(4)**
At sunset the mountain of ancients **(5)**

Here, it is clear that the mountain is presented as a central figure around which the life and identification of the community revolve. The persona speaks of the "Mountain of Muntu" and the "Mountain of Masaba" as places of origin, memory, and inspiration. These lines are not only geographical references but they express a deep cultural bond between the people and the land. When the speaker says, "Upon the mountain of Masaba I conceived this tale," the mountain becomes a cradle of storytelling and wisdom, a source from which songs, histories, and cultural expressions flow. It stands as a symbol of collective identity, a place where the people's cultural roots are firmly planted.

Bole Butake (2005) observes that African Poetry often ties land to the processes of storytelling, memory, and historical consciousness. He notes that nature, especially landmarks like rivers and mountains, are used “to establish rootedness and authenticity of voice.” Wangusa's depiction aligns with this, as he uses the mountain to ground his poetic voice in both personal and communal experience.

Through Wangusa's use of adverbs of time, the mountain is depicted through the passage of time. At sunrise, it is a mountain of prosperity, at noon it is a mountain of the speaker's age-mates and at sunset, it is a mountain of ancients. This progression mirrors the stages of life and the continuity of generations. At sunrise, the mountain is linked to prosperity, symbolizing youthfulness, new beginnings, and hope. At noon, it is tied to the vigor and the fellowship of age-mates, showing how the mountain witnesses and nurtures social bonds and shared experiences. At sunset, it becomes the mountain of ancients, evoking reverence for elders, ancestors, and the wisdom of the past. In this way, the mountain embodies the life cycle of the community, standing as a witness and guardian of cultural continuity.

From the above ideas, I note that Wangusa handles the concept of time and the mountain in an interwoven, symbolic manner, using the mountain as a temporal and cultural anchor. In the poem, the mountain is not just a physical landmark but a living timeline that marks key phases of human life. By aligning the movement of the sun with stages of life, Wangusa naturalises time, rooting it in the rhythms of nature and community. The mountain stands as a stable presence through these phases ("At sunrise", "At noontide", and " At sunset"), hence symbolising continuity and memory.

Furthermore, by placing the mountain at the heart of song and tale, the poem suggests that cultural identity itself is inseparable from the land. The mountain thus inspires creativity, preserves memory, and gives meaning to the rhythms of daily life and the transitions of generations. It's

presence in the poem reinforces the idea that identity is rooted in place, shaped by the landscape that sustains and shelters the people. Wangusa therefore develops the human-nature bond through the mountain's role in cultural memory, generational linkage, and artistic identity.

Timothy Wangusa powerfully employs the image of the mountain to express a deep sense of pride and an enduring connection between the landscape and its people. In his poem "Children to the mountain" (Wangusa, 2017, p. 11) the persona says;

You mountain of ours Mount masaba, (1)
You have within you many priceless wonders, (2)
Out of you flows river manafwa, (3)
That rejuvenates lakes of the plains; (4)
Out of you flows river solonkho (5)
That blossoms nearby and distant lands; (6)
Out of you comes the dance of the knife (7)
That converts boys into men! (8)
Mount Masaba, Mount Masaba, Mount Masaba! (9)

The speaker repeatedly addresses the mountain as "you," giving it a personal presence and portraying it as part of the people's collective self. The opening line, "You Mountain of ours Mountain Masaba," immediately establishes a relationship of belonging and ownership. The phrase of "ours" indicates that the mountain is not distant or abstract but a shared heritage, a marker through which the Bagisu people define themselves.

The poet personifies Mount Masaba as a nurturing force from which rivers like Manafwa and Solonkho flow, rejuvenating plains and blossoming distant lands, showing that the Bagisu people's livelihood and prosperity are tied to this landscape. It is also celebrated as a cradle of cultural rites, such as "a dance of the knife," a metaphor for initiation ceremonies which transforms boys of the land into men and link generations into shared customs. Ruth Finnegan (1970) observes that

African oral traditions and poetry root human identity in specific landscapes that hold cultural memory. It is now clear that Wangusa presents the mountain as a custodian of cultural practices.

Wangusa's work exemplifies the deliberate employment of intertextuality, seamlessly weaving ecological poetry into his folktales, as evident in "Betwixt Mountain and Wilderness". This narrative strategy serves to show the profound attachment to Mount Masaba, illuminating a deep cultural tradition of the Bagisu. He (Wangusa, 2015, p.173) writes:

This mountain of ours Mount Elgon **(1)**
Has in it many wondrous gifts **(2)**
In there are measureless forests **(3)**
In there are tall cliffs; **(4)**
In there are sweet bamboo shoots **(5)**
In there are rare yams **(6)**
Masaba, Masaba, Masaba! **(7)**
Mount Elgon, Mount Elgon, Mount Elgon! **(8)**

The first line of the poem, " This mountain of ours Mount Elgon" immediately establishes the tone of intimacy, pride, and communal ownership. The possessive phrase "of ours" signals a strong sense of belonging and identity tied to the mountain by the Bagisu people. It does not simply describe a physical landmark, but a cherished cultural and ecological symbol. The use "of ours" transforms Mount Elgon from a natural feature into a shared heritage, central to the collective memory and spiritual life of the Bagisu people. This line sets the stage for the ecocritical reading, where land is not passive but active in shaping cultural meaning and human identity.

The mountain is described as holding "wondrous treasures" and "immeasurable forests." This imagery suggests that the mountain is a source of both physical sustenance and cultural wealth. The bamboo shoots and rare yams are not just plants but they are symbols of food items the mountain provides to its people. These food items are emblems of the Bagisu identity, fostering cultural symbols of survival and highlighting a unique ecosystem that sustains both body and

spirit. This explains the tone of pride that the speaker uses to tell perhaps a stranger to the land or the young generation of how important the mountain is, hence this indigenous knowledge and tradition is passed down through generations.

The reference to rare yams from long ago, that are of volcanic sweetness also points to heritage and continuity. These yams are not just food but they are living relics of the past, cultivated in the fertile volcanic soils of the mountain. Their sweetness symbolises the richness of history and tradition that continues to nourish the Bamasaba community today. By highlighting these treasures, the poem shows that the mountain is both a literal and metaphorical storehouse of human-nature bond. Finally, the repetition in the closing line "Mount Masaba, Mount Masaba, Mount Masaba!" is a chant of pride and reverence. It echoes the way a community celebrates their cultural symbols through song, rituals, and oral poetry. This refrain points to how deeply the mountain is ingrained in the people's sense of self, becoming a unifying symbol of collective recognition and cultural pride of the Bagisu

This analysis strongly reflects Lawrence Buell's dominant idea that nonhuman environment should be treated not merely a backdrop but as an active presence. By representing the mountain as both a literal and metaphorical storehouse of cultural identity, heritage, and pride, the poem aligns with Buell's ecocentric vision. We note that the bond in Wangusa's poetry is formed through cultural practices such as cultivating ancestral crops for sustenance not destruction, singing traditional chants in praise of the landscapes, and celebrating the land's historical richness. These actions places the landscape in a communal memory. This deep human attachment to the land fosters an eco-community where people and nature are interdependent, with the environment serving as a living participant in the human life continuity and identity.

2.3.The Mountain as a Source of Life and it's Tripartite Connection

This section examines how Timothy Wangusa's poetry presents Mount Masaba as a central symbol of ecological, cultural, and spiritual significance. It focuses on the mountain as a source of life and explores its tripartite connection between humans, the landscape, and cultural heritage. In particular, this section highlights Wangusa's use of different types of imagery including ecological imagery, visual imagery, tactile imagery, Spatial imagery, and motile imagery to convey the mountain's symbolic and functional roles. The discussion draws on a selection of Wangusa's poems, including **Anthem for Africa** (1995), **Children to the Mountain** (2017), and **The State is My Shepherd** (2022), to show how his literary style reinforces the interdependence of people and nature.

The most important aspect about Wangusa's poetry is that he presents Mount Masaba not merely as a physical structure but as a living, enduring entity that embodies heritage, continuity, and ecological balance. Chinua Achebe (1975) observes that African writers often draw on landscapes and natural symbols to affirm communal identity and heritage. Similarly, Okpewho (1992) argues that African poetry frequently uses environmental imagery to emphasize the bond between people and their land. In line with this tradition, Wangusa's vivid depiction of Mount Masaba reflects a broader practice of using ecological imagery to sustain cultural memory.

Through the use of vivid ecological imagery, the mountain is portrayed not only as a magnificent natural structure but also as a source of life, heritage and continuity.

Citing from **Anthem for Africa** (Wangusa, 1995, p.60) writes:

Mountain of rocks older than the oldest river **(1)**
Mountain of soils block with the humans **(2)**
Mountain that speaks of other mountains **(3)**
All mountains tops now upon ocean beds **(4)**
All mountains below ocean level and tall as the Himalayas. **(5)**

Wangusa's use of natural elements such as rocks, soils, rivers and oceans to situates the mountain within a dynamic ecological system. For instance, the line "Mountain of rocks older than the oldest river," (1) emphasises the mountain's timelessness and durability. By linking it to the earth's most ancient features, Wangusa positions the mountain as a witness. This kind of imagery does more than evoke awe, for it suggests that the mountain is a symbol of endurance and resilience in the face of time and change.

Similarly, the line "Mountain of soils block with the humans" depict the intimate connection between the mountain and human existence. The mountain is not distant or passive but actively it supports life by providing soil for agriculture and habitation. In this sense, it becomes a literal and figurative foundation for survival and continuity. It is through this kind of imagery that Wangusa highlights the interdependence between nature and people.

The mountain is also connected to the vastness of the earth through line "All mountains tops now upon ocean beds." This line demonstrates that the mountain is not isolated or static, it participates in the earth's geological cycles. Such description emphasizes the ecological balance and interconnectedness of all life forms, positioning the mountain as a living part of the natural world's rhythm.

Wangusa's use of ecological Imagery therefore elevates the mountain beyond a mere physical landscape to a life-sustaining force, a cultural symbol, and an eternal element in both human and natural history. With this poetic strategy, the mountain embodies nourishment, identity and spiritual grounding for the people who live beneath it. It is now evident that Wangusa uses ecological imagery to portray the mountain as a life-giving source. This kind of imagery helps readers to visualize the mountain not only as a physical landscape but also as a symbol of cultural recognition and a provider that nurtures the community and the environment.

Wangusa's use of visual imagery enables the reader to see the mountain's richness and grandeur. He describes the mountain as having "immeasurable forests" and "exalted peaks and cliffs," creating a mental image of a vast, fertile, and majestic landscape. The poem also employs gustatory imagery to highlight the mountains provision of food. Wangusa writes of "savory bamboo shoots" and "yams from long ago," which evoke a sense of taste and nourishment. These images show that the mountain is a source of edible plants that have sustained the community for generations, reinforcing the mountains role as a provider and nurturer.

Furthermore, tactile imagery is evident in Wangusa's references to "healing herbs" and "food and medicine." These lines appeal to the reader's sense of touch and emphasise the practical, physical interaction with the mountain's resources. The herbs, for instance, can be felt, prepared, and applied for healing purposes, highlighting the mountains role as a source of tangible benefits. Similarly, references to food and medicine underscore the mountains capacity to sustain life, providing nourishment and promoting well-being. This use of tactile imagery suggests that the mountain is not merely a passive symbol but an active participant in human life, offering both sustenance and holistic care, and reinforcing its central role in supporting survival, health, and community resilience.

Wangusa also uses spatial imagery to emphasise the mountain's position in both the physical and spiritual realms. By describing the mountain as "near the side of heaven," he situates it at a point where earth and sky seem to meet, giving it a divine aura and strengthening its symbolic role as a guardian and life giver to the community. Through these layers of images Wangusa presents Mount Masaba as more than a backdrop, for it becomes a character in its own right, a nurturing presence that shapes the life and identity of the people. The poem's repeated praise of the mountain suggests the pride and deep connection the community feels towards this landscape.

I note that Timothy Wangusa represents an eco-community by illustrating the deep, interwoven relationship between humans (Bamasaba), the landscape and nonhuman entities. Through his rich use of ecological imagery, he shows that Mount Masaba is more than a physical landmark. It is a living presence that feeds, heals, and inspires the community. The mountain provides food through yams and bamboo shoots, cultural meaning through chants and memory, and spiritual significance through its towering presence and sacred associations.

This connection to the land goes beyond utility; it reflects mutual dependence where humans respect and protect the mountain, and in return, the mountain sustains them. Additionally, the mention of cultivated plants and natural elements alludes to the presence of nonhuman life (animals, crops, and ecosystems) that form part of this shared space. Together, these elements form a tripartite bond where humans, landscape, and nonhuman life coexist in harmony. Wangusa then envisions an eco-community rooted in respect, memory, and interdependence, aligning with ecocentric ideas that value nature as a vital part of human existence.

Building on this ecological vision of harmony and interdependence, Wangusa also explores the theme of renewal through imagery of fire and battle. In *Anthem for Africa*, the battle between the armies of 'Ojozi' and 'Masaya' is Portrayed not merely as a physical conflict but as a spiritual and moral struggle to read the land of evil or tyranny (Wangusa 1995, p.168). The symbolic use of the fire implied through visual and auditory imagery (gun-battle) suggests a purging force, a dramatic force meant to restore balance and purity.

Here, Wangusa uses vivid kinetic and visual imagery to dramatise the violence and chaos of invasion or warfare in Africa. He writes:

Then did guest stories of the enemy's magic **(1)**
Pierce and terrify the weary land: **(2)**

Of the beardless warrior boys on foot (3)
And advancing across panicking hills and plains (4)
Blasting Afrolandian garrisons upon their trail (5)
Striking targets then river's ahead (6)
With rocks of dynamite that had human eyes. (7)

The speaker in this poem adopts a detached, descriptive tone as an observer of the devastating effects of warfare on both the land and the people. Though not directly involved, the speaker's detailed recounting of events marked by visceral imagery and kinetic descriptions positions them as a witness to the traumatic transformation of the African landscape and psyche. This narrative stance allows the speaker to blend realism with symbolism: while chronicling the actions of the invading force, they also infuse the natural environment with emotion and voice, turning hills and rivers into panicked, sentient participants. The speaker's voice, therefore, is not neutral and it is loaded with empathy, highlighting destruction of indigenous life, the loss of innocence in young warriors, and the violence imposed on the land. This suggests the speaker's deep connection to the African setting and a moral stance against the chaos and alienation caused by war.

Phrases like "advancing across panicking hills and plains" gives the landscape a human-like reaction (panicking) which personifies nature, showing how deeply war disturbs both people and the land. The line "blasting Afrolandian garrisons upon their trail" shows violent destruction of African strongholds. "Striking targets ten rivers ahead" exaggerates the reach and devastation of the invading force, suggesting a relentless and far-reaching attack.

The human presence is central in the poem, captured in the phrase "beardless warrior boys on foot." This description evokes an image of young, inexperienced fighters navigating through a war-torn environment. Their youth and vulnerability emphasise the human cost of conflict. As

these warriors move across panicking hills and planes, their journey not only reflects their physical advancement but also symbolises how well alters the emotional and physical state of the land.

The landscape, far from being a passive setting, is described with emotive language. Phrases such as panicking hills and rivers ahead suggest that the land itself is reacting to human activity. This personification of the terrain reflects a deep, almost spiritual connection between the environment and its inhabitants. It also signals the disturbance of natural order, where the land becomes a participant in the conflict, not merely a backdrop.

Non-human entities appear in form of technology specifically, weapons of war. The line "rocks of dynamite that had human eyes" is a striking image that matches the mechanical with the human. Tools of destruction have taken on life-like qualities, symbolising how warfare dehumanises and replaces natural elements with manufactured violence. This substitution of nature destructive technology Max a critical shift in the ecological balance.

Though not directly about the mountain, this imagery parallels Wangusa's vision to care for the land. The poem presents a landscape in turmoil, where the harmony between humans, nature, and nonhuman entities has been disrupted. The human connection to the land is no longer nurturing but invasive, and nonhuman forces instead of being animals or plants take the form of lethal tools. The tripartite connection is therefore constructed through a lens of conflict and imbalance, showing the fragility of ecological and cultural bonds in times of war.

The researcher notices the theme of resistance and endurance in Wangusa's poetry, who speaks about the broader African experience, especially in post-colonial contexts where missions must rebuild their identities and institutions from the ruins of colonization. Danson Kahyana (2024) observes in his analysis of Wangusa's poetry, the mountain can also be read as “a symbol of

historical struggle and social resistance." It is not just the individual that must climb but the entire community. The mountain stands firm, unmoved through storms and seasons, just as African societies continue to survive and resist systematic injustices. This powerful image resonates in poems like *The State Is My Shepherd*, where disappointment in governance does not extinguish the desire for justice and change. Instead, it calls for resilience—the same Spirit the mountain embodies. Wangusa's mountain invites readers to embrace struggle not as punishment but as an opportunity for building strength and achieving transformation.

Wangusa's poetry further amplifies the mountain to depict the tension between traditional African values and the influences of colonialism and modernity. He employs the mountain image in his poem to dramatise the clash between ancestral ethics and disruptive forces that arrived with colonial rule and modern government. This makes Wangusa's poetry a carrier of hope and resistance.

2.4. Conclusion

Wangusa's poetry successfully illuminates the profound tripartite connection between humans, the landscape, and animals, drawing attention to the multifaceted significance of nature. Through symbolic references to Mount Masaba and other landscapes, the chapter has demonstrated how nature functions not just as the physical presence but as a living archive rich with historical and ancestral memory. Nature, particularly mountain Elgon in Wangusa's view serves as a site of origin and continuity, preserving the collective journey of communities like the Bagisu of eastern Uganda. In this way, Wangusa reinforces the role of landscape as a bearer of identity and lineage.

Nature is foregrounded as a source of livelihood. Wangusa illustrates that the landscape provides essential resources such as water, fertile soils for agriculture, forests, and animals. These resources

support subsistence farming, tourism and cultural crafts indicating a vital interdependence between the human community and its natural environment. This ecological wealth contributes to the well-being of people in both the material and cultural way.

Nature becomes a site of identity and resistance. Wangusa's use of the mountain especially Masaba marks ownership, belonging and territorial pride. It acts as a symbol of political rootedness and cultural resilience, asserting that landscapes are not neutral but are tied to power, memory, and placemaking. Mountains in Wangusa's poetry reflect both the struggles and the triumphs of a people anchored in their land.

The researcher has noted that literature plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting this human-nature relationship. Wangusa uses landscape symbolism and ecological imagery to convey the continuity of the Gisu community, bridging oral tradition and modern African Poetry. His poetry contributes to environmental memory by framing places like Mount Elgon as cultural touchstones in the collective consciousness of the people.

The key aspects observed in this chapter about Wangusa and his eco-poetry range from placing nature as a symbol of identity and memory, nature as a source of life and sustenance, nature as a shared vulnerability in times of war and Language as a bridge to cultural specificity of the landscape. These views in Wangusa's selected poems align with Lawrence Buell's ideas on environmental representation to show that nature is not passive but an active participant in the environment.

This chapter has deliberately not explored the spiritual significance of the human-nature relationship, which is equally central to Wangusa's poetry. That dimension of how nature functions as a spiritual realm and a channel for transcendence will be examined in the next chapter

CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN- NATURE-SPIRIT CONNECTION IN WANGUSA'S SELECTED POEMS

3.1 Introduction

Timothy Wangusa's poetry offers a profound meditation on the intricate entanglements between the humans, the natural, and spiritual realms, forming what can be termed a Human-Nature-Spirit Continuum. Rooted in African cosmological thought, Wangusa's work reflects what Kenyan philosopher John Mbiti (1990) describes as a religious ontology, where the universe is populated not only by humans and nature but also by spirits, ancestors and deities, all coexisting in a tightly woven moral and metaphorical order. This holistic world view resists western dualism by affirming that the sacred and the material are deeply fused.

African literary critics such as Garuba, H (2003) and Micere Mugo (1994) have emphasized the centrality of the spiritual in African consciousness and literature, noting that traditional African art forms often draw meaning from ritual, community, and the land.

In this light, the chapter explores how Wangusa's selected poems merges the spiritual and physical realms through his evocation of myth, ritual, nature, and ancestral memory. It analyzes poems where deities, spirits, and ancestors are not abstract beings but animate forces inhabiting landscapes, animals, and natural phenomena. The chapter also interrogates the role of ritual and traditional belief systems in binding the living to their environment and spiritual lineage. By doing so, it positions Wangusa's work within a broader African poetic tradition that views existence as an interconnected web of life, spirit, and place.

I will use Kellert's Biophilia theory (1993) as a critical framework to analyse the human-nature-spirit connection in Timothy Wangusa's selected poetry. Kellert's theory posits that humans

possess an innate affinity for the natural world and drive emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being from it, offers a fitting lens through which to examine Wangusa's portrayal of the interconnectedness between humans, the landscape, and spiritual elements. Through this perspective, the chapter will explore how Wangusa imaginatively constructs an eco-community grounded in mutual dependence, reverence, and symbolic unity among all entities.

This study will adopt a poem-by-poem analytical approach to systematically examine how Timothy Wangusa constructs the interconnection between humans, nature, and spiritual elements in his selected poetry. By engaging each poem individually, the analysis will uncover the unique linguistic, thematic, and symbolic strategies Wangusa employs to represent an eco-community grounded in mutual interdependence. This method allows for a close reading of poetic nuances, including metaphors, indigenous expressions, and cultural imagery, which collectively reveal the complexity of the human-nature-spirit connection. The poem-per-poem analysis is significant as it not only respects the integrity and distinctiveness of each poetic work but also facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the overarching ecological vision in Wangusa's poetry. The poems to be discussed include; The mystic herb, Soil Song, The trinity tree, The enchanted lad, Bishop of cows, Ancient Oracle, and First Coming.

3.2 Sacredness and Spirituality of Landscapes

This section examines the sacred and spiritual dimensions of landscapes in Timothy Wangusa's poetry, highlighting how natural spaces are imbued with cultural, historical, and spiritual significance. It explores how landscapes serve as sites of reverence, memory, and communal identity, reflecting the intimate and symbolic relationships between humans, nature, and the divine. The analysis focuses on Wangusa's use of poetic techniques, including visual imagery, tactile imagery, auditory imagery and motile imagery, to evoke a sense of sacredness and spiritual

connectedness. Other figures of speech like symbolism, personification, apostrophe and metaphors will be used.

Basso (1996,p.53) asserts that the Sacredness of landscapes is deeply intertwined with the culture of the people who inhabit and revere them, reflecting their spiritual beliefs, values, and traditions. Timothy Wangusa's work offers a profound exploration of sacredness and spirituality of nature, revealing the intricate relationship between people, landscapes and the divine. Wangusa's poetry demonstrably embodies characteristics of African cultural traditions and the ecocentric tenets. These fundamental components integral to literary landscape, enables scholars to elucidate the mythical aspects inherent in his poetry. Taking "The Mystic Herb" and "Land of Uhuru" as case points, it becomes clear that Wangusa's poetry often portrays nature as deeply sacred and spiritually significant. In the poem "The Mystic Herb, " the poet brings out the mythology in his works for it reveals the traditional knowledge and spiritual connection to the fore-fathers of the land (Wangusa, 1993, p.13)

Come with me children of grief (1)
Come with me to the raged mountain (2)
And I will show you the hidden spot (3)
Where grows a rare scarlet herb (4)
At the hollow centre of an antique stone- (5)

In this poem, Wangusa crafts a vivid portrayal of the human-nature-spirit connection, highlighting the sacredness and spirituality of the landscape. The poem begins with an apostrophic call "Come with me children of grief/Come with me to the raged mountain" which immediately invokes tactile and motile imagery, inviting the reader to physically and emotionally journey into the landscape. This use of direct address creates an intimate communion between humans and the mountain, suggesting that nature itself is an active participant in the restoration and healing of the human

spirit. Wangusa further employs visual imagery in lines such as " Where grows a rare scarlet herb/At the hollow centre of an antique stone," which evokes a sense of sacred space, as if the mountain holds hidden treasures and spiritual significance accessible only through attentive observation and reverence.

Through ecological imagery, Wangusa positions the mountain as a repository of communal memory and emotional restoration. The repeated references to the "ragged mountain" function symbolically, representing both the turmoil of human suffering and the resilience offered by nature. This dual symbolism establishes the mountain as a mediator in the tripartite connection: humans derive spiritual and emotional sustenance, the land is animated and revered as a living entity, and the interaction underscores the sacred continuity between human, nature, and spirit. The tactile and motile imagery, combined with apostrophe and ecological representation, allows the mountain to become both a literal and figurative site of refuge, demonstrating that nature's sacredness is inseparable from its role in human and communal healing. In this way, Wangusa's poetic style not only enlivens the landscape but constructs a spiritually charged space that reflects the interdependence of humans, the environment, and spiritual consciousness.

Wangusa's depiction of nature as sacred continues in a poem "Land of Uhuru" (Wangusa,1995,p.102). He presents the land as sacred through both spiritual symbolism and poetic style, reflecting deeply rooted African cosmologies. The poem opens with a mythic scene: "When Murungu first moulded Gikuyu and Mumbi, / He stood them upon this sacred mountain..." This moment evokes a creation narrative, blessing the land at the center of divine-human interaction. By referencing Murungu, a divine being in kikuyu cosmology, Wangusa aligns nature, particularly the mountain, with divinity. The mountain is not merely topographical but becomes a spiritual axis, a meeting point between heaven and earth.

The poetic style enhances this sacredness through imagery and diction. The phrase "creation's splendour/ In a harmony of light, drizzle and blossom" evoke a serene and fertile Edenic landscape. This image of natural elements in harmony suggests not only ecological balance but also divine order and blessing. The use of the word "harmony" reinforces the sacred connection between the divine, the land, and humanity. The sacred commission continues in the next stanza: "To you, O Man and Woman... / Protect and tend it with passionate care, / And it will be your everlasting mother," The land is personified as a mother, symbolising life-giving sustenance, nurturance, and continuity. In African thought, the land is often viewed as a living entity. It is ancestral, spiritual, and communal. By referring to the land as " your everlasting mother," Wangusa echoes the African belief that the earth is not just property but heritage and a divine trust. Wangusa uses enjambment and rhythm to mirror the continuity and flow of this sacred heritage. The tone of the speaker is solemn and reverent, fitting for spiritual pronouncement.

This portrayal resonates with Okot p'Bitek's (1966) Song of Lawino, where nature is central to spiritual life. Lawino, the speaker, affirms: "The ways of your ancestors/Are rooted in the trees and hills." Here, Okot critiques the disconnection from nature brought by colonial modernity, emphasizing that spiritual rituals tied to the land sustain community identity and continuity. The forest, river, and shrine in his poem stand beyond setting to living spiritual beings. Similarly, Wole Soyinka (1967), in *Idanre and Other Poems*, presents the natural world as a liminal space where human and divine intersect. In "Idanre," he writes: "The forest is a god's temple, where the mortal goes to shed his skin and speak with spirits." Soyinka's Yoruba cosmology sees nature as a divine archive echoing Wangusa's idea of nature as a keeper of spiritual knowledge.

In the two poems analysed above, "The Mystic Herb" and "Land of Uhuru", Wangusa exemplifies Kwame Gyekye's (1995) idea that asserts a holistic African worldview, in which human life is

understood in relation to spirits, ancestors, the land, and the community. Within this framework, nature is not inert but morally and spiritually charged, playing a vital role in healing, remembering, and transmitting knowledge. In this context, Wangusa, similar to Okot and Soyinka, constructs a poetic world in which grief is addressed not through isolation but journeying into nature, a space where ancestral and divine healing can be accessed. This conception of nature reflects a spiritual ecology, grounded in African epistemology, in which the land serves as a sacred agent and the human experience remains inseparable from the natural and unseen world. Therefore, through symbolic imagery, ancestral allusions, and poetic reverence, the two poems reflect a worldview in which land is not just a physical entity but a living, spiritual presence deeply intertwined with identity, heritage, and divine responsibility. Wangusa, in particular, presents nature as a sacred trust, a maternal force and a moral compass for humanity. This sacred connection rooted in African cosmology, elevates the environment beyond utility, calling for reverence, care, and harmony with the natural world.

The role of rituals and traditional beliefs in binding the living to the nonliving through natural elements and landscape is further presented as we see the speaker's instruction to the children (Wangusa, 1993, p.13)

On my mound of earth when I am gone **(1)**
Place three leaves of the rare herb **(2)**
Then true as the length of my years **(3)**
Shall return to you in peculiar dream **(4)**
And into your ears whisper such secret **(5)**
As shall turn your tears into joyful song... **(6)**

Here, Timothy Wangusa presents a profound sense of sacredness and spirituality through the depiction of rituals, natural elements, and the intimate relationship between humans and the land. The speaker's instruction to "Place three leaves of the rare herb/Then True as the length of my

years/Shall return to you in peculiar dream" addresses the children directly, engaging them in ritualised interaction with nature. This use of direct address functions as an apostrophe, creating an intimate connection between the human participants and the natural world, and positioning the landscape as a sentient, almost spiritual guide.

Wangusa employs symbolism and imagery to convey the sacred qualities of the landscape. The "rare herb" represents knowledge, healing, and ancestral memory, while the "mound of earth" signifies continuity, mortality, and the grounding presence of the land. The tactile and olfactory imagery associated with the herb namely its handling, placement, and spiritual significance evokes a ritualised and multi-sensory engagement, transforming the landscape into a locus of sacred activity. Additionally, the line "true as the length of my years" bridges human life with the timelessness of nature, suggesting an enduring, cyclical relationship that transcends mortality.

The poem further employs a metaphor and spiritual allegory, in the line "And into your ears whisper such secret/ As shall turn your tears into joyful song." Here, human grief is transformed into spiritual expression through engagement with the sacred landscape, emphasising the tripartite connection between humans, ancestors, and the land. Nature at this point actively participates in human life, providing healing, guidance, and continuity. Through these poetic styles such as direct address, imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and ritualistic cadence, Wangusa constructs a spiritually charged environment where the land becomes a conduit for ancestral knowledge, healing, and communal identity. The sacredness of the landscape is established by showing how human, spiritual, and natural realms intersect, creating a holistic experience of the land as a living, sacred entity.

The ritualistic vision of turning tears into joy resonates strongly with the Bagisu traditional songs during the Imbalu circumcision ceremony. In the poem "Song of Mukimba"(Wangusa,2022,p.34)

a traditional circumcision song of the Bamasaba people from eastern Uganda, nature and ritual merge as the initiate is prepared spiritually and physically to enter adulthood. Circumcision among the Bagisu is not merely a biological procedure; it is deeply a communal and sacred rite of passage. The poem captures the emotional, cultural, and ceremonial tone of an African male circumcision rite. The speaker, likely an elder or parent, address a boy preparing for initiation, blending awe, urgency, and celebration. The poetic voice shifts between wonder at the vibrant sounds ("What is that resounding like a drum?") and a direct call to the initiate, reinforcing the communal nature of the ritual.

Stylistically, the poem uses repetition, rhetorical questions, and vivid imagery to heighten the drama and sacredness of the moment. Items mentioned in poem like "cowary-shells," "monkey-skin headgear," and "stringed beads" evoke rich cultural symbolism and the contribution of animals to uphold tradition and identity. The communal excitement "bubbling for circumcision" reveals how the ritual connects the individual to collective cultural belonging. This connection reflects the African cosmological view, where rituals act as bridges between the living and the non-living. As John S. Mbiti (1969) notes in *African Religions and Philosophy*, "The physical and spiritual are but two dimensions of the same reality in traditional African life. Rituals involving herbs, stones, trees, and burial sites are not symbolic alone, for they function as links in the ongoing dialogue with ancestors.

This is echoed in Kofi Awoonor's poem, "Songs of Sorrow", where the speaker laments: "I have no place to stand, the spirits have deserted me" (Awoonor, 1971). Here, the disconnection from ritual and tradition isolates the speaker from the ancestral world, reinforcing that continuity depends on adherence to cultural practices rooted in nature. It is clear that Wangusa's poem also suggests the healing power of rituals: the persona promises to "turn your tears into joyful song,"

implying emotional transformation through communion with the dead, via a natural ritual. Nature is therefore is not idle but a spiritual technology that is made up of memory, healing and continuity.

In another poem, Wangusa further creates the intimate bond between humans and the landscape.

In the poem "Soil Song" (1993, p.5), Wangusa metaphorically merges the spiritual and physical realms as a symbol of both corporeal sustenance and metaphysical origin. The speaker sings praise of the soil:

There is nothing so close as the soil (1)
There is no honey so sweet as the earth (2)
There is no treasure so dear as the mud (3)
This soil is the child of my very mother (4)
This is true and I did not know it (5)
That this mud is the substance of my body (6)
That I eat of it to sustain my breath (7)
Then it turns around and eats me up- (8)
To make me manure of the world. (9)

The lines "This mud is the substance of my body/That I eat of it to sustain my breath/Then it turns around and eats me up," portray a cyclical imagery and metaphor to convey the interdependence of human life and the earth. This suggests both the physical dependence and a deeper spiritual rootedness where the earth is a mother, sustainer, and a final resting place. By calling soil "The child of my very mother," Wangusa fuses personal and ancestral images. Here, the soil is personified as a mother, nurturer, and protector, which creates an intimate, familial connection between humans and the earth. This personification and metaphor reinforce the idea that land is not inert but alive, responsive, and sacred. This concept is rooted in African spiritual ecology, where land is intertwined with memory, ancestry, and identity.

The poem implies that the earth is not dormant but sacred and responsive. This cyclical exchange where humans consume the earth and are in turn consumed by it aligns with the wider African

view of spiritual ecology where nature is alive, linked with spirit, and central to human identity. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi wa Thiongo (1967) expresses that "the land is sacred; it is the blood of our ancestors," reinforcing Wangusa's message of an indivisible bond between land, spirit, and body.

The poem also mirrors Mazisi Kunene's view (1970) that "life and death are part of the rhythm of nature," where the dead do not vanish but return to the land and continue guiding the living through ancestral presence. Thus, in *Soil Song*, Wangusa merges the physical acts of eating, breathing, and dying with the spiritual rhythms of birth, return, and rebirth. The poem is not just a meditation on mortality but an affirmation of the eco-spiritual continuum, where nature is a vessel of the soul and humanity is perpetually reborn through the soil.

The use of repetition strengthens this emotional connection by emphasizing the uniqueness of the land. The repeated structure in the first three lines " There is no... " serves to stress that nothing else in the speaker's life compares to the closeness, sweetness, and value of the soil. The rhythmic emphasis reinforces the deep affection and sense of belonging the speaker feels towards the landscape. As noted by Okuyade (2011, p.3), repetition in African poetry is used to reflect communal values and deepen emotional resonance.

Personification adds a dramatic and emotional touch to the poem by attributing human qualities to the soil. In the final line "Then it turns around and eats me up," the soil is depicted as a living force that not only supports the speaker's life but also consumes it in the end. This line personifies the soil as a powerful, active participant in the human life cycle, showing that the speaker's connection to the land does not end with life but continues to death. This idea aligns with Achebe's (1975) view that in African thought, the land and ancestors are interwoven, and the dead are never truly gone but return to the soil, remaining part of the living community. With this strong attachment,

Wangusa's poetry puts emphasis that we are not separate from the earth but are bound to it by origin, need, and destiny.

Wangusa's poetry shows a deep spiritual connection between people and nature. In his short but powerful poem “The Trinity Tree”, the spiritual aspect is deeply embedded in the natural image of a tree which symbolically embodies the Christian holy trinity, the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. Wangusa, (2022, p.106), writes:

The father in the root **(1)**
The son in the shoot **(2)**
The spirit in the fruit. **(3)**

This brief but profound poem, is Wangusa's first poem, written after thirty years of contemplation. It was born after the poet's struggle to explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to his students at Mbale High School in 1965. Unable to offer a clear, relatable explanation at the time, the writer turned to metaphor much later in life to capture the mystery in a simple yet meaningful form made up of fifteen words. By using imagery from nature (root, shoot, and fruit) Wangusa presents the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct yet unified parts of one organic whole. The metaphor not only simplifies theological complexity but also draws from an African ecological sensibility where nature often reveals spiritual truths. The speaker in the poem takes on a reflective, almost priestly voice, aiming to teach through metaphor rather than doctrine. He does not preach but offers a distilled insight that invites meditation and personal interpretation, showing reverence both for nature and the divine mystery it embodies.

The use of symbolism in the poem powerfully conveys the presence of divine order in the natural world. By associating different parts of the tree with each person of the trinity - the root with the father, the shoot with the Son, and the fruit with the Holy Spirit, the poem presents nature not

merely as physical but as sacred, alive with spiritual meaning. The root symbolises God the father, the origin and unseen foundation of all existence, just as roots lie hidden beneath the soil yet sustain the entire tree. The shoot representing God the son, suggests growth, revelation, and incarnation - Christ as the visible expression of God emerging into the world. Lastly, the fruit, symbolising the Holy Spirit, implies the manifestation of spiritual nourishment and fulfillment, something that can be received, shared and experienced. Through these symbols, the tree becomes a living representation of divine presence, revealing how the landscape can mirror the sacred.

This symbolic alignment between the tree and the trinity brings out the idea that spiritual and natural worlds are interconnected, reinforcing themes common in both African spirituality and Christian theology, where nature often reflects the divine. Mbiti, (1990). Thus, Wangusa's poem, briefly uses symbolism to merge theology with ecology, showing that landscapes are not only part of the environment but also vessels of spiritual revelation.

He (Wangusa 1965 - 1990, p.6) uses mythological allusion to bridge to the ancient world. When the speaker says;

Henceforth to your dead ones no more burial, (1)
But commit them to their rest in the open grass (2)
Under the tall totem tree beyond the kraal. (3)
From bones let rain and worms clean the flesh (4)
Back into the pores of the soil, it's sweetness (5)
To feed the roots of trees and herbs and crops (6)

The speaker adopts a reflective and instructive voice, guiding the audience on how to handle death and burial with a deep reverence for nature. This speaker challenges conventional burial practices by proposing a return to nurture cycles where the body is offered back to the earth. The tone is solemn yet serene, as the speaker portrays death not as an end, but a transformation. Line (5) "Back

into the pores of the soil, it's sweetness" reflects a calm acceptance of mortality, with the soil symbolising both rest and renewal.

The spirituality of the landscape in the above poem is expressed through a sacred connection between death, nature, and regeneration. The poem encourages a return to the natural burial practices by stating, " no more burial, / But commit them to their rest in the open grass" implying that the dead should return directly to the earth to complete the cycle of life. The use of imagery blended with free verse helps to present the landscape not just as a physical setting but as a sacred and transformative space, where life and death are harmonized.

His verse is infused with the spirit of the land, echoing the whispers of the ancestors and the rhythms of the natural world. Invoking the dead makes Wangusa's poetry to tap into the sense of timelessness and sacredness, connecting the present to the past and the non-human to the human. The researcher notices that the African traditional burial practices are honoured by committing the dead to rest in the open grass under the tall totem tree, and through the image of the rain and worms cleaning the flesh from the bones, which then feeds the roots of trees, herbs and crops demonstrates the Land's role in sustaining life.

The images of "open grass," "tall totem tree," and " roots of trees and herbs and crops, " all of which depict a natural, undisturbed environment. This rural imagery reflects a spiritual world view in which the land holds divine purpose by not only providing life but also receiving and renewing it. The reference to the "totem trees beyond the kraal "is deeply symbolic because in many African cultures, totem trees are sacred, representing ancestral spirits and continuity. Placing the dead under such a tree implies a spiritual return to one's origins and a unification with nature and ancestry. This reflects what Wole Soyinka (1976, p.1-5) describes as the Yoruba metaphysical world view, where the boundary between the physical and spiritual is thin and nature acts as a

medium for ancestral presence. By situating the dead beneath the totem tree, Wangusa portrays the land as a sacred resting place where spiritual and ecological renewal converge.

Moreover, the poem's free verse structure reflects the organic, unrestricted flow of natural processes since death is not confined by cultural rigidity but embraced as a return to the earth. The line "From bones let rain and worms clean flesh" offers a raw, yet reverent depiction of decomposition, showing how nature acts as a divine agent of purification and transformation. This idea is related to Graham Harvey (2006), who urges that indigenous and animist traditions see land as alive and responsive, a spiritual partner in human existence. Finally, the poem's closing lines "Back into the pores of the soil, it's sweetness/To feed the roots of trees and herbs and crops" frame the earth not as the final destination but as a sacred womb for regeneration. They dead, return to the land, nourish future life, echoing Nfah-Abbenyi's (1997) assertion that African Literature often portrays land as a symbol of continuity, healing and ancestral presence. This way, Wangusa redefines burial not as a loss, but as, spiritual reintegration into eternal rhythms of the natural world, this land is a living spiritual entity that connects the human, natural, and ancestral realms.

In the "Ancient Oracle" particularly the last stanza, (Wangusa 1993, p.13) the persona says:

From an elder's or a warrior's Skelton save the skull **(1)**

And in a branch of that sacred tree fix it high **(2)**

In this poem, Timothy Wangusa presents a compelling image of the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the spirit world. We see that the communal identity is embedded with spirituality and Wangusa establishes this continuum through visual imagery and symbolic style, when the speaker describes a ritual act of saving a skull from warrior or elder and fixing it high in a sacred tree. This act symbolizes reverence for the deceased and the integration of human remains with the natural world. The tree in this sense, becomes a spiritual and communal archive.

In line (2) of the poem above, the tree transforms into a physical and spiritual monument. It not only preserves the past but becomes a symbolic tool for shaping the future. The persona continues:

That in ages to come when the children fret, (3)
You shall to that family tree bring them - (4)
Show them their past and predict their future. (5)

This interaction suggests that nature holds ancestral memory and functions as a guide. It preserves identity across generations, revealing Wangusa's view that nature is both an archive and oracle. The tree is not simply a tree to play with, for it becomes an agent of cultural and communal continuity.

Just as Simon Gikandi (2003, p.378) argues that African literature frequently portrays nature as a living archive, Wangusa exemplifies this by embedding ancestral skulls in trees, reinforcing that land is more than geography. It is memory and prophecy. Similarly, Wanjohi (1997) explains that in African ontologies, nature is a companion in human history and identity, not separate but part of human destiny. Wangusa's symbolism of the skull and sacred tree positions the environment as both witness and vessel of human history, memory, and spiritual connection.

By presenting this continuity, Wangusa suggests that ecology is inseparable from community. Nature is a setting for the devine entities and majorly a participant in all human affairs. As Robin Nixon (2011, p.15) asserts in "Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the poor," that literature plays a crucial role in resisting ecological degradation by showing how deeply culture and spiritual values are tied to the land. Wangusa's work fits this model by calling attention to nature's centrality in spiritual and communal life.

The connection in Wangusa's poem leans towards building an eco-community, one where ecological awareness is cultural awareness. In such a community, sacred trees and landscapes are

preserved not only for their utility but for their historical and spiritual importance. Children are taught about their origins through nature linked rituals, ensuring continuity, and the land becomes a moral and historical compass, grounding individuals in collective identity. Ultimately, "Ancient Oracle" illustrates that in African thought, spirituality, ecology, and humanity form one inseparable chain. Wangusa challenges modern alienation of man from the land, reminding readers that nature is not silent but speaks through ancestral memory.

Timothy Wangusa's poems "Bishop of Cows" and "Ancient Oracle" present two contrasting versions of spiritual leadership and religious philosophy, one grounded in traditional African reverence for nature and ancestral continuity, and the other critiquing materialism and spiritual detachment within modern religious leadership. This contrast underscores Wangusa's broader commentary on the erosion of spiritually rooted, nature-centered worship in favor of commodified and self-serving religion. Today, the association between the Christian and traditional worldview is often seen in how people (Bamasaba) combine religious practices with cultural traditions. For instance, during burial ceremonies, a Christian family may hold church service with prayers and hymns, but also perform traditional rituals such as pouring libations or calling upon ancestors to bless the journey of the deceased. Another interesting association between Christianity and tradition is in the naming ceremonies, a Mugisu child might be given both a Christian name during baptism and a traditional name that reflects family heritage or significant events.

In "Ancient Oracle," Wangusa reflects the African worldview in which spirituality is intimately bound to nature and ancestral heritage. The persona in the poem instructs that the skull of a deceased elder or warrior should be fixed on the branch of the sacred tree so that future generations may consult it to learn about their past and receive guidance. The natural environment specifically the tree becomes a spiritual medium. This depiction aligns with African cosmologies where trees,

rivers and mountains are sacred spaces of communion with ancestors. John Mbiti (1969, p.29 - 30) emphasises that in African tradition religion, "nature is never empty" for it is alive with spirits and ancestors and serves as a bridge between the living and the dead. During the initiation rituals such as circumcision among the Bagisu, which transforms boys into men, a call to the ancestors especially "Masaba" the grandfather of the land and the proprietor of Imbalu circumcision is called upon by the initiates for the spirit of bravery before facing the sharp knife. While Christianity may discourage such rites of summoning the dead of the land, some families still allow them but follow with thanks giving services in church.

By contrast, "Bishop of cows" (Wangusa , 2022,p.86) satirises the modern cleric who has lost touch with both natural sacredness and the community's spiritual needs. The Bishop is preoccupied with material wealth (cows, pigs, and goats) and sees livestock as a symbol of ecclesiastical stature, boasting, "The cows you have, the more Bishop you are!" His spiritual office is defined not by service or sacred duty but by economic success. The congregation's eventual rejection of him, choosing instead to "elect one of your cows as our Bishop," reflects a deep dissatisfaction with religious materialism and spiritual alienation. This theme resonates strongly today. In many societies, religious and public leaders are increasingly seen focusing on personal enrichment like acquiring land, businesses, or luxury while neglecting their follower's spiritual or social needs. Churches and institutions and turned into profit - driven ventures, and leaders boast more about assets than service. Just as in a poem, communities grow disillusioned, recognising when leadership becomes self-serving. The poem warns that when leaders lose moral focus, the people may eventually turn away or rebel with biting irony, as seen in the cow's "election." Therefore ,It is clear that the Bishop being devoted to his farm than to his flock is a symbol of misplaced values.

This contrasts sharply with Ancient Oracle, where nature is not a possession but a sacred partner in the community's moral and spiritual continuity. While the Ancient Oracle suggests that nature holds ancestral wisdom and moral truth, Bishop of cows warns that detachment from these values reduces religion to business. The African sacred worldview, as shown in Ancient Oracle, is holistic, combining land, spirit, and lineage whereas the modern religious model mocked in Bishop of cows is fragmented and exploitative.

Wangusa's contrast here, mirrors Ngugi wa Thiongo's (1986) critique of "Decolonizing the mind," where he argues that Christianity, as practiced in many African settings, often replaced indignant sacred relationships with profit-driven and hierarchical structures. Likewise, Taban lo Liyong cautions against "imported spiritual formulas" that ignore African epistemologies and reverence for the land. Wangusa's Ancient Oracle celebrates the spiritual a grounded relationship with nature that sustains memory, identity and guidance, while Bishop of cows critiques the degradation of that relationship through materialism and clerical greed.

Timothy Wangusa's poetry critiques the colonial narrative, exposing the destructive tendencies of colonial powers that sought to dominate and exploit East Africa's sacred and beautiful natural landscapes. Through his narrative poetic style, Wangusa challenges the colonial discourse, revealing the devastating impact of imperialism on the region's ecosystem. In the poem, "First coming" the persona says:

I see them, **(1)**
I see them inside the divine stone- **(2)**
And now they are eating the earth **(3)**
And now they are sowing poison teeth **(4)**
And now they are urinating on the graves **(5)**
And now they are excreting on the shrines- **(6)**

The sacredness of the landscape is emphasised through its defilement. Wangusa's poetry depicts this, and the two other poems that support this argument "A Pattern of Dust" and "The continental Wish" are to be discussed at a later stage. In the poem, "First Coming" as illustrated above, the speaker observes with sorrow and alarm how once - holy places are being desecrated, stating " I see them inside the divine (divine) stone, "and later" they are urinating on the graves... excreting on the shrines." The lines clearly indicate that the earth and its cultural landmarks - graves, shrines, and divine stones are not just physical locations, but sacred spaces deeply tied to spirituality, ancestry, and cultural memory.

The speaker uses the first-person perspective (" I see them "), making the voice both personal and prophetic, almost like a witness testifying to sacrilege. The repetition of now "And now they are..." "Builds rhythm and urgency, suggesting an unstoppable wave of destruction and moral decay. Each act described for example "eating the earth," "uprooting landmarks," "sowing poison teeth" evokes a violation not just of nature, but of ancestral and spiritual order.

The references to graves and shrines highlight the African view of land as sacred, a belief widely acknowledged by Nkiru Nzegwe (2006), who emphasizes that African cosmological, land is not owned rather it is entrusted by ancestors and shared with the living and unborn. To urinate and defecate on such sites is more than disrespect, it is spiritual desecration. The imagery of pollution namely the bodily waste on sacred sites serves as a metaphor for moral and cultural corruption brought about by ignorance of modern exploitation. The poem serves as both a lament and a warning, reminding the audience that the land holds divine and ancestral significance and desecrating it invites both cultural and spiritual loss.

The poem "A Continental Wish" (1995) by Timothy Wangusa , attributed to Cecil Rhodes, exposes the brutal greed and colonial exploitation that marked European imperialism in Africa. The

speaker expresses a desire to possess the entire continent and strip bit of its natural resources, people, and soul for personal and imperial gain. Lines like " All its soils mine to fence out native squatters" and "All its souls mine to enslave to my banner" reflect the violent displacement, enslavement and dehumanisation of Africans. The irony depends in the last stanza of the poem, where the speaker claims he would exalt God "with a Kingdom -of- heaven metallic highway" , referring to Rhode's infamous Cape to Cairo railway dream. The "altars of human sacrifice" starkly reveal the poet's criticism of the so-called devine mission built on African suffering and death. This poem powerfully critiques colonialism's moral hypocrisy using religion to justify exploitation and exposes the long-lasting scars it left on the continent. Wangusa forces the reader to confront the dark underbelly of imperial ambition disguised as civilising missions.

In his poem "The Cock" (2000,p.829), Timothy Wangusa presents a deeply reflective and spiritual experience through the imagery of the mountain. The persona says:

And my spirit has gone tip-toeing (1)
Upon your mystical summit (2)
Till I touched heaven with a finger. (3)

These lines depict a movement, not just physical space but a spiritual awareness. The mountain is portrayed as a "mystical Summit," which suggests that it is more than a natural formation for it becomes a sacred space with spiritual meaning. The act of "tip-toeing" implies a cautious reverent approach, as if the speaker is entering a holy realm. It reflects a respectful engagement with the divine, emphasizing the idea that the spiritual world must be approached with awe and humility.

Wangusa uses symbolism as the dominant literary style to express spirituality of the landscape. The mountain is symbolic of transcendence, Inner Awakening, and closeness to the higher power. Traditionally, mountains have been viewed as sacred in many cultures such as Mount Sinai in the

Judeo-Christian tradition, or Mount Elton and Mount Kilimanjaro in African cosmology. Wangusa draws upon this shared understanding to communicate the idea that landscapes can serve as a bridge between the earthly and the heavenly.

Additionally, the poet uses vivid imagery to make the spiritual experience tangible. The line "touched heaven with a finger" is a particularly powerful image that captures the intimate closeness between the persona and the divine. It suggests that the summit of the mountain allows for a physical and spiritual intersection, where the boundaries between human and the divine, earthly and heavenly, become momentarily blurred. Through this imagery, Wangusa shows how nature is a backdrop for human life as well as a sacred force capable of transforming the soul. The mountain in its mystery, becomes a metaphor for the soul's Journey towards divine truth, thus Wangusa affirms the spiritual value of landscapes.

Timothy Wangusa's poem "Ancient Oracle" on the other hand explores the connection between landscapes, memory and spirituality within the African culture. The poem presents a sacred ritual in which the skull of a respected elder or warrior is preserved and placed upon the sacred tree. This act is not merely cultural or symbolic for it reflects the spiritual world view in which the land itself through trees, bones and ancestral memory hold divine power. Wangusa's work highlights how landscapes function not only as physical settings but also as vessels of ancestral wisdom, identity, and spiritual continuity.

The lines "From an elders or a warrior's skeleton save the skull/ and in the branch of the sacred tree fix it high..." "Reveal the belief in the sacredness of both the body and the tree. The tree is not ordinary for it is "sacred" suggesting that nature, specifically certain elements of the landscape is set apart for spiritual purposes. Fixing this skull high in its branches implies an elevation to a place of reverence and spiritual significance. In an African setting, please often serve as shrines or points

of connection between the physical and spiritual words. The researcher therefore notices that Wangusa grows from this belief system to show how the natural environment is central to spiritual rituals and remembrance.

The second half of the stanza depends the spiritual function of this landscape:

That in ages to come when the children fret **(1)**
You shall to that family tree bring them- **(2)**
Show them their past, and predict their future **(3)**

(Ancient Oracle).

Here a tree becomes a spiritual medium, a living archive of the past and the prophetic guide to the future. The persona believes that in terms of uncertainty, future generations can be brought to this sacred tree to receive wisdom and comfort. This mirrors the role of Oracles in many traditional societies, spiritual figures or objects that provide divine insights. By connecting the skull to the tree, Wangusa merges ancestral memory with spiritual power of the landscape, suggesting that Landscapes act as spiritual custodians of identity, history and destiny.

Important to note is that the "skull" symbolizes ancestral wisdom and the continuity of spiritual presence beyond death. The "secret tree" represents a spiritually charged part of the landscape, a place where the artery and divine meet. Wangusa also employees imagery such as "fix it high" and "bring them to that family tree," to evoke the visual and ceremonial significance of the act, thereby emphasizing how the landscape serves as both a sacred site and intergenerational connector. This is a clear indicator that landscapes are spiritual reservoirs deeply embedded in cultural memory and religious practices.

In the poem "The enchanted Lad" (Wangusa, 1995, p.65) the persona declares a rite of passage:

The day I ripen into a man, swore the enchanted lad (1)
Planting curious finger upon Africa's map, (2)
To that untrodden wild I must venture (3)
Upon that serpentine river sail to it's tail (4)
Till I drag into light the secrets of the jungle (5)

This poem marks a transition not only into adulthood but into a deeper engagement with both land and legacy. Through the use of tactile imagery, the poet draws a tactile connection between the human body and the earth "planting" a finger as one would a seed, suggesting growth, rootedness, and belonging. This evokes the ecological idea that humans are not external to nature but deeply rooted in it.

Symbolism in this poem further strengthens the connection between the humans and the earth. The serpentine river represents more than a physical feature. It is a sacred conduit, echoing the traditional African belief that rivers are spiritual pathways (Mbiti, 1990). Similarly, the "untrodden wild" is symbolic of ancestral territory unexplored yet sacred, inviting reverence and initiation. Nature becomes an agent of spiritual enlightenment.

Wangusa's use of personification deepens the sacred character of the landscape. Nature is described as "enchanted," the jungle as possessing "secrets" that the persona must "drag into light." This positions nature as sentient, as a teacher or oracle. The journey into the wilderness becomes a metaphor for cultural rediscovery. The persona's urge to "venture upon" the world signals a desire to reclaim buried histories and reconnect with spiritual and ecological roots. This aligns with Achebe's view (1975) that African writers must recover and retell the dignity of traditional knowledge systems, particularly those embedded in the environment.

The tone is solemn and reverent. The vowel-like diction for example "swore," "must venture," "drug into light" views the poem with a sacred energy. The voice is personal yet collective, linking in the video growth to communal continuity. In this way, Wangusa enacts the communal ethos of African oral traditions, where did and ancestors are Central to Identity formation

Finally, the use of allusion to traditional spiritual practice is subtle yet significant. Though Christianity is not directly mentioned, the poem positions nature as the primary spiritual realm. Here, spirituality is reclaimed through the landscape, echoing Chikeenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's (1996) assertion that African spirituality is often embedded in nature and transmitted through cultural storytelling. Wangusa's poetry triggers our insight into understanding that nature is sacred, active and memory-laden.

3.3 Conclusion

Through an imaginative deployment of mythic allusion, indigenous imagery, and diction, this chapter has shown how Wangusa constructs a poetic space where the human is inseparable from both the spiritual and ecological domains. His selected poems embodies the African world view in which rivers, mountains, animals, and ancestors form a continuum with the living, reinforcing the Sacredness of nature and presence of ancestral spirits within the land. By centering ritual, memory, and belief as binding forces, Wangusa confirms cultural identity and reclaims traditional ecological knowledge as a spiritual act.

Through close analysis of poems like "The Mystic Herb" (1993), "Soil Song" (1993), "The Trinity Tree" (2022), "The Enchanted Lad" (1995), "Bishop of cows" (2022), "Ancient Oracle" (1993), and First Coming, it becomes evident that Wangusa portrays landscapes as sacred spaces where the physical and spiritual world intersect. The mountain becomes a site of spiritual ascent, while

the sacred tree transforms into an oracle of ancestral memory. These elements reinforce a worldview in which nature and culture are inseparably intertwined, and where landscapes play a central role in shaping belief systems, intergenerational knowledge, and communal continuity.

I note two distinct characteristics in Timothy Wangusa's eco-poetry in line with sacredness and spirituality:

- Even in its wild state, nature serves as a space for deep encounters and transformative experiences.
- Nature holds spiritual journeys that are accessible only to those who are attentive and receptive.

Ultimately, Wangusa's poetic landscapes act as mirrors of African cosmology and cultural memory. They represent not just as the physical terrain of a people but also their spiritual geography - an invisible map of values, rituals, and history rooted in the natural world. In doing so, his work powerfully affirms that landscapes are more than a scenery, they are active participants in the social and spiritual life of the community.

Conclusively, Wangusa's poetry powerfully illustrates the deep connection between humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. Through rich imagery, symbolism, and cultural references, he presents the landscape as a living, sacred space that sustains life, carries memory, and offers healing. This vision aligns closely with Kellert's biophilia theory (1993), which suggests that humans have an innate emotional and spiritual connection to the natural world. Wangusa's work affirms this by portraying nature not only as a source of physical survival but as central to emotional and spiritual well-being, reinforcing the idea of an interconnected eco-community.

Language in Wangusa's poetry serves a key medium for expressing the relationship between humans and nature, especially through the use of indigenous terms and localised expressions.

While this chapter has acknowledged its importance, a well detailed analysis of how language shapes and reinforces this interconnectedness will be addressed fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ECO-COMMUNITY AND THE POWER OF LANGUAGE: A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE

4.1. Introduction

As the previous chapter explored the sacredness and spirituality of nature in Timothy Wangusa's poetry, highlighting the intimate and transformative bond between humans and the natural world, this chapter shifts focus to his use of language and poetic techniques to depict the interconnectivity of humans, nonhumans, and the broader ecological network.

This chapter explores the intricate relationship between language, literature, and ecological consciousness within African cultural contexts. Drawing on ecocritical theory, it investigates how Wangusa's poetry articulate a world view in which nature is not merely a backdrop for human activity but a living, sacred entity deeply woven into communal identity and memory. Language in this sense, becomes a useful medium through which ecological values, spiritual connections to the land, and traditional knowledge systems are preserved and transmitted. Anchored in the argument by Vandana Shiva (2005), the chapter contends that globalization and homogenised language practices have disrupted indigenous epistemologies that once sustained ecological balance. It shows how metaphors in African poetry such as Rivers seen as mothers or forests as ancestors reveal the ethical and ecological significance of learning human entities and affirm the interconnectedness of human and non human worlds. Through close reading and analysis of selected poems, this chapter focuses on how African literary expressions resist ecological degradation and cultural erasure by reaffirming the sanctity of the land. It emphasises that reclaiming Indigenous language and narrative forms is central to fostering a more ecologically sustainable and spiritually grounded community. It identifies a gap in African eco-poetry

scholarship in that while many studies acknowledge African poet's engagement with nature, few focus specifically on how language is deployed to construct and sustain the vision of an eco-community, a holistic network of humans, nonhumans animals, and the landscape.

Most African eco-critical readings tend to emphasise environmental degradation, colonial exploitation of natural resources, or symbolic associations with land (Gikandi 2002, Kroger 2018). However, this chapter further argues that Wangusa's work goes beyond thematic concerns to use poetic language through metaphors, repetition, imagery and personification as a dynamic tool for mapping interdependence among beings and the landscape.

Ecolinguistics as introduced by Michael Halliday (2001, p.175-202), emphasizes the role of language in addressing environmental degradation. Halliday argues that mainstream language often supports consumerism and exploitation of nature, while alternative linguistic frameworks such as those found in indigenous and ecological discourses promote sustainability and respect for the interconnected life. He proposes a "green linguistics approach," (p.199) calling for the reshaping of language to reflect ecological realities and interconnectedness.

Building on Holliday's foundation, Arran Stibbe (2015, p.6) advanced the idea that language contains "stories we live by," underlying narratives and metaphors that shape how people relate to nature. Stibbe contends that dominant discourses in modern society frequently portray nature as passive or as a resource to be exploited. In contrast, ecolinguistics seeks to uncover and promote stories that emphasize reciprocity, harmony and the interconnectedness of humans and ecosystems. His final view is that, language is not neutral, it either contributes to ecological harm or fosters environmental care.

Lawrence Buell (1995) examined how environmental literature portrays the relationship between humans and nature. Buell highlights that ecocritical texts often use language to dismantle the human-nature binary, portraying instead a mutual dependency. This linguistic strategy is evident in Wangusa's poetic language, which often frames nature as sentient, communicative and morally significant. Like we shall see, his diction fuses the sacred and the ecological, portraying the environment as part of a shared moral universe.

Building on Nfah-Abbenyi's (1997) assertion that African literature often encoded a "relational worldview," and Ngugi wa Thiongo's view of language as a carrier of culture (1986,p.13), this chapter will demonstrate that Wangusa's diction and poetic structures enact the very connectivity they describe. His poetry imagines soil, rivers, animals, mountains and humans not as separate entities but as co-existing members of an eco-community. Thus the chapter investigates how Wangusa's use of language, rooted in oral tradition, ancestral wisdom, and ecological consciousness becomes a powerful medium for reimagining ecological relationships and addressing the under-theorized connection between language and ecological imagination in African eco-poetry.

This chapter will analyse the following poems from Wangusa's anthologies: Anthem for Africa (1995), Salute to Mount Masaba (2017), The State is My Shepherd And Other Selected Poems (2022); Source of the Nile (p.98), The old man of Manafwa (p.110), The Ageless Utterance (p.108), Tears for Madiba Mandela (p.101), and Of The Great Pyramid (p.78). This will be analysed in line with Lawrence Buell's idea that triggers literature in the representation of the environment. A poem-per-poem analysis is the strategy used in this chapter.

4.2 Linguistic Strategies and the Interconnectedness of Entities

The representation of connectivity is particularly evident in oral traditions and African literary texts, where nature is often personified and linguistically elevated. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) argues that indigenous languages contain ecological wisdom and express a world view that emphasises balance with nature. The erosion of these languages, he claims, results in the loss of knowledge systems that recognise interdependence. In Timothy Wangusa's poetry, this connectedness is often dramatised through symbolic references to mountains, rivers, animals, and seasons - many of which are named or evoked in indigenous terms.

A clear example of this is seen in his poem "Salute to Mountain Masaba," Wangusa employs powerful imaginative strategies to portray Mount Elgon (Masaba) as more than just a physical feature, but he reimagines it as a living entity central to the identity and survival of the Gisu community. The mountain is not only a geographical landmark but also a cultural anchor that binds people, nature, and the rhythms of life into one cohesive eco-community. The persona declares:

You towering ever presence (1)
Forever commanding the end of distance (2)
Forever trapping the pilgrim rain (3)
And scattering it to the plain... (4)

These lines reveal Wangusa's imaginative use of personification. The mountain is depicted as an active, almost a sentient force, "commanding," "trapping," and "scattering." This language presents the mountain as a giver and sustainer of life, positioning it at the center of ecological cycles. The image of it trapping rain and distributing it across the plains suggests an ecological system where landscape directly nurtures both human and animal life by enabling agriculture, pasture, and habitation.

Wangusa's imagination constructs the mountain as a symbol of permanence and cultural rootedness, embodying resilience, identity, and continuity across generations. It is imagined as an enduring guardian under whose presence human communities flourish and animals find sustenance. This portrayal aligns with indigenous ecological knowledge, where land is not passive but a participant in the life of a community.

By representing the mountain as a timeless, nurturing figure, that influences human and animal well-being, Wangusa encourages an ecocentric perspective. His poetic strategy thus affirms the interconnectedness between people, natural features, and the broader ecosystem, imagining a harmonious eco-community in which each element plays a vital role in the sustenance of the whole. Drawing from Anthem for Africa, "The Ethiopian Enigma" (Wangusa,1995,p.63) , The poem demonstrates how language preserves the memory and identity of an eco-community by evoking Ethiopia's layered history, cultures, and landscapes. Through evocative diction such as "heights of Tigray," "the paradox of Addis," and the "melting-pot of hearts and tongues," Wangusa uses poetic language to map out both the geographical and cultural terrains that define Ethiopia. The poem functions as an oral reenchantment, a communal performance calling on the daughters and warriors of the land to "enact" and "retell" the stories of dynasties, empires, and survival. This performative language acts as cultural reservoir through which collective experiences of place, struggle, and adaptation are passed down. By intertwining the physical environment with historical consciousness, the poem positions Ethiopia as more than a nation, it becomes an eco-community sustained through the narrative power of language. Thus, Wangusa affirms that language is not just a medium of expression but a vessel of ecological and cultural continuity.

To strengthen the argument of the power of language in an eco-community, let us look at the poem "Source of the Nile" (Wangusa,2022,p.98). Wangusa continues to employ personification

as the dominant imaginative strategy to map the interconnectedness of humans, landscape, water, soil, animals, and destiny hence forming a cohesive eco-community. Wangusa personifies the Nile River as a living, purposeful entity. It "surges forth, "compels soil and debris," and embarks on a "four-thousand-mile" journey. This journey is not just a geographical one but a symbolic Odyssey that connects land, life, and human destiny. The river is given agency, described as having the power to "sprout" nations like Egypt and the wilderness, emphasising how it nourishes and shapes entire civilizations.

Additionally, the poet uses biological imagery like "fish and smallest biotic entities, " showing that the river carries with it not only water but life itself, threading ecosystems together from its source to the sea. The cascading "waterfalls, rapids, and cataracts " represent the dynamic flow of energy linking geological formations, animals, and plant life in one interconnected cycle.

The closing declaration "LIFE AS EQUIVALENT TO WATER!" acts as the poem's philosophical core. Here, Wangusa equates existence itself with nature, reinforcing the interdependence of all forms of life and matter. Therefore, by animating the river and integrating natural, geographical and biological elements into a single flowing system, Wangusa crafts a poetic vision of ecological unity, a true eco-community where every element, from "soil" to "song, "is part of a living, breathing whole. His poetic language does more than describe nature; it integrates people with the land, water, and ecosystems in a shared, interdependent existence. By giving voice to the environment and embedding indignant psychological knowledge within verse, Wangusa free account that language is not only a vehicle for artistic expression but also a vital tool for envisioning and preserving a harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world. Language, in Wangusa's vision becomes the thread that binds ecological consciousness, cultural memory, and communal resilience into one living, breathing eco-community.

In another poem "The Old Man of Manafwa," Okot p'bitek's oral aesthetics meet Wangusa's deeply reflective style to portray an eco-centric world view. Wangusa employs a blend of imaginative and linguistic strategies to reinforce the idea that identity, memory, and survival are inseparable from the environment and its living beings. This poem stands as a cultural archive that maps ecological interconnectedness while celebrating ancestral wisdom.

The call - and - response technique found in African literature is evidenced in the repeated question "Do you remember the Old Man of Manafwa?" Important to note is that this repetition is not merely a rhetorical, for it creates a communal voice, prompting both the speaker and the audience to engage in the shared act of remembering. Through this structure, Wangusa presents memory as a communal experience rooted in the land and passed down through generations. The old man becomes a symbolic figure, embodying personal memory and collective ecological knowledge.

Nature in this poem is not static. It is animated, ancestral, and participatory. The "ridge above River Ririma" and " Mountain mysteries " represent more than just physical places but they are sacred places that house memory, nurture life, and anchor cultural identity. Wangusa personifies nature to show that the land is a repository of wisdom, one that is intimately linked to the elders who lived, sang, and raised animals there. The river and mountain, therefore, are not just geographical features but ecological kin.

Speaking of animals as extension of human livelihood, Wangusa subtly weaves in the theme of animal life by referencing how the "duo... kept cattle." Here, livestock is not viewed in a sense of economic terms but as a cultural constant, a symbol of sustenance, social structure, and environmental balance. The presence of cattle reflects an interdependent relationship in which humans rely on animals and, by extension, the natural world for survival. This positions animals as co-participants in the eco-community.

Wangusa's strong use of ancestral symbolism presents the Old man as an ecological symbol. His songs, stories, and connection with the land make him a mediator between human society and the natural world. His "sweet and sour songs" are emotionally rich but also act as ecological narratives, stories that encode environmental values, seasonal rhythms, and interspecies relationships. His memory becomes a metaphor for eco-consciousness, reminding the community that their survival depends on nurturing both cultural and ecological continuity.

Wangusa uses cultural lexicon by employing specific terms such as "litungu," a traditional Elgonian musical instrument, and names of local dishes like "Kamalea", "Kamalele", and "Kamanananaa" to root the poem in indigenous culture. These words act as cultural makers that affirm a way of life deeply connected to specific landscapes, plants, and culinary practices. By integrating the local language, Wangusa not only preserves cultural knowledge but asserts the ecological value of cultural expression, which includes the animals, soil, and plants involved in food and music production.

With the above observations, it is clear that Wangusa crafts a poetic landscape in his poem "Old Man of Manafwa " where human beings, animals and nature are imagined as mutually sustaining entities. Through repetition, indigenous vocabulary, ancestral memory, and natural imagery, he constructs a world where ecological harmony is both cultural inheritance and a present responsibility. The poem becomes a literary ritual of remembrance, calling attention to how African eco-poetry, when deeply rooted in oral tradition and local knowledge, becomes a powerful medium for envisioning an eco-community.

In the poem "That Ageless Utterance" Timothy Wangusa imaginatively constructs a world in which the interconnectedness of human beings, animals and nature is affirmed through diction, symbolism, and metaphorical expressions. The poem deliberately weaves everyday experiences

with deeper reflections on life, love, and the environment, revealing that language is an ancestral thread that binds all entities into a shared eco-community. The speaker says:

It is what infants bubble, (1)
In their innocence and eloquent glee, (2)
As they stumble across lap and landscape:(3)
'Mummy, daddy, you are a hen and a cock, (4)
And this puppy of mine is my brother'; (5)
It is what lovers proclaim, (6)
As they serenade their deathless devotion, (7)
On the verge where speech breaks into song: (8)
Till all rivers run dry, all deserts sprout into forests, (9)
I will be your constant star, ever shining on you. (10)

Wangusa's diction is deliberately gentle, innocent, and emotionally resonant. Words such as “infants bubble,” “eloquent glee,” and serenade their deathless devotion “evoke images of tenderness, suggesting an organic and intuitive relationship between humans and their surroundings. The child's speech " Mummy, daddy, you are hen and cock, / and this puppy of mine is my brother " should not be looked at as playful, for it reveals a profound perception of kinship that dissolves species boundaries. The child in their unfiltered understanding of the world, names their pet as family and anthropomorphism their parents into domestic animals, highlighting the theme of interconnectedness of life. This diction echoes indigenous African cosmologies in which animals, people, and land are seen as part of one communal existence.

The poem's symbolism further expands this connection. Wangusa uses elementary imagery of rivers, deserts, forests, and stars as symbolic markers of permanence, change, and natural cycles. The line " Till all rivers run dry, all deserts sprout into forests, " presents an impossible reversal of nature, used to underscore the eternal quality of human emotions and commitment. Here, rivers and deserts are not only physical spaces but symbols of continuity and transformation. The “constant star” becomes a symbol of enduring love and guidance, suggesting that emotional

constancy mirrors cosmic rhythms. These symbols highlight the theme of emotional and cosmic continuity, asserting that nature is not separate from human feeling, but a mirror to it.

Wangusa's use of metaphors is perhaps the poem's most potent imaginative strategy. When the child equates a puppy to a brother and parents to a hen and a cock, he presents the metaphorical collapsing of hierarchy among beings. This metaphor illustrates a pre-rational, instinctive sense of communion across species, a world view where love and kinship extend beyond human relationships. The stanza on lovers, metaphors such as the "constant star" and transformations in the natural world serve to show love's boundless and natural integration with the cosmos. Through these metaphors, Wangusa builds on the theme of language as a bridge, a medium that unites emotional, human, and ecological dimensions of life.

Underlying these strategies is the larger theme of innocence and imagination, particularly in children. The poem celebrates how children intuitively grasp unity with the natural world before societal distinctions teach otherwise. This connects to the theme of ancestral wisdom, suggesting that the earliest utterances, whether of infants or lovers carry eternal truths. Wangusa implies that such speech, rooted in emotional honesty and symbolic imagination, sustains the eco-community, where language, nature, and love coalesce.

4.3 Language and Localisation of the Entities (Bilingualism and Indigenous Terms)

Language plays a vital role in the localisation of Wangusa's Mountain, especially through his strategic use of bilingualism which Bloomfield (1933) defines as the ability of an individual or a community to use two languages effectively in everyday life. There is clear use of indigenous terms in Wangusa's poetry. The poet blends English with local Gisu language plus imagery,

allowing Mount Masaba to emerge not only as a geographical landmark but also as a cultural symbol rooted in native identity.

Through the delivery incorporation of indigenous words and expressions, Wangusa affirms the authenticity of his cultural setting while resisting total dependence on colonial linguistic frameworks. His linguistic style reflects a bilingual consciousness that accommodates both local and global audiences. Wangusa (1995, p.60) writes:

Upon the mountain of Muntu I conceived this song **(1)**

Upon the mountain of Masaba I conceived this tale **(2)**

The poet intertwines language and place to reveal how creativity and identity are inseparable from the indigenous landscape. The deliberate use of the term "Masaba," the local name for Mount Elgon demonstrates how Wangusa localises a universal symbol, the mountain, by embedding it in his own cultural heritage.

Wangusa's choice of language in these lines exemplifies a form of bilingualism. While the poem is composed in English, the retention of the indigenous name Masaba signals a deliberate act of cultural preservation. According to Grosjen (1982) bilingual expression is not a matter of being two separate monolinguals but rather having a unique linguistic configuration shaped by cultural realities. In this light, Wangusa's blending of English with indigenous term conveys not only a geographic reference but also a deep affirmation of identity. It resists the erasure that often comes with translation, ensuring that the cultural weight of the mountain's native name is preserved.

The mountain itself functions as a symbol of origin and inspiration. The Poet's assertion that he "conceived" a song and a tale upon the mountain implies that a landscape is a womb of creativity, and active source of artistic and spiritual nourishment. This approach aligns with Ngugi Wa Thiongo's (1986) argument in "Decolonizing the mind," that the use of indigenous terms within a

colonial language is an act of reclaiming cultural space. By naming Masaba directly, Wangusa invites readers into a specific African setting, affirming that meaningful art emerges from rootedness in one's own soil and traditions.

Furthermore, Wangusa's use of Mountain Masaba is not confined to a single poem. In many of his other literary works, the mountain reappears as a central motif. In his novel, *Upon This Mountain* (1989), Masaba is depicted as a looming presence in the protagonist's life, symbolizing both ancestral continuity and the enduring strength of the Bagisu people. In poems such as "Children to the Mountain," Wangusa presents the mountain as a nurturing mother and guardian of memory. Similarly, in the sequence "Salute to Mount Masaba," Wangusa celebrates the mountain as a sacred source of inspiration and identity. Through these recurring images, the poet ensures that Masaba stands both as a physical location and a living emblem of cultural pride.

Wangusa's integration of indigenous terms with his English compositions highlights how language and landscape can work together to express identity. The mountain motif, localized through the name Masaba, embodies both the creative Spirit and the cultural roots of the people. By consistently invoking Masaba across his works, Wangusa affirms the enduring relevance of local heritage in Modern African Literature, demonstrating that bilingualism and indigenous terminology can coexist to produce powerful, culturally grounded art.

In "Tears for Madiba Mandela," Wangusa localises geographical and environmental entities across Africa to forge a powerful sense of interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the spiritual ecosystem of the continent. Through poetic invocation of rivers, mountains, deserts, winds, and skies, he constructs an eco-community that mourns in unison, emphasizing that nature is an active participant in the collective grief for a human figure (Nelson Mandela).

The localisation of entities of "Zambezi, Limpopo, Nile, Congo, Niger, Rwenzori, Kilimanjaro, Elgon and Sahara," roots the poem firmly with the African landscape. These features are summoned as mourners, urged to halt their natural functions namely, rivers to "disrupt" their flow, mountains to "dispel the glory" of their clouds, and desert winds to "stop dead". This symbolic reversal of nature's regular rhythm signals the magnitude of Mandela's death and places nature as both witness and participant in human history.

Wangusa's poetic strategy reveals a deeply ingrained African view in which the land and its features are extensions of human experience. Mandela is described as "Africa's Monumental Son" and in honouring him, every region and natural force becomes animate. This reflects a cosmological unity where rivers carry memory, mountains represent endurance, and winds embody voice. Such imagery illustrates that humanity is in dialogue with nature, not above or apart from it.

We can therefore say that Wangusa constructs a poetic eco-community where nature, geography, and human legacy intersect. In grieving Mandela, the natural and humans merge in a Pan-African symphony of reverence. This confirms Mandela's iconic status and portrays the African environment as a living archive of collective identity, emotion, and continuity.

In his poem "Of the Great Pyramid" Wangusa's localisation of entities plays a central role in rooting the narrative within a tangible African historical and geographical context. The poem mentions different places like Mokattam, Gizeh, and Aswan alongside materials namely, limestone, granite, and copper tools and human labour by Egyptian hands. This geographical naming reconstructs the cultural and environmental ecosystem around the construction of the Great Pyramid, anchoring it firmly in Africa's historical landscape.

By citing Aswan, a city over 500 miles from the construction site, and detailing the transportation of granite on 70-tonner royal barges, Wangusa emphasizes the massive coordination between natural resources, technology, and human effort. The stone, river, tools and labour are entities that form an interdependent network reflecting the eco-community model where humans and nature collaborate in monumental achievement.

This localisation doesn't just serve realism but also functions symbolically. The stones represent endurance, the Nile as a channel of movement of life, and the hands of Egyptians as a symbol of ancestral ingenuity. Together, they highlight the African origin of one of the words most iconic wonders and reassert African agency in global history. Wangusa's strategy thus builds pride while also imagining a deeply interconnected cultural, environmental, and human legacy. This aligns with Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014) who mentions that African eco-poetry often restores the interconnectedness of land, labour, and legacy by presenting nature as an enabler and witness of human achievement.

4.4 Conclusion

The idea of an eco-community is intricately tied to the power of language, particularly within African environmental literature. This chapter has explored how Timothy Wangusa employs poetic language to construct and affirm an eco-community rooted in cultural, spiritual, and ecological interdependence. Through imaginative use of indigenous expressions, metaphor, and personification, Wangusa repositions natural features such as mountains, rivers, and plants not as passive landscapes but as active participants in community life. His poetry demonstrates that language is not merely a means of communication but a vital tool for preserving ecological wisdom, culture identity, and moral responsibility. By reinforcing the interdependence between humans,

nature, and non-human entities, Wangusa's work exemplifies how literature can nurture ecological consciousness and uphold the ethical values that sustainable eco-communities.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. General Conclusion

An issue raised, examined and resolved about Timothy Wangusa's poetry is that the imagination of interconnectivity of entities is a powerful thing that underscores the intricate relationship between human beings and the natural environment. The concept reflects not only the ecological awareness but also a deep rooted African philosophical and spiritual world view in which all elements of existence (humans, animals, plants, landscapes and spiritual forces) are fundamentally connected. Wangusa does not merely represent nature as a backdrop for human activity, but as a living, breathing entity that shares a reciprocal relationship with humanity.

The researcher also notes that Wangusa's poetic imagination is profoundly influenced by African cosmology, which perceives life as a web of interconnected forces, relating to other scholars like John Mbiti (1990) to view people as being in continuous relationship with the earth, ancestors, divinities and each other. In Wangusa's poetry, the mountain is not just a geographical formation but a spiritual symbol, as seen in the recurring references to Mount Masaba (Mt. Elgon). This mountain functions as a cultural and ecological marker that connects the people to their history, identity and environment. It is both a physical landmark and a spiritual presence, highlighting how Wangusa imagines natural elements as co-participants in human life.

This imagination of interconnection is further illustrated through Wangusa's use of ecological imagery. In poems such as Anthem for Africa, he describes human movement across "panicking hills and plains," suggesting that the land itself responds emotionally to human actions. This personification implies that nature is sentient and intertwined with the fate of humanity. His

depiction of "rocks of dynamite that had human eyes" creates a surreal but deeply symbolic sense of fusion between man and nature, showing how destructive forces also carry the memory and agency of human decisions.

We have observed that language plays a key role in reinforcing this interconnectivity. Wangusa incorporates indigenous terms and local names into his poetry, using bilingualism as a literary strategy that reflects cultural specificity and environmental awareness. The use of local language roots the poetry in a particular place and worldview, affirming the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in shaping ecological consciousness. As Ngugi Wa Thiongo asserts, language is a carrier of culture and memory, and Wangusa's use of native language/words ensures that both culture and environmental identity are preserved and passed on.

The role of literature in creating a human-nature-spiritual bond is seen through the use of dominant poetic devices like symbolism, personification, metaphors, and diction. This has articulated the voices of ecocritics such as Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) and Lawrence Buell (2005) to emphasize that literature should portray the environment not just as a setting but as a character with agency. Wangusa fulfills this by giving voice and form to natural elements, allowing readers to see the environment as a co-creator of meaning and history.

The imagination of interconnectivity is not just poetic, it is ethical. It goes upon humans to recognize their responsibility in maintaining balance with the natural world. It is not with the modern ecological thought, particularly in the face of climate change and environmental degradation, where the need for a renewed sense of connection with nature is urgent. Wangusa's poetry therefore exemplifies the imagination of interconnectivity by portraying a world where all entities (human and non-human) exist in a dynamic relationship. Through the use of indigenous language, spiritual symbolism, and ecological imagery, he offers a poetic vision that honours the

interconnected nature of existence. His work serves as both a celebration of African ecological thought and a cautionary reminder of the consequences of disrupting the delicate balance between humans and the natural world.

In conclusion, Timothy Wangusa's selected poems powerfully embodies the principles of eco-communitarianism, a term articulated by Eve Nabulya (2018) to describe a literary vision in which the environment is seen not merely as a setting, but as a co-constituent of human existence. Nabulya looks at eco-communitarianism in form of ethical interdependence between human and nonhuman in communities, emphasizing the need for mutual respect and survival among all life forms.

Wangusa resonates deeply with this philosophy. Through spiritual symbolism, ritual language, and metaphoric fusion of the body within the landscape, he constructs a tripartite eco-community of humans, elements of the landscape (such as the soil, herbs, trees, rivers, forests, and mountains) and nonhuman animals. His poetry demonstrates that the physical, the spiritual, and ecological are not disjointed realms but a unified cosmology where life is sustained in cycles of giving and returning.

Therefore, Wangusa's poetic vision gestures towards a re-sacralised ecological order, a conscious eco-community where humans, land, and nonhuman life forms are not separate entities but part of a living spiritual network.

Through an in-depth exploration of Wangusa's poetry, the researcher observes that nature is not merely a backdrop but a dynamic presence with profound significance. First, nature is portrayed as sacred and spiritual, evoking reverence and symbolising divine presence. It is also seen as a home and sanctuary that offers identity, especially within indigenous African contexts like the

Bamasaba, where landscape and culture are inseparably linked. Nature functions as a moral and ethical force, reflecting consequences for human actions and urging responsibility in environmental relations. Moreover, Wangusa envisions nature as a living entity - active, sentient, and capable of nurturing life or responding to human behaviour. Lastly, nature becomes a witness to history and oppression, bearing the scars of colonial violence, political turmoil, and environmental degradation. Collectively, these views reflect Wangusa's commitment to an ecocentric worldview, where nature holds agency, memory, and moral authority within the broader African experience.

Timothy Wangusa's poetry is a site for constructing an eco-community, one rooted in the tripartite relationship between humans, nature, and non-human animals. By examining the human nature spirit connection and the linguistic strategies used to reinforce this interdependence, the study reveals how Wangusa envisions a holistic world where all entities coexist in harmony. This eco-community challenges anthropocentric views and embraces ecological consciousness, aligning with ecocritical theory and affirming the role of literature in reshaping our understanding of ecological and spiritual belonging.

5.2. Recommendations

There is need for further scholarship in the field of East Africa ecocriticism, particularly in exploring the limitations of applying first-wave ecocritical theories such as those advanced by (Lawrence Buell et al) to African literary texts. Such research should aim to interrogate the applicability of these theories within African contexts, taking into account the region's specific environmental realities, cultural expressions, and historical experiences. It is also important for future studies to remain aware of the political interests and ideological orientations that often shape

theoretical frameworks, in order to develop more grounded and context- sensitive approaches to ecocritical analysis in Africa.

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