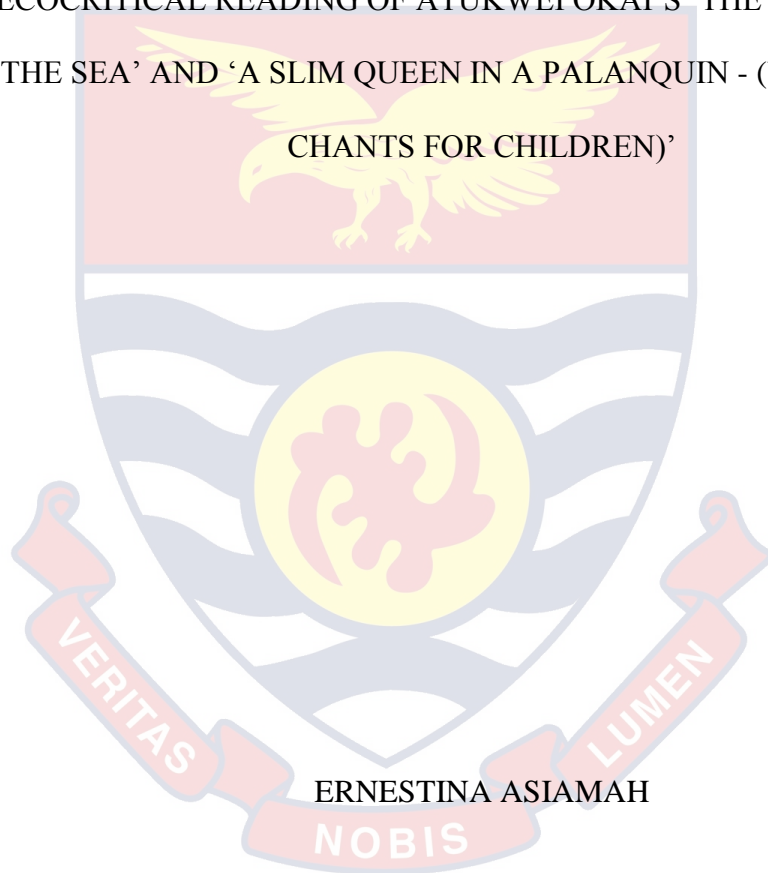


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ECOCRITICAL READING OF ATUKWEI OKAI'S 'THE ANTHILLS IN
THE SEA' AND 'A SLIM QUEEN IN A PALANQUIN - (VERSES AND
CHANTS FOR CHILDREN)'



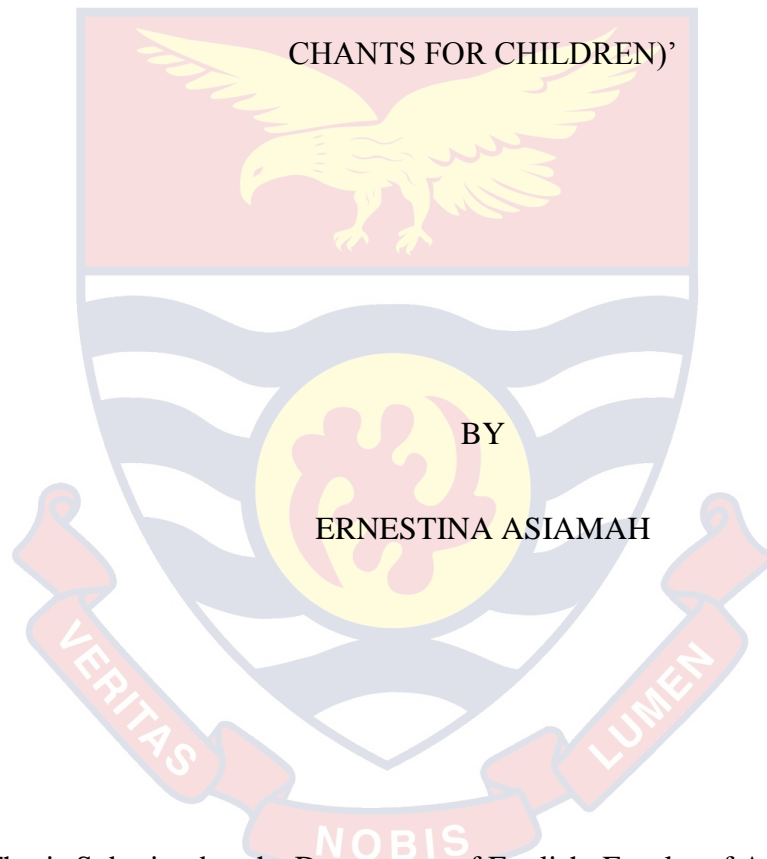
ERNESTINA ASIAMAH

NOBIS

2021

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THE SEA' AND 'A SLIM QUEEN IN A PALANQUIN - (VERSES AND
CHANTS FOR CHILDREN)'



BY

ERNESTINA ASIAMAH

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of
Cape Coast in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master
of Philosophy Degree in Literature in English.

MAY 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

Name: Ernestina Asiamah

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of thesis laid down by University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Name: Dr. Moussa Traore

Co- Supervisor's Signature:

Date:

Name: Dr. Rogers Asempasah

ABSTRACT

The survival of nature is dependent on today's children who are being trained to be the adults of tomorrow. To sustain the earth for tomorrow, it is paramount to create awareness and regard for nature among the younger generations and to teach them the need for protection and preservation of the environment for their survival tomorrow. This fissure forms the frame of this research which seeks to analyse texts from Atukwei Okai's 'Anthill in the Sea: Verses and Chants for Children' (1988) and 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin; Verses and Chants for Children' (2010) to unearth the representation of the environment and how these environmental issues are foregrounded in creating eco-consciousness in the African child. Using Ecocriticism and Semiotics, an analysis was made on the selected materials. Familiar factors like human beings, plants, animals, the light, air, water, land, soil and so on form the centre of the analysis. The African culture is employed to create an anthropocentric environment or anthropomorphic environment, which has implications in forming an ecoconscious ecocitizen. The study identified the human dominance over the other factors of the environment and the need to foster harmony between all factors because all factors of the environment are interrelated. The study recommends for writers to be conscious when they write about the environment for the child reader.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Samuel Asiamah and Kate Asomani,
For believing in me and making me believe that I can do anything I put my
mind to.



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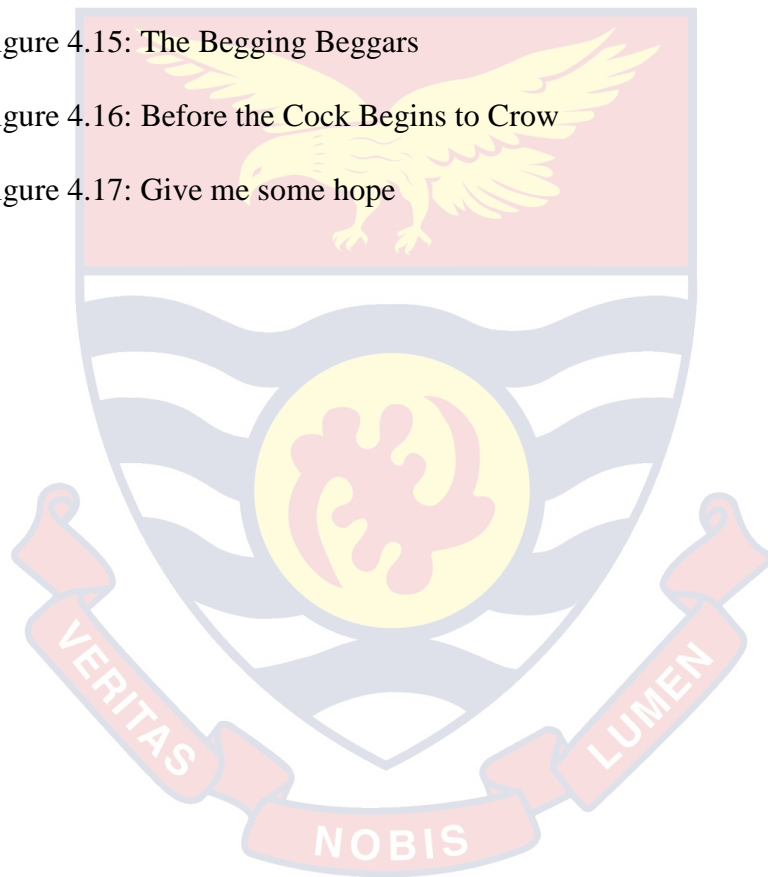
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world sobs as a result of pandemics, global warming, deforestation, depletion of the ozone layers, climate change, natural disasters, air pollution, reduction in water reserves, destruction of water bodies, poor soil conditions, desertification, among a long list of problems caused by human actions. Human actions have caused unalterable damages to the natural environment, forgetting the only source of sustenance for man is with nature (UNESCO, 2008). Humans have spoilt the land to find minerals, desecrated water bodies to find fish and artefacts, cut down trees to build homes and other structures and polluted the air under the disguise of industrialisation. The irony in this downward trajectory lies in the fact that the next generation of people and developing countries will suffer the hardest from the effects of a destroyed nature, even though they may have contributed little or nothing to causing the problem. What is left of nature is not enough to sustain the coming generations on the earth unless there is a deliberate attempt to save the natural environment (Stern, 2006, p. xxvi).

The survival of nature is dependent on today's children who are being trained to be the adults of tomorrow. To sustain the earth for tomorrow, it is paramount to create awareness and regard for nature among the younger generations and to teach them the need for protection and preservation of the environment for their survival tomorrow (Kalemba, 2010). It is believed that at childhood, while socialization is taking place, attitudes and values towards the environment are also formed. There is a strong consensus that environmental education or environmental consciousness necessary for sustaining the earth

should begin in the early childhood period when children are developing their basic values, attitudes, skills, behaviours and habits for life (UNESCO, 2008). Psychologists confirm the criticality of early childhood education by saying that the personality and memory of the individual begins to take form at childhood and serves as a reservoir whence information will be extracted in adulthood, that is, innate values and practise nurtured from childhood of human development are likely to remain for the rest of one's life (Vygotsky 1934; Piaget 1936). Worth noting, is the fact that, the child's perception of the environment is framed by the society's cultural ideologies around the environment; in other words, the child's environmental consciousness will depend on a societal background. The child who grows up in Africa may have different ideologies of the environment compared to the child who grows up in Europe. This environmental socialisation and consciousness is a joint responsibility that takes place at home, in the community, in schools, at religious centres and in books, purposefully in children's literature. The training involves teaching children about the environment and society setting worth - modelling examples. The concern of this study will be with African children's literature and how eco-consciousness is raised.

According to Tomlinson and Lynch- Brown (1996), the term 'children's literature' is used to cover infants to adolescent texts that exhaust topics of relevance and interest that purposefully inform, entertain, develop the senses, introduce culture, show the universality of human beings and develop a sense of morality in the child (p.2). This speaks to the relevance and the criticality of children's literature in the formation of children. It becomes necessary for Children's literature writers to purposefully incorporate environmental

concerns in texts as well as relevant issues that will shape the minds of children, and foster responsibility and maturity in them. Ambika Bhalla (2012) also indicates that ‘children’s literature with a tinge of ecological issues can help promote eco-consciousness among the future generations’ (p.6). Bhalla projects that childhood is an ideal stage at which children create an acquaintance with the natural world through reading and listening to informative text.

Environmental education is not new to the formal or non-formal educational curriculum around the world; however, Man continues to destroy the environment for several unpardonable reasons. Children’s literature becomes one medium to consider in enforcing the environmental aspects of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2030. Boudreaux (2006) asserts that,

[t]heoretically, if we [human beings] want to utilize children’s literature (in school or in the home) to socialize our young to have pro-environmental perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, then we should increase their knowledge about the environment and present pro-environmental ideologies as well as the reality of human interactions with the environment and the resulting environmental social problems that occur (p.5).

Boudreaux prescribes the increase in knowledge about the environment and the appropriate means and time for such environmental education. In other words, children’s literature must expound the actions of men that affect the environment. The onus is placed on authors to consciously create in children’s literature the relevance of nature and to portray the relationship that must exist between human beings and the environment, and on parents and teachers to be able to tease out environmental elements in children’s literature and make the children appreciate the concepts.

Africa, like the rest of the world needs this eco-consciousness in children's literature in homes and at schools to equip the upcoming generation of the state and relevance of nature to their survival because like Stern (2006) says, poor countries like those in Africa may suffer the most when nature begins to die although these poor countries contributed nothing to the destruction of nature.

Background to the Study

Children's literature serves as an apparatus used to imprint memories on the minds of children. Until 1865, literature was adults' readings that children could read too like Charles Dickens' works, Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), Shakespeare's works and others. Children's literature that was fused in the seventeenth century curriculum of education in England was basically to teach children religious tenets and prepare them for death and escape from hell (Anderson, 2005). The first known published work for the pleasure of children is Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) by Lewis Carrolls. This children's literature has been followed by several others and the recent favourite of children, Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997-2007). Before these European and American writings, African children's literature was in existence. African children listened to oral recitals and were told about myth, folktales and legends of the ancestors by their parents or elders. The drive of African children's literature was to pass on morals and culture to the child. This is couched by Tomlinson and Lynch- Brown (1996), thus:

...prehistoric humans had stories to tell long before they had a written language. For thousands of years before writing was discovered, the best of these stories were preserved through the art of storytelling from one generation to the next. Surely these

stories survived because people enjoyed hearing them. Even today, their entertainment value cannot be denied. In folk literature, we have our most ancient stories and priceless literary heritage that links our beginning as thinking beings (p.100).

Addo (2003) adds that African children's literature has been used to help students take pride in their history and ancestry, and can be used for understanding cultural values. These assertions suppose that issues raised in literature for children should concern the child and the society. Similarly, the issues raised or the themes communicated should be real and relevant to the child reader. In achieving this purpose, children's literature authors employ characters of humans, animals or other objects that children can relate to and employ relevant issues in society like development, religion, morality, magic, the environment and many others.

The environment is one feature that dominates in African literature written for adults because it is a significant part of the continent's culture. Tracing from Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958), Cyprian Ekwensi's Burning Grass (1962), Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born(1968), Healers(1978), Kwesi Brew's "The Sea Eats Our Land", Kofi Awoonor's "The Cathedral", Joseph Rubadiri's "An African Thunderstorm", Lenrie Peters' "We Have Come Home" and Amma Darko's Beyond the Horizon(1991), Faceless(2003), Not Without Flowers(2006) and many others, the concern of the environment is not neglected. In recent decades, when issues of the depleting ecology have become paramount, environmental discussions have risen in various modes in various disciplines but nature has achieved little or no improvement since it continues to suffer. It becomes expedient that

attention be shifted from adult's texts to children's text where a lot of effects can be made on the readers' mind.

Children's texts that employ the concepts of the environment contribute to the reader's development and regard for the environment. Similarly, the representation of the environment in texts fosters a bond between the reader and the physical environment and can arouse the reader's appreciation for nature. The representation of the environment by children's literature writers are done using various modes. Some use written text, others use illustrations and some others use both to represent the environment. The advantage of the latter mode of juxtaposing the verbal and the visual enables children learn about the many facets of the environment and to better understand the inter-relatedness of their lives with their surroundings. Some of these speak to man's existence on earth and depict means children can come to understand and appreciate the environment and connect to their environment.

Researchers believe that through such environmental awareness measures in literature, children will develop an attitude that will sustain the planet from destructions (Murdoch 1993:3, Bhalla, 2012). This research, therefore seeks to unearth the representation of the environment in African literature through Atukwei Okai's verses and chants for children.

Statement of the Problem

'Children's literature is generally seen as a peripheral and uninteresting object of study despite the manifold role it plays as an educational, social and ideological instrument. Apart from being entertaining and a tool for developing children's reading skills, it is also an important conveyor of world knowledge, ideas, values, and accepted behaviour' (Puurтинен, 1998:2). In spite of the

marginalization in literary studies, children's literatures have been written and published in large numbers across the globe to project themes on family, friendship, love, politics and many others. Children's literature have been used in various forms to shape the child's mind with various ideologies. However, Children's literature that deliberately engages the child on matters of the environment seems to be lacking (Taveira, Oliveira & Araujo, 2016). Anna Chitando (2017) laments the marginalization of children's literature within literary studies in particular and in society in general, although it is the best place children can learn and adopt environmental concepts and issues like climate change and sustainability. For several unknown reasons, writers who write for children do not make the conscious effort to make the environment a key feature in their works.

Generally in African writing, environmental issues are present since they are often regarded as subsets of post-colonialism; in other words, post-colonial African writers employ nature in metaphors to put across their concerns. This metaphorical representation creates the assumption that little attention is given to environmental factors in African writings (DeLoughrey, Gosson & Handley, 2005). In the studies of colonial and post-colonial African texts, Chengyi Coral Wu (2016) concludes that environmental issues are archetypes of African writings except that the representation of the environment is peculiar to the various African cultures. He postulates that in postcolonial African literature, the representation of the environment is evident and done in various forms.

Traore, Ilori and Albi (2018) in their ecocritical analysis of Ngugi Wa' Thiongo's Weep Not Child (1966) conclude that the environment is relevant

and key in postcolonial African literature. These findings annul Howarth's Eurocentric allegations on postcolonial literatures. He argues that postcolonial literary writers dwell on political and cultural gaps, ignoring the physical environment. In spite of the studies and contributions that have been made in this on-going discourse, little has been done when it comes to how African children's texts engage the child with language and visuals to promote environmental awareness. Outside Africa, studies and recommendations have been made to affirm the representation of the environment to the child through written and visual texts. Boudreaux (2006) studies the representation of the environment in popular bestselling American children's books and concludes on the need for environmental awareness to be raised in American Children's text. Close to this study area in Africa is Chitando (2017) who has done a study into how spirituality can be used to foster environmental consciousness in children.

This fissure forms the frame of this research which seeks to analyse Atukwei Okai's 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin; Verses and Chants for Children' (2010) and 'Anthill in the Sea: Verses and Chants' for Children (1988) to unearth the representation of the environment and how these environmental issues are foregrounded in creating eco-consciousness in the African child.


Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to examine the presentation of the environment to the child through the use of tropes in language and visual illustrations in Atukwei Okai's verses and chants for children. The study will focus on how human interaction with the environment is represented to children readers in the text and how they inform the child of the environment. The thesis

will evaluate the presentation of the African concept of the environment, as used to create awareness in literature.

Justification of the Study

Atukwei Okai is a Ghanaian poet known for his outstanding artistry. He has passion for children and the value for culture. In his afterword to ‘A Slim Queen in a Palanquin’, Okai talks about his role as ‘a friend to children, and a concerned lover of our country [Ghana]’. His poetry shows a strong allegiance to the African environment although he may not have set out deliberately to make it so. Okai’s representation of the environment is based on his experience and regard for the environment. In an interview with a Nigerian columnist, Femi, Okai talks about his environment while growing up in Gambaga in the Northern part of Ghana. He described his environment as paradise. He recounts:



[I]t was pristine, natural environment where people led undiluted, natural life. The people got all their needs from nature – from food they ate, to the drinks, to the clothes they wore, to the materials they used to build their houses. They got everything from their own backyard or their farms. It was for them a life of total self-sufficiency... I remember the colours of the environment, the sonorous songs of the birds, and the graceful agility of the animals... That type of environment not only nurtured but also inspired one to be creative. I was lucky and blessed indeed.

These childhood experiences have found themselves into Okai’s arts. This makes it easy to analyse the environmental representations employed in the texts– a reason why this study selects his works for analyses. His works lend themselves freely to environmental studies as they capture a wide range of environmental concepts. His publication for children, ‘The Anthills in the Sea’ (1988) and ‘A Slim Queen in a Palanquin’ (2010) are short rhymes children of school going age can memorize. The rhymes are accompanied by good illustrations; the words and images will appeal to the sense of all children including children with special needs. The study like other studies in literature fills a wide gap in children’s literature, African literature, and environmental literary studies.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to on-going research in children's literature and environmental consciousness in children. This study situates children's literature in the academic context of proving it a study-worthy material. It provides one of the many perspectives from which children's texts can be considered. The implication of the study is to highlight the relevance of children's literature in equipping the next generation of children who will be responsible for sustaining the earth.

Research Questions

The research addresses the following questions:

1. What is the environment of children's literature as created in Atukwei Okai's *Anthill in the Sea* (1988) and 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010)?
2. How does Atukwei Okai construct this environment with words and pictures for children in his 'Anthill in the Sea' (1988) and 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010)?

Methodology

The study is a text based critical reading of thirty- three selected texts. Using ecocriticism and semiotics, the primary texts which are made up of words and images would be analysed. The verses and chants in the selected texts will be analysed with critical consideration of the literary language and the visuals with which these poems are presented. The study will attempt to trace environmental concerns made obvious or hidden in the signs on the pages where the communication of the art is taking place. Semiotics allows highly subjective

interpretation, since meaning is ever-changing and arbitrary depending on culture. This suggests that the interpretations given to the sign and symbols may be peculiar and particular to the African culture.

Delimitation

The study analyses the thirty three rhymes which make up the two selected verses and chants for children. The study purposefully seeks the environmental consciousness as relayed in the selected materials. References shall be made to other works of Atukwei Okai and to other African literary works that speak to the environment.

Biography of the Author and His works

Atukwei Okai was named John Atukwei Okai after he was born on 15th March, 1941. He had his elementary education in Northern Ghana where his father worked as a school headmaster in Gambaga in the Northern Region. He attended Accra Senior High School, after which he went for his further studies in Moscow and London. He became a member of the Ghana Society of Writers at the age of sixteen and later studied in the Soviet Union. He was the Secretary-General of the Pan African Writers Association (PAWA) till his demise in July 2018. He was the father of five daughters (graphiconline.com).

He is the author of the following collections: Flowerfall (1969), his first volume of poems; Oath of the Fontomfrom and Other Poems (1971), Logorligi Logarithms (1974) and many others including the three volumes of verses and chants for children: “The Anthill in the Sea”(1988), “A Slim Queen in a Palanquin”(2010) and “A Pawpaw on a Mango Tree”.

His poems are studied all over the world and have been translated into several languages (ghanaweb.com). Professor Femi Osofisan of Nigeria

describes Okai as ‘the first to try to take African poetry back to one of its primal origins, in percussion, by deliberately violating the syntax and lexicon of English, creating his own rhythms through startling phonetic innovations’ (eplangelibrary.wordpress.com)

In an interview with Femi Akomolafe, a columnist, on 25th September 2014, Okai justified his writing of poetry and children’s literature by saying:

...[a]n artist must first question why he wants to become an artist. That is fundamental. Artists are crucial to a people's recollection of themselves. They are the custodians of a people's collective memories. During my days in the Soviet Union, I invaded the libraries literally and figuratively. My research led me to the discovery that Russian writers and poets are popular with the people because they capture and beautifully express the people's daily experiences. In the Soviet Union, the poets declaimed their poems. I thought, hey look, we also do the same in Africa. Our Griots and Praise-singers perform exactly the same roles...The problem was not with the people who do not read, but with the writers that wrote above the heads of the people. Poetry is a living art; it has to reflect the people's experiences and feelings. Anything else is a waste of time. I decided that if I must do poetry, I must do the poetry that makes sense to the people and use language they can easily grasp. And that I must use imageries to which they can relate...My burning ambition was to do for African literature and for poetry, what the Osagyefo had done for Africa in the realm of politics. I wanted to de-mystify poetry and make it accessible to the common people. I knew it was a monumental task I set for myself but I set my sight on achieving it. My own father had also awoken my sense of Africanity already by exposing me to the histories of African heroes and heroines... I went to look for books for our children and we couldn't find any written by a Ghanaian or African for African children. All we saw were foreign books written for children in other climes. I recognized this is an opportunity and a challenge! I said: You are a writer, do something about the gap. That was how it started and so far, I have published three volumes of verses and chants for children: “The Anthill in the Sea”, “A Slim Queen in a Palanquin” and “A Pawpaw on a Mango Tree” (Modern Ghana, 2014).

Okai worked as a lecturer from 1971 at the University of Ghana in the Department of Modern Languages where he taught Russian and also worked at the University of Education, Winneba. His popular poem, “Rosimaya” tackles

the unreciprocated love of the persona. The persona accuses his lover – ‘you feign, you feign, you feign, you forget my face’ – for not returning his love. *Sunset Sonata (To Wole, with Love)* is one of Atukwei’s poems which has received a lot of consideration because it was dedicated to Wole Soyinka while he (Wole) was in prison. It is a lyrical compliment to Africans who fought and suffer for fighting oppression. “Kperterkple Serenade” also speaks to peoples’ love for the western world and how the prominent people he mentions in his lines either travelled to Europe or America. But of the two, the persona calls America a prostitute because most people want to migrate there. He captures this as, ‘America you are a funny girl...everybody wants to kiss you’. This poem is sarcastic considering Okai’s love for his country and locally made stuff.

His works have elicited a variety of critical commentaries that reflect on aspects of his craft. A former president of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama (2018) describes Okai as ‘a genius whose musical poetry was not only spectacular in imagery and clever wordplay, but also natural in how it captured the cadences and rhythm of speech’ (Citinewsroom.com). Senanu and Vincent (1988) believe that ‘Okai consciously directs his poetry through its declamatory and dramatic nature, towards a popular audience’. Okai brings to his writings for both adults and children a wide range of experiences, culture and language which people of various cultures can associate with.

Definition of Terms

Child / Children/ Childhood

Children’s Act, 1998 Section 1: of Ghana says ‘A child is a person below the age of 18 years’. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990 Article 2 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 Article 1 by

UNICEF also define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years (The African Child Policy Forum, 2013). While nations make it a point to define who a minor is as the bases to enforcing protection and to provide needs, authors take advantage of these age brackets to write to suit these categories of people. The age brackets of childhood are infancy (birth to 2 years old), early childhood (3 to 8 years old), middle childhood (9 to 11 years old), and adolescence (12 to 18 years old). This study is concerned with children between three years and twelve.

Childhood

Childhood is a cultural and social construction, and not simply a universal stage in the human being's physical and psychological development. Childhood is neither timeless nor universal: it is not determined only by age, or by biological and psychological factors. Rather childhood is understood by reference to particular cultural and social contexts and to particular periods in history (UNCHR, 2001).

Talero (2004) also believes that childhood is perhaps the age that fathers [nurtures] the most important memories in a person's life. Most adults retain and unconsciously use information commencing from upbringing experiences. He adds that it is during this early stage that personality begins to take form.

Children's Literature

Children's literature is a tool in the socialization process. It is a method for introducing children to new concepts and teaching them about cultural norms and social practices. With this in mind, it can be realized that children's books are not just artefacts that reflect current ideologies, morals and values about everything but the representations contained within them are often models

of what society values as important and thus indeed hopes to pass on to the next generation (Boudreaux, 2006).

Children's literature is one of the most extensive sources for the study of nature, the environment, ecology and the roles humans play in relation to these (Lesnik-oberstein, 1988: 216). According to Giovanelli (2016), 'adult authors write "to children" in order to present ideas, issues and themes in ways that are meaningful for the young, taking into account their cognitive and emotional abilities ... 'it is not what is said, but the way it is said, and to whom it is said, which marks a book for children''. This suggest that the representations done in children's text are critical.

Ecocriticism

According to Cokinos, ecocriticism is fundamentally an ethical criticism and pedagogy, one that investigates and helps make possible the connections among self, society, nature, and text (ASLE, 1994). Crockett adds that ecocriticism elucidates relationships between human and non-human nature (ASLE, 1994). Glotfelty (1996) simply states that ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.

Environment

Environment is derived from the French word 'Environ' which means surrounding. The surrounding includes biotic factors like human beings, plants, animals, microbes, and so on and abiotic factors as light, air, water, soil and others. Environment is a complex of many variable which surrounds man and as well as the living organisms (Mozhi, 2010).

Chants

To chant something is to say something monotonously or repetitiously. Mejjini (2016) believes that chants are useful tools for teaching second language learners as they help them learn new expressions taking advantage of its repetitive nature.

Verses

This can be used to refer to a single line of poetry or a section of poetry. A verse put together as a unit could be a free verse or a blank verse.

Representation

Aristotle says that representations differ from one another in three ways: in object, manner, and means. The “object” is that which is represented; the “manner” is the way in which it is represented; the “means” is the material that is used. He believes that the verbal, visual, and musical modes in which a literary work is communicated is the representation (Epp, 1942). Though there might be a gap between the real and the copy, this study uses representation as the real environment employed in language or pictorials from society into the selected literary contents.

Organisation of the Study

The study has been organized into five chapters. The first of the five chapters deals with the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, methodology as well as the definition of terms. This chapter sets the tone for the entire thesis. Chapter two comprises the review of related literature and the theoretical framework. Chapters three and four contain the analysis and discussion of the ‘Anthill in the Sea’ (1988) and ‘A Slim Queen in a Palanquin’ (2010); verses and chants

respectively. In chapter five, the summary of the analyses and the implication as well as recommendations will be provided.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the background and need for the study. The chapter projects the concerns of the study, questions that the study may attempt to address, as well as the contributions the study hopes to make to academia and to the African at large.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter reviews existing scholarly literature and the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The review will focus on examining ecocriticism in the African context based on available literature and how language and visual illustrations have been used and could be used to raise eco-consciousness in children's literature.

Environmental Crisis before Ecocriticism

The root of environment crisis in the world can be attributed to many factors, including human errors, misconceptions, religious indoctrinations and cultural ideologies and many others. This section reviews some environmental literary seminal material and justifies the anchorage of ecocriticism in general.

White (1967) traces the historical roots of the ecology to several factors characterized by anthropomorphism. White holds humans accountable for this downward trajectory in the environment as a result of certain practices of farming, fishing and hunting which have adversely affected other plants, water bodies, and other species. Similarly, there are human actions of cutting down trees for buildings, without considering other elements of nature and worse of these factors, according to White, is the emergence of technology. Technology has accounted for several factors ranging from climate change to the destruction of plants, animals and water bodies.

According to the scholar, Man's reaction to the environment depends on what he [Man] thinks of himself. Thus, religion conditions the human mind

about his destiny; therefore, religion informs man's perception of his environment. Emphatically, she mentions how Christianity has added to man's disregard for nature. She refers to the creation story where mankind was authorised to name all other creatures -although it was the last to have been created - which began man's domination over nature. She argues that, unlike Paganism and other indigenous religions where man can only fall a tree after performing several rituals, Christianity gives man the power to dominate the earth and disregard other creatures. She, however, commends Christian leaders like Saint Francis of Assisi who were respectful towards nature (p 4).

Manes (1992) also believes that the silence of nature has resulted in the current state of the earth. According to him, human cultures have limited the act of talking to humans and have turned deaf ears to the voices of animals, plants and other creatures. He references motifs of medieval and renaissance origins which created the fiction of man as the sole speakers, subjects and end of the world. He recommends that 'environmental ethics' must learn a language that is different from that of man and transcends times – a language that will understand that man is not the subject of the world (p.3).

Fromm (1978) probes the mind-set of the modern man who has no fear for nature, except during earthquakes or cancer strikes. He argues that man's attention for technology has artfully concealed the need for nature since technology has remedy to every human need, except a few moments when they go crying to God for help. He argues that in the western world today, most children have no connection with the natural source of their living because of the alteration and the evasion of technology; he tells of a student 'who once remarked that she had no desire to venture out into the country to 'enjoy nature'

when she could see all the trees she wanted on colour TV’ (p.33). He blames modernity and technology as the reason the modern human being has lost contact with nature.

Theoretical Framework

The roots of ‘ecocriticism’ can be traced to the 1960s when a wave of environmentalism blew across the United States. It was caused by Rachel Carson’s book called *Silent Spring* (1962) in which she created a beautiful and harmonized world of man and nature which was later interrupted with the ecocatastrophe. Birds, cattle and sheep died due to mysterious maladies. The tropes with which Carson builds this gave room to eco studies in literature (Benesova, 2016).

The term Ecocriticism was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. By ecocriticism, Rueckert meant the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. However, the term ‘ecocriticism’ did not become popular until the 1989 meeting of the Western Literature Association, when Cheryll Glotfelty employed the word as part of vocabulary for a critical approach to studying nature writing. The term used in context meant the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). To clarify the term ‘ecocriticism’, as used in the introduction to the Ecocritical Reader, Glotfelty says that:

...as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies’ (xvii) ... Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature. As a critical stance,

it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman' ... As a recent literary approach, Ecocriticism studies "the relationship between literature and physical environment" and answers such questions as, "How is nature represented in this sonnet? How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it? In what ways has literacy itself affected humankind's relationship to the natural world? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture? etc." (p. xviii).

This exposition by Glotfelty makes clear what the literary approach is about and how it could be used. She draws her passion for this genre from the environmental neglect which has evolved as a national problem to be a global crisis. Until she began to collect literary works on environmental approaches to literature, she believed there was no sign of the awareness of environmental crisis in literary studies while other disciplines like history, philosophy and religion were loud about 'greening'. This low profile made it difficult for literary scholars who were interested in environmental approaches to belong. Glotfelty's collection of works, by the dates of publication, showed that people had begun writing on environmental theories in literature except that these articles had not received the necessary attention. She found that by 1993, ecological literary study had emerged as a recognizable critical school where all of these lone and silent writers had joined force, one of such is the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). ASLE's aim is "to promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world" and to encourage "new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; xviii).

She believed that other disciplines in the humanities (Anthropology, Philosophy, and Religion) had begun solving environmental crises. Therefore, the Literature department had a responsibility too; hence, the body of ecocriticism. She states that working at any capacity in literary studies, it becomes mandatory to contribute to address the environmental problem else the individual (writer or professor) becomes a part of the problem of environmental crisis.

Ecocritical studies cannot be done without the mention of Cheryll Glotfelty because of her immense contribution to the field; however, critics like Abolfazl Ramazani & Elmira Bazregarzadeh (2014) do not appreciate Glotfelty's trace of ecological theories and the reference to ecocriticism as a new literary approach. To them, Romantic Poetry, in general, and William Wordsworth, in particular, became the key icons of ecocritical studies. Therefore, ecocriticism as a term is new but definitely not the approach to literary studies. They elucidate that just like ecocriticism, Romantics created an "ecological perspective"; that is, "a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasis on interdependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth" (Worster, 1977: 82).

To add to the discourse of ecocriticism as an old literary approach, McKusick (2000: 19) contends that "English Romantics were the first full-fledged ecocritical writers in the Western literary tradition" in that they shared a holistic view of Nature and called for the arrival of an amicable relation between human beings and nature as echoed by (Ramazani & Bazregarzadeh, 2014).

Unlike the critics who believe ecocriticism is the same as the Romantic Writing or evolved from Romanticism, Bracke and Corporaal (2010) say ecocriticism is a new variety of critical thinking which opposes the blasé attitude toward the natural world predominant in literary studies (Philip, 2008:578). They add that ecocriticism as a form of literary and cultural critique is believed to have originated from North America, through Europe, and has tended to reflect the interests and concerns of American Nature Writing, the British Romantics and environmentally oriented non-fiction. Although Wordsworth and other Romantic or Nature Writers may have been the icons for ecocriticism, ecocriticism sets out with a different purpose to unearth the relationship established between the physical environments in literature.

Okoye- Ogwu (2013) tries to place a thin line between Nature Writing and Ecocriticism; he thus says, this ‘new’ criticism - ecocriticism - is a call for cultural change. Ecocriticism is not a way of appreciating nature in literature but from anthropocentrism to a global community which equally makes paramount humans, non-human and the physical environment. He believes that ecocriticism addresses culture which narrows and informs man’s ideals of the environment just as feminist and African American literary criticism call for a change in culture.

Similarly, Buell promulgates that “Ecocriticism might succinctly be defined as the study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis.” Though the definitions of ecocriticism vary in structure, the idea of applying ecology to literature is seen in these delineations, and how to sustain the environmental crisis is made key compared to the idea of nature writing by the Romantics.

Paramount in these explications is the relationship that must exist between man and other creatures.

Sultana and Saleem (2016) also in stating how new the approach is, contend that the theory is used and applied in the realm of literature to scrutinize literary piece of works by eco-scientific criteria. In other words, it is the analytical study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary perspective where all subjects come together to analyse the environment and find out possible solutions to the current environmental issues.

Ecocritical writing and reading became necessary when the ozone layer began to deplete and climate change hit the earth and a section of American writers found it necessary to speak to the environment and the need to save it. Since then, studies on environment preservation in literature have spread throughout the world under the ideology of ecocriticism around themes such as pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals and the earth (Greg Garrad, 2004). Ecocritics, therefore, seek to make their work relevant to efforts directed at understanding environmental degradation and finding less destructive ways of living with and within nature than those offered by the dominant modern ways of the world.

It is argued that Ecocriticism has gained popularity in most Western Scholarships, except among Postcolonial Writers. These Eurocentric arguments around the spread of ecocriticism suggest that Postcolonial theory is anthropocentric just like the Western epistemology it criticizes. In other words, Postcolonial criticism has fought to sustain the cultures and ideologies of the people but has done little to sustain the environment of the people.

Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2012) observed that Postcolonial ecocritics push against the western boundaries attached to ecocriticism; knowing and appreciating nature, identifying with the environment and protecting nature in a relatively pure state. Postcolonial writers believe that ecocriticism is a white movement and dwells on the environment of the westerners and ignores the histories and that of the 'others'. Cheryll Glotfelty in the introduction to The Ecocriticism Reader admits ecocriticism is a white movement that can be of "diverse voices" "when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice" (Glotfelty xxv). Buell (Future, 8) calls this the "First-wave ecocriticism." The mantra of postcolonial ecocriticism is that the 'First-wave ecocriticism' or the traditional American or British ecocriticism has a tendency to erase histories of 'indigenous people, of colonial conquest, and of migrations' that disrupted notions of wilderness and rooted dwelling. The findings of Caminero-Santangelo and Myers suggests that ecocriticism will make man conscious of his environment while postcolonial writers perspective of ecocriticism will make man conscious of what his environment was and what it has become as a result of other imperial measures or colonialism.

If the first-wave criteria will be used in literary analysis, there will be little ecocritical literary writings from Africa. Meanwhile, African writers in addressing the themes of their writings foreground issues relating to nature, environmental changes and beyond. This supposes that, the term ecocriticism may be recent, but to say that writing about the environment is new to Africa is to have drawn a limited judgement on African literature. Such reflections have been done in the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah,

Ayi Kwei Armah, Ousmane Sembene, and many more African authors. Tracing from Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born (1968) and Healers (1979) through to Amma Darko's Beyond the Horizon (1991). Faceless (1996) and Not without Flowers (2003) the concept of the environment is fully represented in a style the African can appreciate. These writers do not focus on nature or do not set out to write specifically about nature in its pure state or on its preservation like the Romantic Poet or the first-wave ecocritical writer but in their works are that aspect where the environment plays a key role in the life of man or the social implications of environmental change is addressed or, the relationships between representations of nature and power is stressed (Caminero-Santangelo & Myers).

This justifies the defence of African scholars like Slaymaker (2007) who believe Africa is not oblivious of environmental consciousness in literature, except that they do not use the term 'ecocriticism'. Like Slaymaker, African writers who have been involved in this argument believe that Post-colonial African writers are not oblivious of environmental issues and criticism; rather, they believe the Anglo-American version of ecocriticism is narrow to realize and accommodate the African version of ecocriticism. The African writers' approach to writing about the environment is not the same approach as that used by people in the western world. This is because key to the environment is culture which is different from people to people and geography to geography.

Wu (2016) believes ecocriticism in African literary studies does not follow the Western tradition. The African culture makes room for a wide range of environmental concepts because of the diverse culture. She adds that:

whereas Anglo-American environmental literature critiques the impact of modernity, industrialism, and technology on human society, that results in the alienation of humans from nature, and pollution, and climate change, African environmental literature critiques the impact of colonialism/ neo-colonialism and globalization on African environments, traces the weakening of indigenous inhabitants' attachment to the land and dispossession from the land to the more specific political context. If Anglo-American environmental literature tends to endorse concepts of the pristine nature (or the sublime) and of wilderness (or wilderness conservation), then African environmental literature is concerned more with issues of urban slums and urban environmental degradations brought about by the colonial demands of modernization. And where Anglo-American environmental literature conveys nostalgia about pastoral and agrarian life, African environmental literature highlights the crisis of famine and food shortage caused by the shift from subsistence farming to global, market-oriented farming under globalization. These contrasts remind us that “nature” and “environment” are not universal concepts, and that environmentalism in the context of Africa, or “environmentalism of the poor,”... should not be founded on universal principles.

Still speaking to the roots of environment in African literature, Wu (2016) states some ways Africans over the years have presented the environment in their text without having to use the approaches known to the Anglo- American:

1. Indigenous “kincentric” attachment to the land (a communal consciousness expressed through oral traditions, dialogues, and dialects)

2. Dispossession of the land and displacement (caused by land-tax imposition and enclosure)
3. Agriculture (competition between local, subsistence farming and global, market-oriented farming)
4. Country and city (tensions between tradition versus modernity, nostalgia, “retreat and return”)
5. Colonial/neo-colonial biological control (conservationism, hygiene, birth control, population)
6. Extreme weather/climate change (heat, drought, rain), especially its impact on humans (food shortage, famine, disease)
7. Natural resources (such as oil, mines, and forests exploited by multinational corporations) and resource control
8. Specific African landscapes, such as savannah, desert, bush, mountain, river, and their impacts on human psychology, memory, social practices, customs (representation, Africa-focused environmental aesthetics/imaginations)
9. Urban environments (rapid urbanization, elite neighbourhood versus working class slum or industrial neighbourhood)
10. Plant, food, animal, disease (native and imported, local colours)
11. Modernity/development (technology, car, railroad) and its impact on human living conditions and psychology
12. Impacts of war (civil war, “white man’s war,” resource war)
13. Indigenous ‘knowledges’ (holistic worldview, religion, local practices/customs) versus Western ‘knowledges’ (Cartesian dualism, rationalism, technology and science).

Although the environmentalist tropes or themes recurrent in African literature are not limited to those listed above, these themes demonstrate that African authors have already addressed environmental issues and incorporated environmental aesthetics into their works (p.25-26).

The African perspective of environmental reading in literature is argued for in Wu's research. The researcher affirms Buell's (2005) definition that 'Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement committed not to any one methodology but to a particular subject: the subject of how literature and other media express environmental awareness and concern'. It will be unethical and a fallacy to allow Eurocentric critics and other movements to adjudicate the African writer as unconcerned about the depletion of the earth.

Frantz Fanon, in The Wretched of the Earth (1991) avows that, for a colonized people, the most essential and concrete value is the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity (34). This concept of land that Fanon talks about is made bare in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) and other African texts. In Things Fall Apart, Achebe places reverence on planting on the land and harvesting from the land and other components of the environment are given divine powers. The Igbos do not take kindly anything that is done against the earth. For instance, when Okonkwo defiles the land while the people of Umuofia observe the week of peace, he is punished. Other projections of the environment are seen with how the people reverence their gods and goddesses who are a part of nature (Sun, Mountain, Animals, etc.). The sacredness of the Python is the evidence of the African writers' concern for other creatures in their writings (Gorgoi, 2014).

The Postcolonial African Writer makes paramount the concept of the environment in African writings. The African culture is engraved in the environment and the survival of nature. Gorgoi states that Africa loses herself when she loses her environment. Although colonialism exposed the environment of Africa to harm and exploitation, the reverence for nature that dwelt within the culture was not totally taken away from Africa by the colonizer. The reason Africans have written may not be to show the environment but within the various themes and subject matter is the obvious congruence that exists between humans and the natural environment. Geraldine Massey adds to this saying that, “an ecocritical approach can be sustained and enriched by the inclusion of postcolonial methodologies which explore relationships between social constructions of cultures and land use and abuse” (p. 155). The irony in his statement is that postcolonial methodologies on the contrary contain the ecocritical approaches like Gorgoi, Buell and others have argued.

Okoye-Ugwu (2017) augments the discourse, saying:

part of the reason Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart was to portray the African ideal of a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural environment. He sets out to capture a serene and tranquil traditional society full of love for one another and showcasing people living peacefully with natural elements” as opposed to that which other disciplines have deduced from works like Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (p. 156).

This effort of Achebe, according to Okoye-Ugwu, accounts for the ecological consciousness of African writings.

With the emergence of ecocriticism, Ojaide's writings have been considered environmentally conscious because they show serious connection with the natural world as well as foreground how man's activities affect his environment and ecology. Virtually, all literary works by Tanure Ojaide have the same abiding sensibility anchored in ecocriticism as well as environmentalism (Nwagbara, 2010)

Similarly, the concept of environment in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born (1968) and The Healers (1979) also affirm the African concept of ecocriticism. In The Healers (1979), Armah paints the utopia environment where the beauty of nature is paramount. The significance of rivers and the forest to man is heightened as a relevant part of the Asante landscape and culture. In The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born, he equally paints destroyed environment which is characterized by filth and man's selfish need for fleeting materials. These show that Africa had written about the ecology in different forms before this concept of ecocriticism was birthed.

Slaymaker (2001) avers that, "[t]here is no rush by African literary and cultural critics to adopt ecocriticism or the literature of the environment as they are promulgated from many of the world's metropolitan centres. For some black African critics, ecolit and ecocrit are another attempt to "white out" black Africa by colouring it green".

This perception of Slaymaker and other critics accounts for the unpopularity of the term ecocriticism in Africa. African and other marginalized writers, however, have come to accept the term ecocriticism now because environmentally-oriented literary studies will for the future be termed ecocriticism. These grievances have birthed the current waves of ecocriticism.

These waves of ecocriticism consider the issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality in literature and their impact on environmental perceptions and problems. Despite the rough edges and the indictments that have been thrown from within the theory and to the theory, ecocriticism continues to be vibrant and relevant to literature and society.

Ecocriticism has achieved a lot in a short time, and has opened the doors for many and all who want to join, but the approach is subject to changes (Estok, 2010). The task to the African writer and the reader, here, lies in the criticality with which ecocriticism themes are created and the lens with which they will be read respectively. Pursuing this, the writer and the reader, the child reader comes to mind in achieving environmental consciousness. To present nature to the child in strong metaphors like it is done in most African works for adults may not achieve the intent of the writing considering the set audience. Presenting environmental ideas to the child as it has been done in Kwesi Brew's *The Sea Eats Our Land*; Kofi Awoonor's *The Cathedral*; Joseph Rubadiri's *An African Thunderstorm*; Lenrie Peters' *We Have Come Home* may be a fruitless pursuit. However, in most children's texts, illustrations accompany the writings to drive home the messages of the author.

Authors share equal concern on how to create meaning in the mind of the child reader. Illustrations have become the critical requirement with which the problem and the need to change human attitude towards the environment can be awakened in the child's mind. Most of these authors like Slovic believe that to write on sophisticated themes for the reader can be a challenge, however, 'to write about a problem is not necessarily to produce a solution, but the kindling of consciousness – one's own and one's reader's – is a step, an essential

first step'. He adds that one of the important issues in writing about such sophisticated areas is how the literature translates into concrete changes in readers' attitude towards the environment and how they come to form sound behaviours (Slovic, 1992). This implies the subtlety with which authors must write for children in an attempt to raise children who are eco-conscious.

This is why Boudreaux (2006) suggests that there is the need to present the environment in a mild form and with images to substantiate the message when it comes to children (Boudreaux, 2006).

The Content of Children's Literature

In this study, Okai's poems for children are analysed to understand how he represent knowledge about the environment to children. The theories that support the content of children's literature will be considered only to ascertain the relevance of the signs and symbols used in communicating the issues of the environment to the child.

Bekkedal (1973:110) echoes Pellowski's (1968) claim that 'content analysis offers a sound approach to research on children's books because it is an objective, systematic, and quantitative method of describing content'. Like the problem has been, only a limited amount of researches have been done on content in children's books.

Bekkedal believes that 'studies in the specific area of content analysis are even fewer in number, and results of research in the content of children's books are inconclusive and limited'. He adds that it would be useful if researchers could select any of the numerous contemporary concerns perhaps like issues pertaining to politics, religion, economic growth, the environment and so on and make an intensive study of how often and in what way the

problem is treated in both historical and contemporary realistic fiction for children. Worth noting is that, the contents of children's literatures are often created with words or pictures or words and pictures. This meets the needs of the growing child knowing the relevance of things that appeal to their hearing and sight. Generally, children's literature is a weapon with which the child's psychology is formed. Therefore, it is expedient to consider the ideas and concept imbued into the child while giving account of the world around. Besides the ideas and concept is the kind of language used to communicate to the child. The use of sophistication in communicating with children is therefore, unnecessary. The use of basic representations of language and image may sit well with children than the abstract which may require inferences and difficult deductions to arrive at a conclusion.

Tomlinson and Brown- Lynch (1996), having reviewed contents of children's literature, observe that:

In many children's books the story is told through both text and pictures... Many different purposes can be accomplished through book illustrations. They convey meaning and feeling by helping the reader visualize the physical things and the characters' appearance and action. They also provide an aesthetic dimension to books by offering the readers additional pleasure and insights beyond the message within the text.
(pp. 33-34)

The various modes of creating content for the child appeal to the multiple senses of the child and aid in driving home the literary content. Picture books can be one of the means used to help children understand the value and importance of the environment. Picture books can show children natural wonders that exist outside the child's personal experience and can excite children about nature (Zynda, 2007).

To add to the role of picture books in granting understanding to the reading child, Bhalla (2012) posits that children's literature is funny, interesting, informative, and imaginative and the effective tools to promote environmental literacy. He argues that pictures corroborate the verbal and are used to promote environmental consciousness among children.

Schnotz (2002) suggests that text and visual displays belong to different classes of representations, namely descriptive and depictive representations respectively. Descriptive representations consist of symbols that have an arbitrary structure and are associated with the content they represent simply by means of a convention. Depictive representations include iconic signs that are associated with the content they represent through common structural features on either a concrete or more abstract level. Descriptive representations have a rather general and abstract character, whereas depictive representations are more concrete and specific in nature (Elia et al., 2010). The thought is that they may belong to two different groups of communication but they complement each other.

Oelke, Kokkinakis, and Malm (n.d) believe that visual analysis in literature speaks volumes in understanding the text. They add that through such analyses, it 'becomes possible to detect possible hidden aspects in plots, the structure and interactions of characters become easier to follow enabling experimentation and exploration of new uses and development that otherwise would be impossible to conduct'.

Bradford, Mallam, Stephens & McCallum (2008) in New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature; Utopian Transformation extrapolate from a new world order of presenting the utopia and dystopia to children that

there is the need to change tug at our consciousness for the future. They argue that change is occurring at an unprecedented rate on a global scale which engenders insecurities and the fear of tomorrow. These changes have birthed Utopian texts produced for children which drive in the children the need to be responsible for the problems the adults have created. They researched into other dystopian texts and concluded that such works create ecological awareness through metonymy and analogy or incorporate them into their works as absence. This arouses in the children ways of being responsible for the space around them. They found that picture books are ideal ways of arousing beauty and consciousness in the child (p. 182-184). Children picture books appeal to the reader with the artistically interlaced words and pictures which are used to tell the story or sound the rhymes. They give the child multiple ways of arriving at meaning – by the words or the illustrations. Although the non – linguistic aspects receive little attention in literary analysis, it is necessary to note how relevant these pictures are in arriving at meaning. To understand how the various signs can complement each other to help the reader arrive at a meaning, the semiotic theory will be used as a supporting theory for this study while the researcher analyzes the visuals that form part of this study.

Environmental Representations in Children’s Literature

Environmental education for children serves many purposes – it encourages children to be thoughtful about their personal impact on the environment, it reminds children that the world and its inhabitants are connected, and it encourages children to be proactive in protecting their natural community. Environmental education, when done correctly, can produce thoughtful, responsible young people (Zynda, 2007). As ecocriticism is by

nature interdisciplinary, it draws on environmental studies, the natural sciences, and cultural and social studies. The awareness of ecocriticism has been there since the dawn of civilization. Poets, artists, and thinkers have been emphasizing the close kinship between nature and man from time immemorial. Some of the prominent advocates were the Romantic Writers like Wordsworth, Blake and Coleridge. Human life is inconceivable without the presence of wider nature – animals, water bodies, land and others. These critical elements necessary for human survival warranted the environment writings and ecocritical readings into human writing and purposefully into children's text around the world.

Bhalla (2012) believes that as part of the responsibility of children, they must be made aware of the need to protect and preserve the environment as a way of kindling in them environmental consciousness.

Anne Drolett Creany (1994) says environmental picture books are “informative and allow children to formulate their own feelings about environmental issues”. She raises the concern that, while most writings for children are didactic, they fail to teach environmental education in an appropriate way (16). To her, paramount in children's literature is its ability to teach the child about the environment.

Rule and Atkinson (1994) therefore propose things to consider when picking books that will speak to the environment and inform the child. To them, a book promotes environmental education when;

1. The book promotes nature appreciation.
2. The book shows the interrelatedness of nature and demonstrates the need for people to cooperate with nature.

3. The book presents a realistic ecological problem, without “oversimplification or exaggeration.”
4. The book offers hope for a solution.
5. The book offers steps for a solution. At least some of the solutions “could be realistically implemented by children.”
6. The book has a positive tone and does not induce fear or assign blame.
7. The book has non-stereotypical portrayals.
8. The book has appropriate illustrations that enhance the text.
9. The book has an appealing story with “appropriate action, suspense, pace, and outcome.”
10. The book is developmentally appropriate (586).

If all of these measures are considered in picking a book, then most books will be regarded environmentally unfriendly.

The entry of ecocriticism in critical discourse of children’s literature was formally marked by Americans in 1994 and in two journals that published special issues dedicated to children and ecology (Bradford et. al., 2008: 189). Several years down the line, ecocriticism has been a part of children’s text either deliberately erected by the author or a reading of the representation by researchers. Many of such readings and writings have been done around the world in this twenty-first century.

Boudreaux (2006) reviewed bestselling children’s books for 0-8 year olds in the United States in 2003. The study was to evaluate the extent to which the ideologies of the environment have been imbibed into culture for children by literary artists. The research was and concluded on the findings that ‘the representations of the environment in children’s literature do not produce

ideologies that meet the goals of Environmental Education. They do not depict ecological concepts and processes nearly enough and when they do, they are coupled with domination'. In the analysis of the selected data, except for three, 'none of the books present the ten core values of ecological character education (compassion, courage, courtesy, fairness, honesty, kindness, loyalty, perseverance, respect, and responsibility)'. Like in most children's text, it is discovered in the above research that man dominates over all activities in the selected literatures while the others that make the effort to make other creatures dominate deny the characters of some attributes which are perceived to be associated with man.

Apriati (2013) analyses Julie by Jean Craighead George to identify the human-nature relationship as reflected in the children's novel. The findings of the research revealed that both the good and bad human nature relationships are portrayed in George's Julie. The human-nature indicators were establishing the good relationship and understanding of the existence of plant and animal as a part of human life and respecting all kinds of living things on earth. It was also revealed that the destruction of nature was as a result of money-oriented principle. The researcher also found that humans in the story begin to live a balanced nature when they learn to tolerate other creatures.

Zynda (2007) did a content analysis of a selection of environmental awareness picture books. The analysis was conducted to determine the appropriateness of these picture books for teaching environmental education to elementary-school aged children. It was found that most of the environmental education picture books used literary conventions that were inappropriate in terms of children's cognitive understanding as well as in their understanding of

environmental education, but that these problems would not prevent the child from understanding and enjoying most of the books. Ultimately, it was determined that the ideal environmental education picture book is a quality picture book that encourages appreciation of nature and environmental issues in a positive and developmentally appropriate manner.

Marriot (2002) examined 1,076 picture books (not categorically stated as children's book) and concluded that animals in these books are presented to mislead people about the being of animals. In his finding, he states how animals are anthropomorphized although none of the books seem to raise issues that exhibit how man dominates other creatures.

Lynne Cherry's The Great Kapok Tree (1990) is an example of a deliberate attempt to tell how a logger, employed to cut down the kapok tree in the rain forest falls, asleep and in his dream receives an education on protecting the forest. When he wakes up, he drops his axe and walks out of the forest (Bradford et. al., 2008). This is a modest way for creating eco - consciousness in children.

Semiotics

To be able to analyse the pictures in this study, semiotics will be used as the substructure on which this analysis will be built. Semiotics is the study of signs or an epistemology about the existence or the actuality of sign in societal life (Mohd, Yakina & Totua, 2014). The literary semiotician, Umberto Eco, in his book entitled 'A Theory of Semiotics' indicates that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else' (1979; 7). According to Eco, that 'something else' does not necessarily exist exactly at the same time

when the sign represents or replaces its position. In other words, semiotics accounts for everything that can be seen or be interpreted as a sign. Signs according to Pandiyan and Arangasamy (2014) are objects, images, symbols, words, gestures that are intentionally created and used to share information in human society. In other words, signs communicate to their readers. This definition makes room for authors to employ a wide range of symbols and signs to create a piece of art and for the reader to make meaning out of such works

Albers (2007:83) adds that ‘semiotics is a theory that explores the nature and function of signs as well as the system and process underlying significant, expression, representation, and communication’. She is of the view that studying the signs and signs systems in art, music, language, math, movement and science opens up the language systems to the distinct forms of grammar. She believes that in arriving at meaning the visual and the written or oral both work to give the meaning with the latter not superseding the former in relevance or the other way around. He affirms that anything photograph has language. There is a message to be derived from the images as much as there is to be derived from the spoken or written text. The relevance of language is to enable the communication of information, feelings and ideas through established systems and rules. Semiotics gives critics and researchers the opportunity to disclose the embedded meaning of language either the verbal or visual. The suitability of semiotics in this study lies with the opportunity it gives the researcher to study the signs that are used to construct social issues surrounding the environment. This supposes that the understanding and appreciation of a work of art goes beyond reading the verbal but associating the objects, images, symbols, words, gestures and others which are employed to show or teach a

particular cultural ideology. This suggests that, the visuals, colours, shapes, gestures, design, sounds, are put in context to effect a specific meaning.

Bradford, Mallam, Stephens & McCallum (2008) in New World Orders in Contemporary Children's literature; Utopian Transformation extrapolate from a new world order of presenting the utopia and dystopia to children that there is the need to change tug at our consciousness for the future. They argue that change is occurring at an unprecedented rate on a global scale which engenders insecurities and the fear of tomorrow. These changes have birthed Utopian texts produced for children which drive in the children the need to be responsible for the problems the adults have created. They researched into other dystopian texts and concluded that they also create ecological awareness through metonymy and analogy or incorporate them into their works as absence. This arouses in the children ways of being responsible for the space around them. They found that picture books are ideal ways of arousing beauty and consciousness in the child (p. 182-184). Semiotics gives critics and researchers the opportunity to disclose the embedded meaning of language either the verbal or visual. The suitability of this theory in this study lies with the opportunity it gives the researcher to study the signs that are used to construct social issues surrounding the environment. This supposes that the understanding and appreciation of a work of art goes beyond reading the verbal but associating the objects, images, symbols, words, gestures and others which are employed to show or teach a particular cultural ideology.

Jing Liu (2013) also adds that multimodal texts may pose a challenge to today's readers since they will be required to complement the multiple semiotics to arrive at a meaning and must therefore be familiar with art, media, and

semiotic theories. He believes this multiple approach to making oneself literate and will shift from the word-dominated typographic era to a post-typographic era dominated by the visual images and multimodal texts. Sovic and Hus (2016) believe that semiotics, despite its unfamiliarity, is a very important part of child's cognitive development. This means that signs or symbols on the environment found in children's texts can have a positive effect in forming eco-conscious children as these readers try to decode them.

Conclusion

When there is no problem, people do not think of any solution. The birth and emergence of ecocriticism presupposes the existence of environmental challenges to man and to nature. The collected literature proves that eco-literature is new to the world; however, in Africa and 'other' countries, it always existed although it did not have a big name like 'ecocriticism'. The approach promises to do a lot in transforming the world. This literature forms the basis on which analysis will be made in an African work for children. Since Africans do not set out to write Eco-critically, the extent to which issues about the environment are presented will be unearthed in these verses and chants for children.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF A SLIM QUEEN IN A PALANQUIN (VERSES AND CHANTS FOR CHILDREN)

Introduction

The previous chapters provided the background to the study and the literature in which the research gap was identified. The theoretical framework that foregrounds the study was equally communicated. In this chapter, focus will be placed on one of the two children's collections that form the basis of this research analysis "A Slim Queen in a Palanquin" by Atukwei Okai. This analysis shall consider the representation of the environment to the African child and how it is done using textual description and visuals depictions in the fourteen verses and chants that make up the entire collection. This analysis shall use the ecocritical literary approach as the foundation of this analysis through the critical lens of semiotics. The Postcolonial theory shall be referenced when necessary as well as other supporting works by ecocritics. Garrard (2012) states that, "the widest definition of the subject of Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human" in culture (p. 5). Based on this and other similar assertions, a conscious effort shall be made in identifying the kind of environment created as well as what and who makes up the environment and the relationship that is established in the environment. At the end of each analysis the environmental ideologies and the lesson for the child shall be described to ascertain the African author's representation of the environment. The reality of this representation in contemporary times or the fictitiousness will also be analysed. How this is created will also be described to achieve the key

purpose of the chapter which seeks to answer a part of the two research questions: what is the environment of children's literature as created in Atukwei Okai's 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010) and how does Atukwei Okai construct the environment with words and pictures for children in 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010)?

Analysis

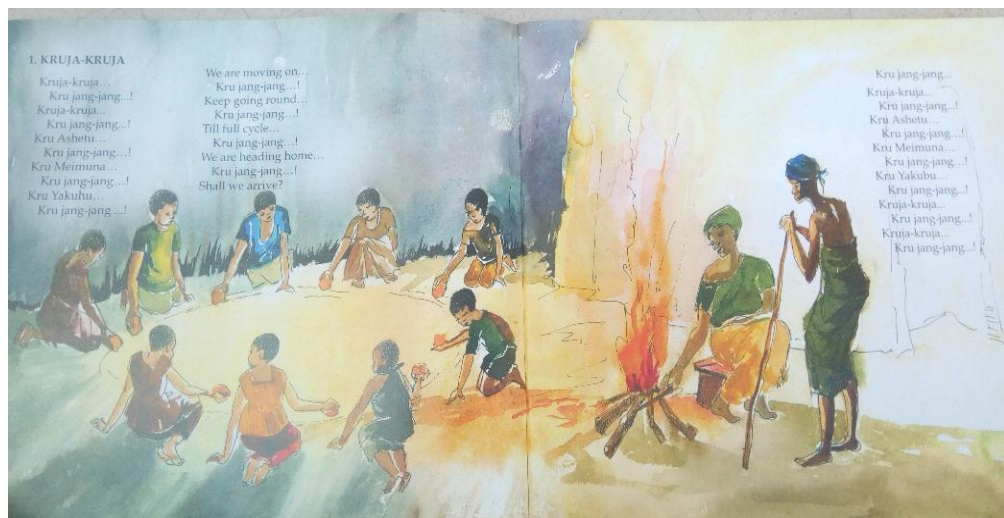


Fig 3.1 Kruja- Kruja

The main text or rhyme is a play song of children in a particular setting of Ghana. Play songs as oral literature serve as great sources of Indigenous Knowledge. They help children socialize as they play, learn more about their culture and their local dialect as well as learning to be human by interacting with other humans. The rhyme is a repetition of the sound 'kruja- kruja... kru jang - jang' and in every other line, they add a name which could be the names of the participants or other people in their setting; 'kru Ashetu' 'Kru Meimuna', 'Kru Yakubu'. These are names given to people of Islam or people of Hausa descent. The choice of names can be explained with the background of the poet who grew up in the northern part of Ghana which is inhabited in a

larger percentage by Moslems and Hausa speakers. The rhyme adopts a code mixing, that is, the local interjection kru-jang and the English Language. Readers are given deeper understanding of the song as a play song in the illustration which depicts a typical life of the African in the rural setting where children gather at night to play or to listen to stories from elders. This practice of old where children gathered to play and listen to folktales provided the child with the opportunity to interact with friends and with the environment – the moon, stars and the night’s breeze and to learn from the older generation. In the accompanying illustration, the children kneel in a circle and move the stones in their palm to the person next to them in the circle perhaps to the tune of the song. The play song appeals to the ear as the lines are filled with repeated words and a lot of rhythm which complement the game and the noise from the stones that are lifted and dropped. Compounding the sound effect are the exclamation marks at the end of the lines which tell the excitement and the high tone in which the children sing. The ellipses that follow the sound ‘jang’ and precede the exclamation marks also adds to the sound effect created and the excitement with which the children play making the sound onomatopoeic and humorous. The two female adults on the other half of the page are interacting while the one sets fire with pieces of wood.

The environmental factors raised on the double page are of multiple folds – pro and anti-environmental. The children in the illustration are doing something that is not seen in the modern setting of Africa – they are interacting with one another through games in the open space of their community. Although not common in recent times, this practice of old and in rural settings captured in this text teaches the child to learn and know the relevance of the space (land)

around them and also of other humans. Like Fanon says, “for a colonized people the most essential value, the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.” The land is of utmost priority to the African and hence a great relationship must be established with her [the land] at all levels, this is partially depicted as the children play on the land although nothing is said of it textually. The relationships that exist between the humans (children and the women respectively) are obviously established in words and/ or in visuals but, the relevance of other creatures is not portrayed neither is the relationship between the humans and non-humans established. This is evident in the pictorials -- there are neither trees, nor water bodies, nor astronomical/ celestial objects in the sky; in the created environment (either in words or the visuals) besides the shrubs -- even the land on which the children play is not mentioned but just seen requiring the child to infer its relevance to humans. This makes the representation anthropocentric, building in the child the disregard for other creatures and centring on self. Although all creatures have utility, the concept of self prioritizes other creature based on what they can offer. Another anti- environmental ideology of this presentation is seen in the actions of the adults - setting fire- which connotes deforestation and air pollution. This fire setting perhaps justifies the lack of trees but shrubs in the illustration; the people might have cut down the trees for firewood. One of the things that bedevil our African societies now is deforestation for commercial and domestic purposes. Some forest areas provide homes, food and a means of survival to the extremely poor but the practice of deforestation will soon render such people homeless. One other reason people cut down trees in African is for charcoal or firewood. Poverty and inability to afford other forms have given

people in rural settings or poor African societies, the unpardonable excuse to cut down trees for firewood though they are poor environmental practices. These human actions have caused the reduction in our forest reserves and have caused most of the ecocatastrophes that the world cries about today. In spite of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals which seek to fight deforestation and to stop hunger, the forest reserves suffer. Africa lost 75 million hectares of forest areas from 1990 to 2010. In general, 31.6% of the world space had forest covers as at 1990, however, in 2015 it had reduced to 30.6% (FAO, 2018) What will become of the world in fifty years is obvious if not curbed.

Another concept projected in this rhyme is air pollution. The smoke from the fire distracts and pollutes the air making the earth an unbearable place to live not just for humans but to the detriment of other creatures that are affected. The author does not comment about this action putting the child in the middle to make a decision of either adopting this action or not. However, fear grips the environmental educator who knows that the children are influenced or imitate adults. This anthropocentric representation of this verse, *kruja-kruja*, visually and textually will raise the eyebrow of ecocritics as the eco-consciousness created is deficient for building a child who is responsible for the environment but sufficient for nurturing in the child a domineering attitude towards other creatures.

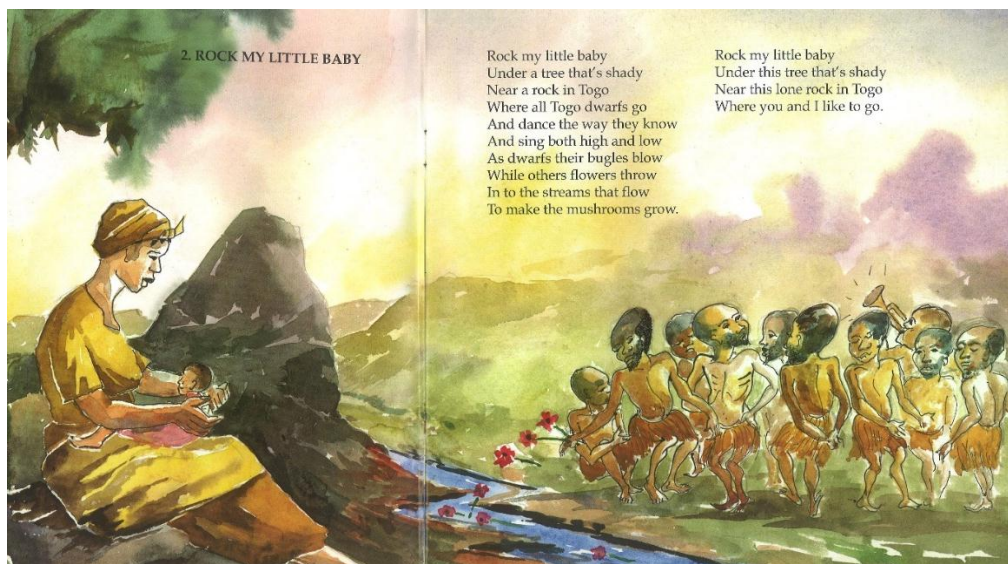


Fig 3.2 Rock My Little Baby

This rhyme, “Rock My Little Baby” is a lullaby. Lullabies are soothing songs which are used to calm babies or to lull them to sleep. Shirazi and Khaleghzadeh (2016) describe a lullaby as “the first poetics and musical agreements which are concluded between mothers and children. They are the invisible chains that move from the lips of the mother to the ears of children, and its magical effects are calm and deep sleep that involves children.” Lullabies are the first forms of oral literature children are exposed to during their early childhood stages. Lullabies are very important in activating the brain of the child as well as in educating them. The double page illustration that accompanies the text shows a mother who holds her baby in her arms, seated under a tree. To her left is a rock and a few meters from where she sits with her baby lies a stream. Across the stream are dwarfs dancing while one blows a trumpet and another one throws flowers into the stream. The background, which is a natural setting with beautiful colours, speaks to the beauty of nature and how the environment around humans should ideally look like. The mother of the baby who seeks to sooth her baby sings in the first two lines, ‘Rock (verb) my little baby (object)/

Under a tree (adjunct) that's shady...'. The subject of the sentence is unknown as it is constructed in an imperative form requiring the unknown subject to rock the baby. However, the subsequent lines are specific on the place the baby has to be rocked. She uses prepositional phrases to make specific these places: 'under a tree ... near a rock...' in making the setting specific, she mentions what goes on at this place 'where all Togo dwarfs go/ And dance the way they know...'. This representation seeks to make the baby eco-conscious and desire to be in the idealized setting where nature still exists.

The mother in this presentation is to be applauded for bringing her child to the ideal environment. This is a good beginning to environmental education as the lullaby employs a setting that will equip the child's understanding of her surroundings. The early years of a child are critical in development as they learn through various ways especially from parents or family and from mastering their surroundings. The baby who has been brought to nature is surrounded by trees, rocks, water bodies and dwarfs; this is symbolic of the solace and freedom that comes from nature and the interrelatedness of all creatures. The mother's hope in nature is seen in her actions and in her words which denote that nature can put the baby in a comfortable position by rocking it. With this act of the mother, the child will learn to have regard for other elements of the environment at a very early stage. Again, the mother's actions socialises the baby into living harmoniously with other elements of the environment and equally signifies the responsibility given to the child to protect nature for the future. The harmonious lines of the verse imbues in the child the comfort and peace that comes from nature. Also, the reader (child) learns and is aroused to visit or be at a place filled with such unadulterated feeling of the environment.

In spite of the good environmental practice being exhibited, humans (the child, mother and dwarfs) are in the centre of the text and illustration while the main factors are placed in the peripherals. There is no interaction between the other creatures except what they do for the humans. The *tree* is captured in this presentation only as providing shade for the mother and her child. The *rock* is also captured only as a landmark. This denies other creatures the liberty to interact and to be of relevance in themselves. Every creature presented is required to work to favour the child while man is seen doing nothing for the other creatures projecting humans as preeminent. This anthropocentric presentation brings to mind the actions of man and writers that indirectly underestimate the importance of other creatures.

In spite of the anthropocentric ideologies and other biases, this presentation projects pro-environmental principles of deep ecology where the relevance of other creatures are brought to play.

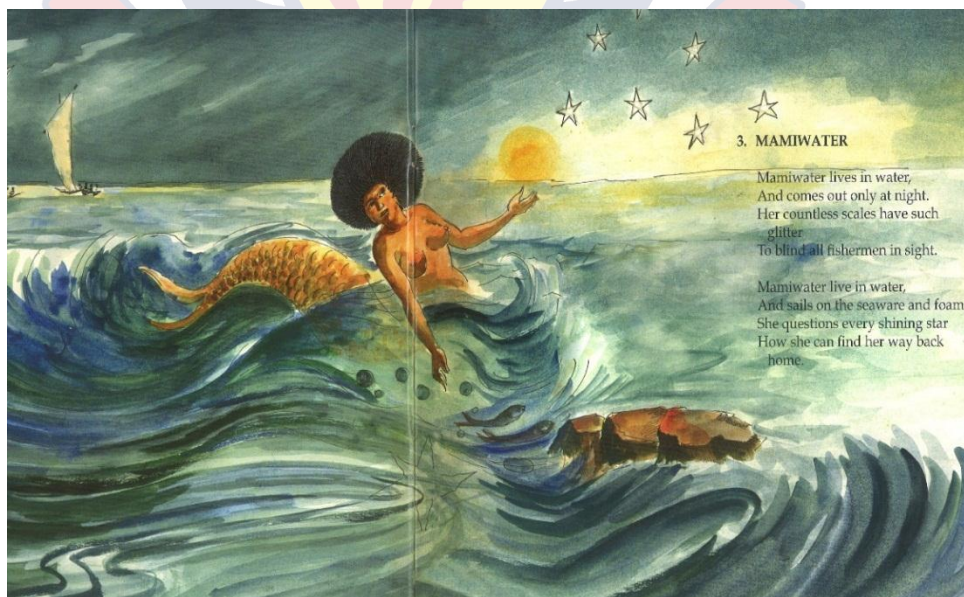


Fig 3.3 Mamiwater

In Ghanaian traditional stories, Mamiwater is a half aquatic and half female creature that lives in the ocean. Mamiwater is an example of code mixing of the Ghanaian Twi language and the English language. Mami in Twi means woman so the name Mamiwater can be translated as woman of the water. Mamiwater stories form a part of the African fables that are passed to generations to teach moral lessons. Mamiwater is known in English as the Mermaid. The double page illustration shows the ocean with a mermaid lying in the middle of the sea while some canoes float on the ocean some distance away from the mermaid with the stars and the moon in the skies. This half human half fish creature is presented in folklores as dangerous and as a result, scares African children. In most Ghanaian settings, the lore behind ‘mamiwater’ projects her as one who appears at night to deceive humans and lure them into the ocean where they stay forever. Meanwhile Ghanaian children who have read or watched Western stories of the mermaid perceive the creature as good or bad, depending on the role it is made to play. However, the African folklores of mamiwater create in humans the fear of the ocean. These indigenous stories were used in the past to drive humans away from destroying water bodies. The poet demystifies a myth of mamiwater - which stands in the way of man and the ocean. The poem rather describes this fierce creature as a beautiful one which the child would rather want to see than run away from. It is captured: ‘Her countless scales have such glitter/ to blind all fishermen in sight.’ Again, this creature that stands in the relationship of man and the ocean is presented as vulnerable other than the treacherous creature that devours man from the oceans. ‘She questions every shining star/ How she can find her way back home’. This arouses pity for Mamiwater in the child, taking away the fear for

water bodies that has been imbued in humans through folklores. This also resonates to the child how similar or different non-humans could be to or from humans. Also, it resonates the need to debunk the thought that everything non-human is evil or bad.

The ideology painted here is a pro-environmental ideology which seeks to take away from the child fear of the ocean and the creatures that exist in the ocean.

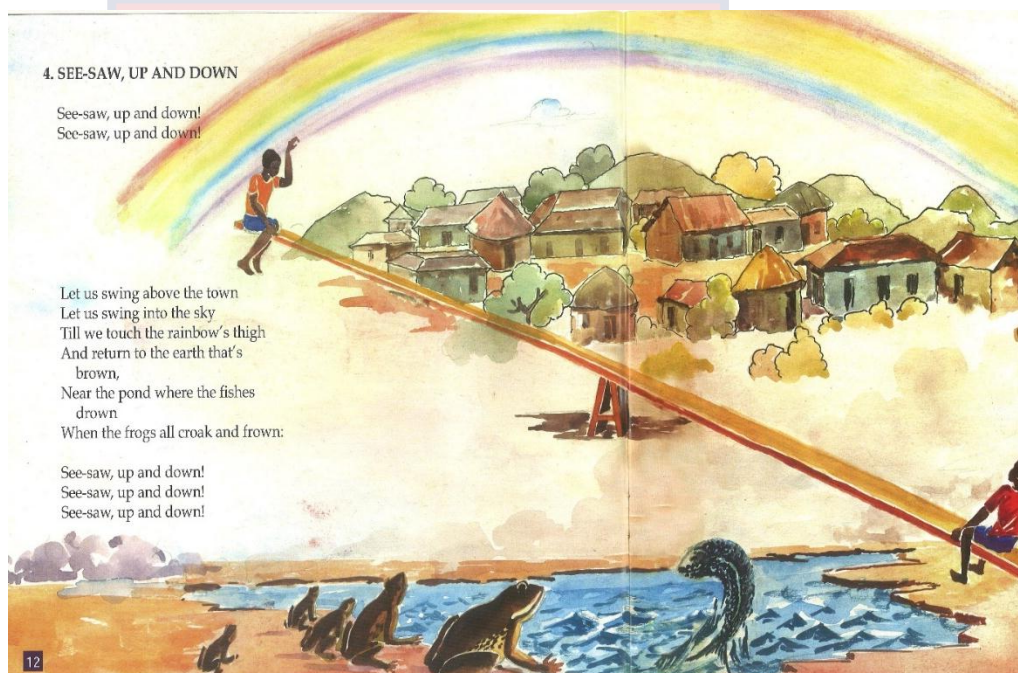


Fig 3.4 See- Saw, Up and Down

‘See-saw, up and down’ is a play song that children sing when they sit on a playground equipment called the seesaw. A seesaw is a long board balanced in the middle on a firm object which serves as a pivot. Two people sit at both ends and swing up and down alternatively and the children sing to the movement ‘see-saw, up and down’. This playground song adds to the lyrics of the rhyme *See-Saw, Up and Down*. Most African children who engage in such outdoor games may be familiar with the line of the song although it differs from culture

to culture. The playground is elaborately painted on the double page illustration to go with the text. The wish of the children as they move up and down is to swing into the sky and touch the rainbow's thigh and to return to the earth that is brown, near the pond where fishes and frog live. These are the wishes of children which are impossible but worth considering in this analysis. These may be considered anti-environmental as the wishes of the children seek to distort the peace of other creatures. However, these could be argued as pro-environmental; a way the children can bond with these creatures – the frogs, fishes and the sky. In the excitement of these children, they seek to encounter these other elements by passing on their excitement. This excitement will save the fish that is said to be drowning and to put a smile on the face of the frog that is said to keep a frown. The illustration foregrounds this interpretation as a fish is seen diving while the frogs look at the children as they swing.

The environment painted on these pages is that of a community with a water body, a clean surrounding with beautiful trees growing in the interspersed buildings. These are elements of sustainability as the community has put in place life's resources that will ensure their survival in many years. Another ideal part of this illustration is the rainbow (with its many beautiful colours) that hangs in the sky. The rainbow in many settings is noted for its beauty and significant of the harmony and ideal world in which all creatures live.

Another environmental concern raised is with the interaction of the children with their environment. Technology denies children of such opportunity, especially the dwellers of urban centres. The tone of this text enforces the harmony that must exist between humans and all creatures around them.

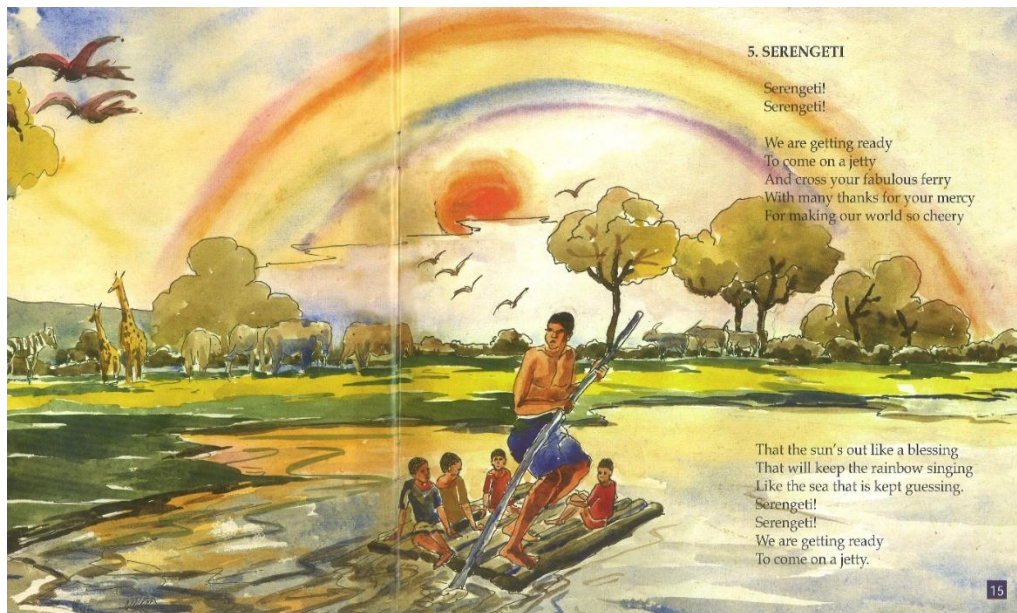


Fig 3.5 Serengeti

Serengeti is a praise poetry in reference to Serengeti National Park, a reservation in northern Tanzania. The park is inhabited by more than two hundred species of birds and thirty- five species of plain mammals including cheetah, leopards, lions and giraffes. The park was declared the World Heritage Site in 1981 by UNESCO.

This presentation (the illustration and chant) gives children the opportunity to know this iconic park in Africa, Serengeti, which most children may not know about or never get to see. The mood of the reciter (children) is realized in the excitement with which they call the place and announce their visit:

Serengeti!
Serengeti!
We are getting ready
To come on a jetty

The exclamation signs that punctuate the first two lines express the admiration the children have for the place and the desire to be at such a place. The intensity of their emotions is emphasized by the repetition of 'Serengeti'. 'We' refers to

the plurality of voices and persons in this presentation and is also antecedent of the people in the illustration, that is, the four children on the ferry and probably the ferryman who are embarking on this trip. Their excitement about this journey is also as a result of the knowledge they have of the place and its importance to humans:

With many thanks for your mercy
For making our world so cheery

With Serengeti personified, the reciters are grateful to Serengeti for showing ‘mercy’, that is, for being compassionate and forgiving irrespective of the destructions humans cause at such reserves where they hunt animals and cut down trees. They also describe this reserve as cheery - good in spirit - which affects the sun, the sea and the rainbows not just humans.

The illustration agrees with the text. The double page illustration shows a park with different animals – rhinoceros, elephants, zebra, giraffes, bird- and trees cohabiting peacefully. Across these trees and animals are the ferryman and the children riding on the ferry towards the reserve. In the sky spreads the multiple colours of the rainbow, the sun and the free space for the birds to fly. The natural reserve makes room for the freedom of these creatures.

The affection exhibited in the presentation is enough to get every child to fall in love with Serengeti or any natural reserve. The excitement of the children captured in the text tells the preparation of the child for the accomplishment of sustenance goals and the protection of other creatures of the earth. Serengeti is personified, that is, referred to as having mercy and cheering the world. This description of the reserve gives the place some authority and superiority. The reciter (child) admits that Serengeti has these features by qualifying these features with the adjective ‘your’ which shows possession or

that which this place can give. He uses the simile, 'like'; to draw the effect such places have on the sun which in effect projects the beauty of the rainbow which is personified to sing while the sea is kept guessing. This anthropomorphized presentation is a way of fostering in the child their recognition of and dependence on other creature and to build in them the love and respect for life's other creations. This affirms Commoner's first law of Ecology that says, 'everything is connected to everything'. This also gives eminence to other nonhumans as integral part of the world. Another ecocritical concept seen in the lines and pages of presentation dwells with the ferryman. The ferryman is symbolic of parents, teachers and adults who are have knowledge of Ecopedagogy and take the responsibility of raising Ecocitizens. The lesson projected here is that when natural reservations are left undisturbed and respected, it becomes a place of relevance to humans and all creatures.

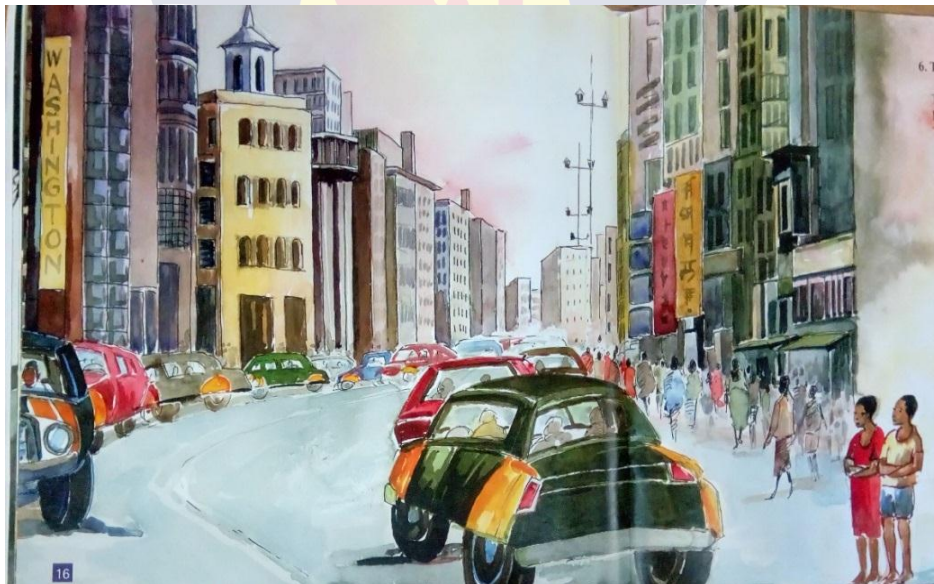


Fig 3.6: The Taxi Cabs

The image that accompanies the rhyme is that of a typical urban area. Like most urban centres, the buildings fill the environment, cars and human beings fill the streets of city. Pollution is one of the challenges of such dwellings and in this

text, noise pollution is paramount. The rhyme begins with the sound from horns of the taxi cabs which sound ‘pingpong like in old Hong Kong’. The sound according to the persona ascends like a million ton to the skies; this deep ecology challenge can be translated to mean that the noise is strong enough to disturb all creatures especially those that take solace in the skies including the flying birds. This coincides with the clouds painted in the illustration where all the birds have been driven away perhaps as a result of the noise created by these urban dwellers. Old Hong Kong mentioned in this rhyme, *A Taxi Cab* was originally ruled by Imperial China up until 1842. Hong Kong has a population of about 7.5 million and has different cultures in relation to hygiene compared to Mainland China which is the world’s populous country with over 1.4 billion people and poor hygienic conditions (Lock, 2019). The image presented in the text could be the case of current China which is over populated and fights various conditions of pollution associated with over population – destruction of the natural environment; air, noise and water pollution as well as climate change and others. Concerns raised in this text mostly dwells with noise pollution. The issue of noise pollution is of major concern to the well-being of man, animals and for the sustenance of the earth, however, it is of little concern to urban dwellers. The intensity of the noise can be foregrounded with the various sound images that fill the poem. The repetition of the lines ‘...toot their horns/ like pingpong in Hong Kong’ that foster auditory images intensifies the effect of the sound made by these taxi cabs. Similarly, the onomatopoeia ‘horns... Hong kong...toot’ and the rhyme scheme which takes ‘ababab’ adds to the effect of the sound. Alongside the noise pollution is air pollution which is as a result of the fumes from the exhaust pipes of the taxi cabs.

Another concern of urbanisation seen in the illustration is deforestation. In this illustration, there is the absence of trees which have obviously been cut down to make way for houses and industries for Human's temporal survival. The absence of trees further explains the absence of birds in the sky since they have no place to perch. Overpopulation, which is a canker of urbanisation, is seen in this illustration, putting humans at the centre of the city while other creatures are not seen at all. The presentation foregrounds the causes of ecocatastrophes in urban African societies which are as a result of modernity and the evasion of technology since colonization. The desire for Africa to develop has pushed for the destruction of nature, to make room for roads, industries, advanced technologies. To the left of the illustration is a building with the inscription 'Washington' while to the right is an inscription in an Asian language. This emphasizes the Postcolonial ecocritic's assertions that the destruction of the natural environment is as a result of western cultures. These actions of humans go ahead to deplete the ozone layers and to expose humans to various reactions by the ecology. This rhyme speaks to a modern-day environmental challenge. However, the poet does not handle the problems of pollution and over population as dangerous. The presentation style does not make this look like a problem to the child.

The reciter (child), like the two children who stand by the road in the illustration, have no option than to look on as the adults in the society go about their daily lives. This is a contrast to the rural presentations which have been seen on the previous pages which are eco-friendly or have some environmental practices to encourage the reader. The environmental concepts captured on

these pages are negative and it may be difficult for the child to tease out the causes of these ecocatastrophes.



Fig 3.7 The Lion

This rhyme may remind the reader of the popular rhyme, 'A lion, A lion, A lion has a tail. It has a big head and a very small tail'. The lion is a big tawny-yellow wild predatory animal whose fierceness scares human beings especially children and most animals, if not all animals.

The lion in this text is presented from its natural habitat 'alone' which is quite unusual with lions as they are known to live in groups. This unusual living perhaps is the reason for the beginning line which is emphasized by repetition in the last two lines – 'the lion is alone / in the bush that is all grown'. This line poses thoughts in the mind of the reader (child) who may assume that the fierce animal may have eaten all the people around him. On the other hand it may sound ambiguous to the child who knows that the 'king of the jungle' has a happy life. The lion is said to have mastery of how to lie on the stick and the stone which is likened to '[a] dream that can be blown'. This is affirmed with the illustration which fills the double page. The lion is seen lying down in the

bush on a piece of wood which lies on a big stone. His mastery of this lying positioning is likened to a rope tied on a dream that can be blown.

The lion is presented to the child in a different light as without company- '[t]he lion is alone' - and hence pitiful instead of being fierce. The lion is extinct in most continents because of human behaviours associated with hunting, deforestation as well as the quest for development have driven away these animals. In this text, this may represent one of the few surviving species living in the bush without the interruption of man. '[T]he bush that is grown' is symbolic of a natural preserve that contains animals that live unharmed by human actions however, isolated from civilization. Distinct with this presentation is the admission of the fact that animals have emotions in spite of their sizes and strength. The child will transfer this knowledge and pity for the lion to other wild animals or non- domesticated animals in dealing with them and might stop their generation from killing animals or disturbing them or even eating them. This makes room for misconceptions about other living things to be addressed in children. The illustrator, to make the lion appear friendly, draws a beautiful kite next to the title, either to excite the child who is scared of lions or to make the lion look friendly.

Anti-environmental of this rhyme is the denial of the voice of the lion. Everything said about the lion is based on human description. The lion may not be alone but because it lacks voice as an animal it takes that description from the human. This ironical representation is tagged anthropocentric by ecocritics like Huggan and Coetzee because the lion is presented from the human point of view because it is assumed that animals do not have the voice to express their emotions. In as much as the reader is made conscious of the emotion of other

creations, the dominance of humans over all creations lingers in this text. In the same sense, the isolated animal who stays away from other creatures tells the barriers that exist between the various species. The relevance of a creature to human kind determines how close it stays to home. The lion in this text stays away from the human territories but the question posed is, ‘will humans respect the animal and stay away from its territory too?’. The underlying ideology is humans choose which animals they desire as pet but those they cannot control, they keep a distance away or destroy their species, hence ‘the lion is alone’.

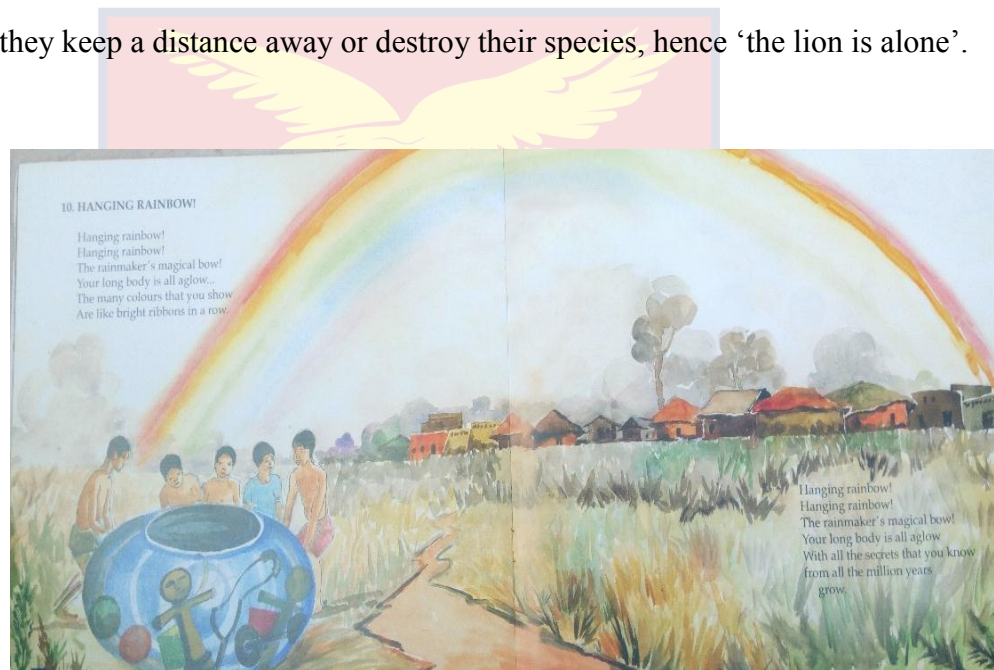


Fig 3.8 Hanging Rainbow

The ‘Hanging Rainbow’ is another of Atukwei Okai’s chants and verses for children. The title, ‘Hanging Rainbow’, speaks the mind of a child who does not know the origin or cause of the rainbow, and therefore will assume the rainbow hangs in the sky. Praises are sung to the hanging rainbow as ‘the rainmaker’s magical bow.’ The child is made to believe that the rainbow is the ‘magical bow’ of the ‘rainmaker’ – that is, the Supreme Being. The subsequent lines sing the praises of the ‘long body’ and glow of the rainbow and goes ahead to compare the many colours of the rainbow to that of the ‘bright ribbons in a

bow.’ The sound imageries identified in this presentation adds to the beauty and the excitement that the rainbow gives the little child. The rhyme creates in the child the mystery in the world and the beauty of the environment.

The visuals to this presentation show a beautiful rainbow-like image ‘hanging’ in the sky above a rural setting whose environment can be described as neat with well-structured buildings and trees. The knowledge of the rainbow (from seeing one or being told about one) to the child will increase the effect of this presentation and appreciation for the beauty of the real rainbow – although it is rare due to the depletion of our ozone layers. Away from the building and tree are five people (children) trying to move a transparent pot which contains play items – catapult, doll, balls, dumbbell and other play items. This pot is symbolic and can be alluded to the myth that the end of the rainbow signifies a pot of gold and the magic of fulfilling our dreams and wishes. The rainbow gives the children the assurance of a good weather in which they can play and receive all their needs. The religious symbolism of the rainbow could be interpreted; thus, a new beginning awaits the younger generation irrespective of the harm caused nature by adults. The illustration is a representation of how an ideal environment should be like – tranquil and peaceful- to make room for the child to play and live in.



11. THE BABY DOZING

The baby dozing
On her mama's back
Is miles away
In another land
Where fairies
Are dancing
In a mighty sack
To the music
Of a kangaroo band.

The baby dozing
On her mama's back
Is miles away
In another land.

Fig 3.9 The Baby Dozing

The Baby Dozing may be a sequel to the lullaby *Rock My Little Baby* (p 4) where a mother brings her child to nature to be rocked. Likewise in *The Baby Dozing*, the rhyme sings of a baby who sleeps on the back of her mother but we are told that while she remains strapped to her mother's back, in her sleep, she is far away in 'another land'. In this faraway place, fairies are said to be dancing to the tune of kangaroo's which emanates from the drums and trumpets they play. Fairies are imaginative supernatural beings employed as characters in children's literatures to teach a lesson through their impressive powers. What takes place in this faraway land which may be interpreted to be in the child's dream is presented in a hyperbole. This presented scenario of fairies dancing to the tune of kangaroos in the text as illustrated in the visuals is based on what the child has been exposed to by her mother. This dream is something which an adult may not perceive since it is 'nonsense'. The psychological formation of the child becomes very necessary in this situation. Nature has a way of adding to the development of the child and equips the child's ability to create her own world. The child employs multiple situations from her environment in her dream, that

is, the part of culture where people dance to drums; fairies from modern folklores and the knowledge of other creatures - kangaroos. The environmental factors that influence this child tells how critical the formative years can be to raising an Ecocitizen. The child creates a world where all creatures relate well without dominance from specific species.

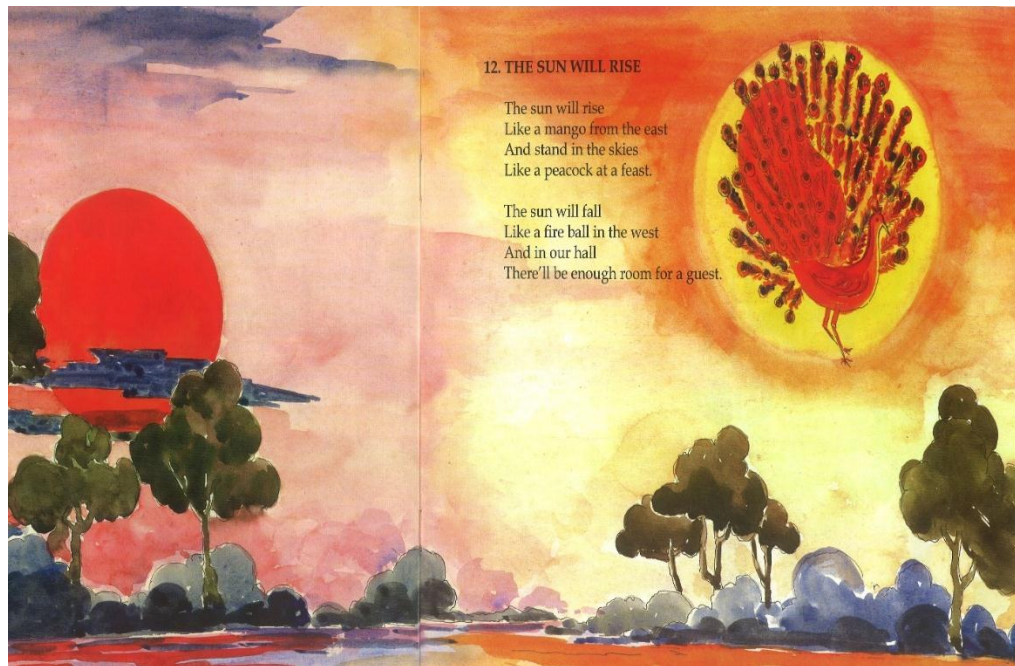


Fig 3.10: The sun will rise

The double page speaks of a beautiful traditional landscape with the natural scenery of the sun as the source of the beauty. Scientifically, the sun is said to be the basic source of all energy in nature and for survival on the earth. In this text, the beauty of the sun is compared to mango from the east. Its position in the sky is also likened to a peacock at a feast. The beauty of the rising sun is compared to a fruit and a bird which the child can relate to from experience. The falling of the sun is also compared to a fireball and its comfort makes room for guests in the hall of the reader. The sun is presented on the left facing the reader (east) as yellowish with a peacock standing in the sun while on the right (West) it is presented in its reddish form depicting sunset. The sun is presented

in metaphor as a source of satisfaction (mango), beauty (peacock), for joy and happiness (fireball). The metaphorical consideration of these elements in the postcolonial context portrays two worlds, the east and the west. While the east is made to represent the beginning and prime of the sun, the west is made to represent the fall of the sun. Again, while elements of the environment like a mango and peacock is used to represent the sun in the east, fireball which is of nuclear physics and technological creation is used to represent the sun of the west. The last lines also suppose the appreciation the reciter (the child) has for sunset since it makes room for guests to come and find comfort. Generally, the rhyme sings the beauty of the sun with such sound imageries of repetition, rhyme scheme and parallelism which project the expected effect.

The sun will rise/Like a mango from the east/And stand in the skies/Like a peacock at a feast.

The sun will fall/Like a fire ball in the west/And in our hall/There'll be enough room for a guest.

These devices help the illustration and text to project the consistency in the beauty of the sun as well as the changes that occur in our environment as a result of the various seasons and astronomical/ celestial objects. The scenery projected is an idyll natural setting which the child may only envisage. The presentation is ecocentric as everything revolves around nature and how all creatures must depend on the other as source of energy and sustenance.

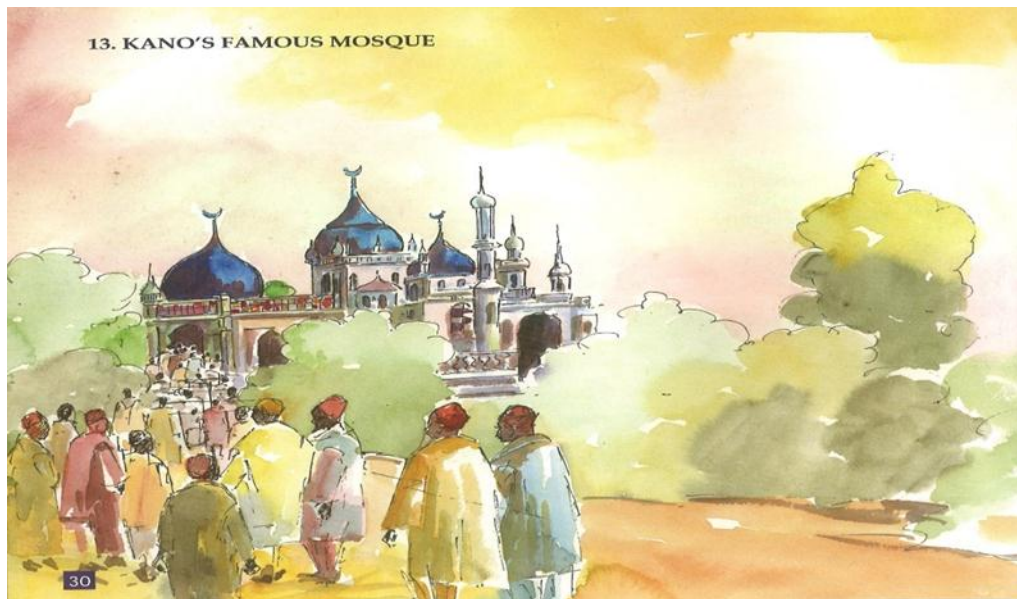


Fig 3.11: Kano's Famous Mosque

This is a religious rhyme that tells of a famous worship centre of Moslems- the Kano Famous Mosque. Kano is a state in northern Nigeria mostly populated by Hausa's and people of the Islam faith. This poem is an allusion to the Great Mosque at Kano which serves the Moslems of Kano. The third line shows the distance that lies between the readers and the mosque; the reciter says that to get there (to the mosque), 'you do not need a horse/ with an elephant tusk/ whenever you start/ You must arrive at dusk'. This supposes that the distance to the mosque is short and does not require any empowered form of transportation to get there – 'a horse with an elephant tusk'. The hyperbole used in describing the horse creates in the lines some humour and further emphasizes the distance to the mosque. Irrespective of the distance one comes from, they must arrive before dusk to join in the breaking of the fast.

The illustration on the double spread shows the Kano Mosque with a lot of people walking towards the mosque. On the second half of the page, someone is riding on a horse with a tusk towards the mosque which contradicts what the

rhyme tells us. The environmental concerns of this presentation lie in the effect the rigorous riding of the horse causes in the air and to the horse. From where the rider has gotten to, it is a stone's throw to the mosque which does not require any force on the animal however, the dominance of humans over nature transcends to the inhumane treatments of other creatures irrespective of their relevance. The horse is overworked because it has no voice to complain but to move to the demands of its master – human. In Amy Ratelle's Animality in Children's Literature and Film (2015) she explores the ways in which horses are means 'for capturing the hypocrisy behind the façade of civility and empathy maintained by a society driven economically by an unrelenting productivist ethos'. These pages give room to make such consideration in relation to religion, that is, how religious bodies hide behind their faith to abuse animals. In Africa, most religions shield themselves in their faith and sacrifice animals for their own redemption and other times for celebrations. These actions of men are embodied in the perception that animals do not have emotions. Animals are representative of Children and the 'others' who do not have the voice to defend themselves in front of adults and their masters respectively. In this illustration, the 'other' subjects the horse, ironically to make it in time to worship God, forgetting that the horse is equally one of God's creations. Besides the abuse of the horse, the galloping causes air pollution which adversely harms the 'master' and other creatures. The illustration shows the dust that fills the air as the horse is made to gallop to the mosque, even though the rider is not far from his destination. The lesson for the child (especially the Moslem) based on this text and illustration is to be frequent to the mosque. Different children may wish to ride the horse like the person in the illustration [to their satisfaction without

considering its pain or feeling], while others who have love for animals may find this act inhumane.

Besides the mosque, the horse and the humans that make up the visuals, there is the absence of other creatures as the trees or water bodies or birds. This paints the picture of urbanisation which is noted for cutting down trees and blocking water bodies to make way for human comfort. In postcolonial methodologies, cutting down trees and taking lands signifies the destruction of the indigenous African religion and cultures to make way for other modern cultures and religions.

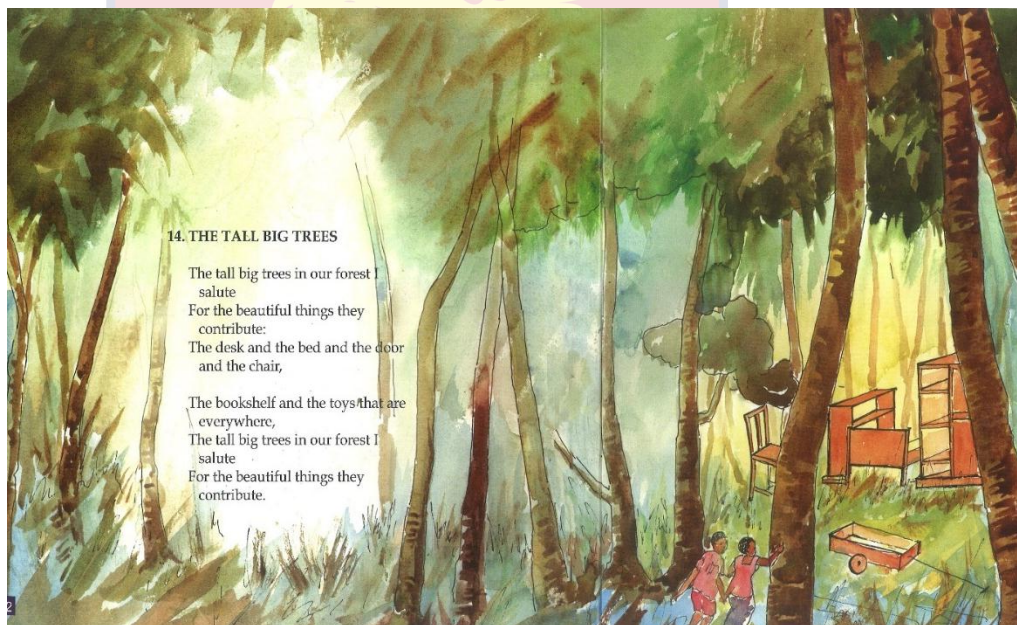


Fig 3.12: The Tall Big Trees BIS

Trees are significant to the survival of all entities of nature- humans, animals, water bodies, and all we can find in our environment. *The Tall Big Tree* is an ode to the trees in the forest for the comfort and things trees provide. In this anthropomorphized presentation, the tree is personified by the reciter - the tree is elevated to a place of authority. This formal signal of praise is repeated twice affirming the regard the reciter has for the tree- 'the tall big tree in our forest I

salute'. The tree is acknowledged for contributing beautiful things such the desk, chair, door and toys which the child uses. The lines point to the fact that the tree is of superior importance to the comfort of humans. The double page spread contains the illustration of trees in the forest and their produces – bed, chairs, toys, bookshelves and others. In this forest are two children who look at a tree with one of the children's hand stretched to the tree. The forest under normal circumstances breeds fear in the human since it is known to contain all the wilds of the world however in this text, the forest becomes a place of anxiety, discovery and joy since it gives the child so many goodies. Similarly, this piece builds in the child the responsibility to respect the wood producing tree that makes their life a comfortable one. However, the key relevance of the tree (plant) for mankind - such as the food and how it provides oxygen, how it shields humans and animals from strong winds and floods and regulates the atmosphere, the medicinal roles and how the tree is used in building our homes and serve as homes for birds and other creatures –is not mentioned.

Though the tree is anthropomorphized, its relevance is anthropocentric – human's need of the tree is made preeminent making no room for other entities. Again, the idea of planting trees after they are cut to meet the needs of men is not addressed in this rhyme. The child reader is left hanging after he is made to admire trees for their purposes but nothing is said about replacing them after cutting them for human uses nor is anything done about solving the problems of deforestation. The anti-environmental representation affirms the anthropocentric tones that have been raised in the lines of the poem. Destruction of our forest to make way for human comfort in postcolonial context is representative of the white man's destruction of the physical and cultural space

of the colonized. In this text, the tree is acknowledged for it produces but it is 'killed' and denied a voice to cry or complain. The current generation is being made to inherit the culture of destroying what is left of the physical space, the environment and the thriving cultures of the African.

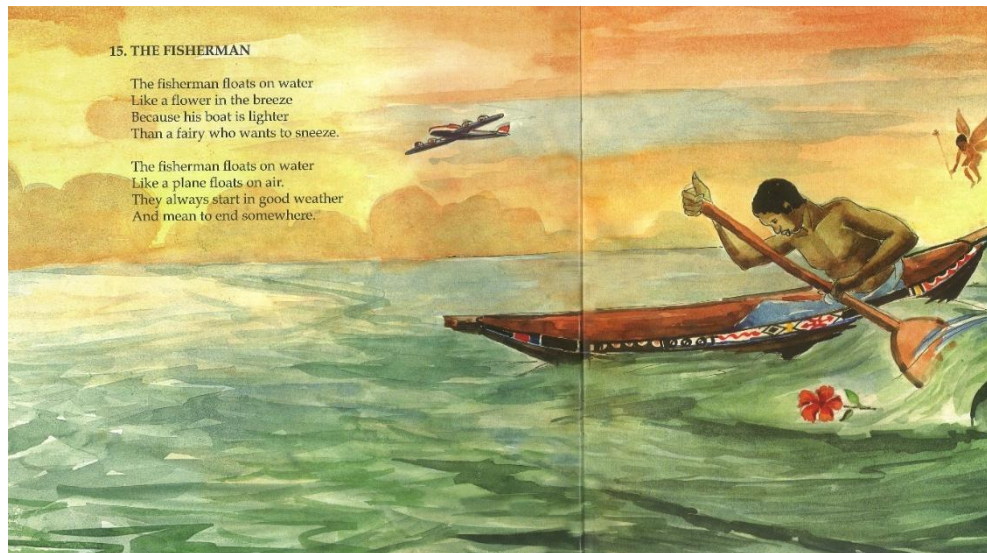


Fig 3.13 The Fisherman

The Fisherman is another of Okai's verses for children. In this rhyme, the fisherman is projected as he tries to do his work. Using the simile 'like', the fisherman's float on water is compared to a flower in the breeze and a plane in the air. His ability to float is pointed to his boat which is lighter than a fairy who wants to sneeze. The fisherman is said to work in good weather and hopes to end somewhere. The illustration that goes with this rhyme is on a double page with the fisherman paddling his boat on the sea. On the water is floating a flower and in the air behind the fisherman is a fairy and up in the sky is the image of an aeroplane.

This presentation is a typical anthropocentric representation of the environment to the child. The fisherman takes the centre of this presentation

while the sea he floats on becomes the inessential part of the construction. This is seen in the first line of the rhyme which is repeated again in the second stanza:

The fisherman (Subject) floats (verb) on water (adjunct).

The adjunct only gives details to the other part of the sentence which makes up the subject and predicate. The ability to float on the water is pointed solely to the fisherman's light boat and nothing else. The sea and fishes which project the interest and duty of the fisherman is not mentioned or seen in the illustrations at all. Nothing is said about protecting the waters or the habitats. The human being (the fisherman) takes the centre of the presentation. The fisherman's float is likened to two things, one natural thing and another technological object; flower in the breeze and plane on air respectively. These two references make room for multiple environmental interpretations both anti and pro. The setting in this text is in nature, not the forest but another of nature's beautiful places that is usually ignored – the sea. This setting also tells the child about other places that make up nature besides the land. The floating flower speaks to the beauty and the simplicity of nature while the plane speaks to the modern technological ideologies that nature battles with. Another lesson left in the mind of the child is the essence of the sea (nature), for the effectiveness of man-made objects such as the plane which needs the sea to take its course. The fairy, which is a fictitious element, is used to tone the intensity of the concepts being discussed as the child is given a break from the two worlds at play here.

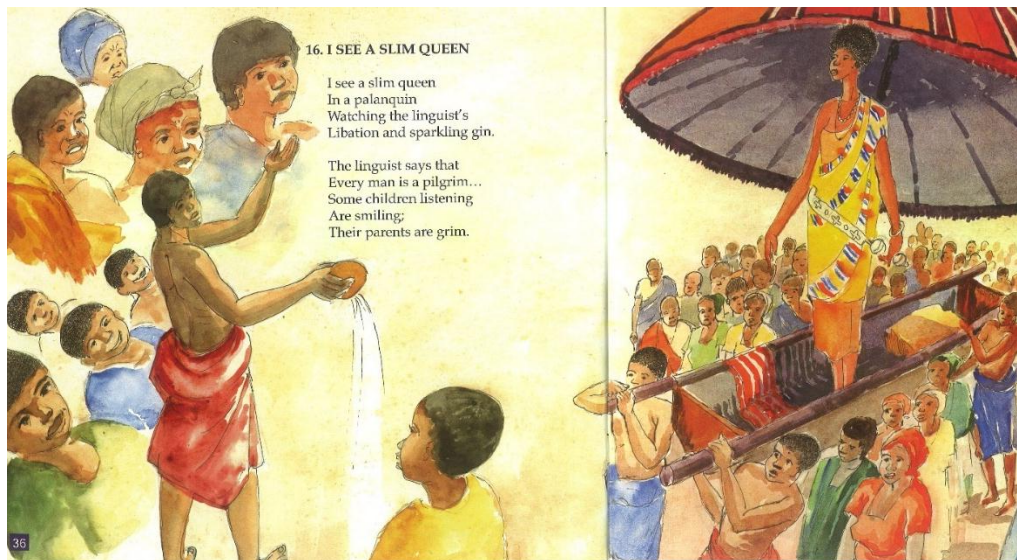
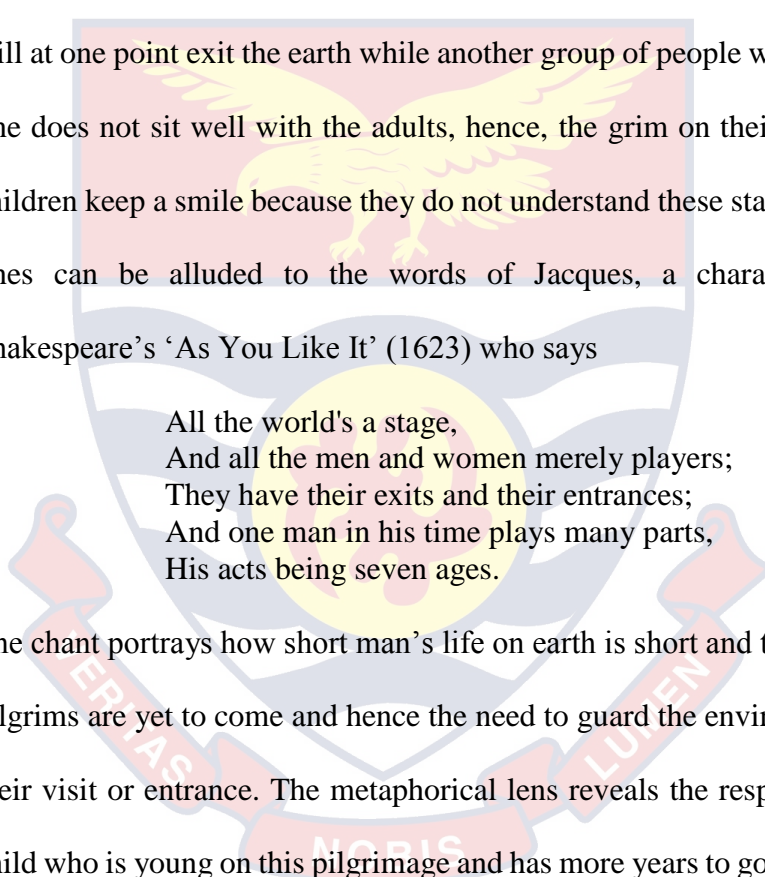


Fig 3.14 I See a Slim Queen

The African culture is embodied in the daily way of doing things. In the chant, *I See a Slim Queen*, aspects of the African culture are projected. The African environment is mostly characterized by its land and the things done on the land which entails the beliefs, religion and cultures of the people as well the things done to protect the land and people. The text in the above chants is the voice of an adult who recounts a moment in the life of the people perhaps at a festival or during an occasion where a linguist pours libation as the slim queen looks on. The linguist goes ahead to say that, “[e]very man is a pilgrim”. This makes the adults grim while the children smile. This text is accompanied by a double page illustration which shows a slim queen standing in her palanquin carried on the shoulders of some men in a crowd. On the first half, the linguist stands with a cloth tied to his waist and a calabash in one hand pouring libation while the other hand is raised towards the sky. On that half are people, both old and young, with grim and laughs on the faces respectively.

The environmental concepts in this chant may be far-fetched for the child, however, the angle of presentation has various pro-environmental

concepts. The African believes she can protect her land and wealth through shared activities and beliefs which are embodiments of unity. The last time Africans allowed themselves to be divided, they were colonized and their resources were explored. This presentation finds a way of presenting to the child a rich part of the African culture and the systems of leadership. The climax in this presentation is in the line, '[e]very man is a pilgrim...'. The line talks about how men pass through the earth for specific reasons. This connotes that men will at one point exit the earth while another group of people will show up. This line does not sit well with the adults, hence, the grim on their faces while the children keep a smile because they do not understand these stages of life. These lines can be alluded to the words of Jacques, a character in William Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' (1623) who says

The watermark is the official crest of the University of Cape Coast. It features a central shield with a yellow eagle with its wings spread, perched on a globe. The shield is surrounded by a blue and red border. Below the shield is a red banner with white text. The text on the banner is partially visible and reads 'ERIAS' on the left and 'LUEN' on the right. The word 'NOBIS' is also visible in the center of the banner.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

The chant portrays how short man's life on earth is short and the fact that other pilgrims are yet to come and hence the need to guard the environment awaiting their visit or entrance. The metaphorical lens reveals the responsibility on the child who is young on this pilgrimage and has more years to go unlike the adults who may be exiting or ending the pilgrimage soon. The responsibility to guard the environment is built in the minds of the child in this illustration as they are handed the mandate of protecting the environment for other pilgrims who are yet to come.



Fig 3.15: The Cat

The whole poem sets out to ridicule a cat which is at the centre of the presentation. Generally, cats are often kept as household pets, and valued for many reasons including their skills at killing mice and rats, their sensitivity and neatness. In this rhyme, the domesticated cat lives to the disapproval of her owner because it perhaps is not like other cats.

The cat is so fat
It cannot jump over the mouse
And this just means that
It's not so helpful at home

This cat is described as 'fat' which makes it impossible to kill its prey, the mouse. Her inabilities suppose to the human that the cat is not helpful in the house. In subsequent lines, we get to know that this cat is female; 'she' puts on a hat and awaits a blouse perhaps to complement her hat which is unusual of animals. Who she expects to bring her the blouse is not stated but it affirms her inabilities or her laziness. The queer representation of this animal makes room for multiple interpretations in the mind of the child. Predominantly, the text projects 'her' as subordinate to humans and this concept buttresses the

marginalization of animals all over the world. This is a typical anthropocentric presentation where the cat is spoken about with little respect. In our supposed civilized world today, humans still abuse animals physically and verbally because of the assumed superiority over all creations and also because the animal is docketed to have no dignity and rights. Now, describing a human as being ‘so fat’ openly connotes emotional blunders and has as a result lost its way in human languages with time however, the animal can still be described as such because it lacks the voice to tell the human being how offensive it sounds. The rhyme in subsequent lines says that the cat is not helpful in the house because of her weight and her inability to jump on a mouse. This imports an imperialistic interpretation of the master and slave, in this context, the animal must be of use to the master else it is a waste and must be gotten rid of. The issue of gender is used as warrant for the cat’s inabilities; ‘she’s put on a hat/ she must be waiting for a blouse.’ In this presentation, the animal is used to enforce a social construction that females are weak. The cat’s weight, inoperativeness and demeanour are ascribed to her gender – feminine- which perhaps justifies her ineffectiveness and the fantasy she lives in.

On the other hand of the representation, the animal has been personified as it is referred to by the pronoun ‘she’ and is presented to be in a hat waiting for her blouse. This aspect of the presentation may resonate with children who love cats or have appreciation for animals as they are made to see cats as ‘humans’ more than animals. The children will love the cat more because it is not savage; it dresses modestly, it is sensitive and does not eat mouse. This cat does not use its power to destroy other creatures it is superior to. The Ecocritical lens will still consider this text a satire more than an effort to give the animal

human features since the cat is disrespected more than esteemed. Similarly, the cat is used to ridicule the feminine gender, that is, the cat is used to represent female environmental issues which have been socially constructed. Women have been projected as weak and have the desire to beautify themselves than to develop themselves unlike the male counterpart. One key factor necessary for environmental peace and development is the respect for the opposite sex as well as for all creatures; however, this is minimal in this presentation.

Amy Ratelle, in her Animality and Children's Literature and Film (2015), speaks to the representation of animals in children's readings and films and points to the fact that animals are treated with woe because it is assumed by humans that animals have no emotions or voices to err their pain. She states ardently that human's relationship with animals speak more about the human than it does about the animal. It is, therefore, necessary for humans to realize animals as part of their environment and the need to collapse the superiority empires created against the animal. It is worth noting that the children's understanding and relationship with animals created in life and in literature, enforces a critical role in shaping their minds and forming their personality.

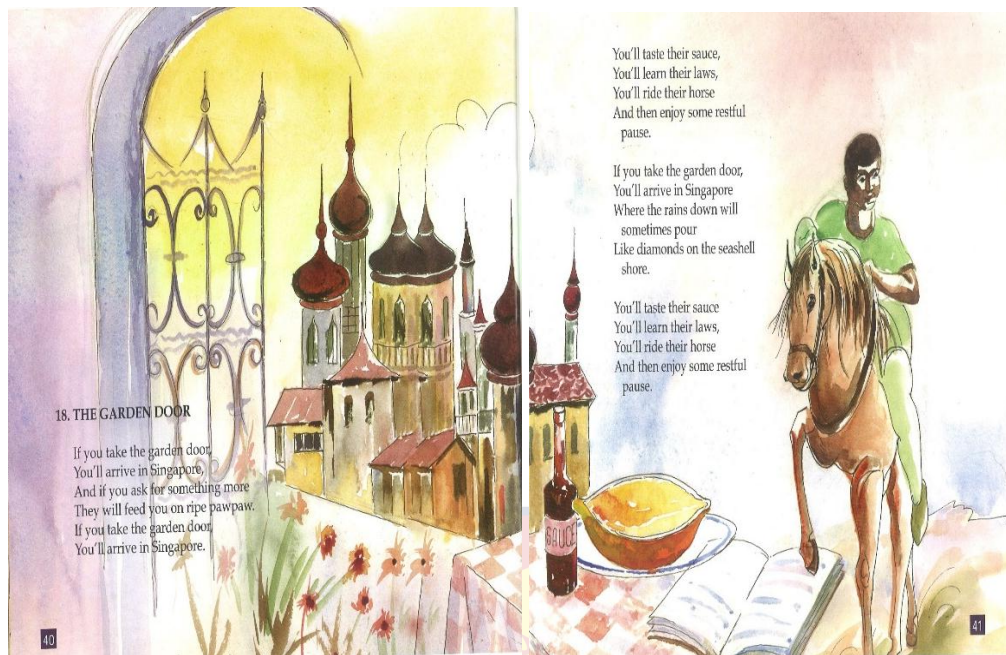


Fig 3.16: The Garden Door

The Garden Door is a rhyme that speaks of an ideal place. The entrance to this ideal world which is Singapore is through the garden door. In this ideal world, ‘...if you ask for something more’, you will be fed on ripened pawpaw. In this world, you will have the opportunity to learn their laws, taste their sauce, ride their horse, enjoy some restful pause and witness the rain which pours like diamonds on seashell.

This rhyme is a typical pro-environment literature since it turns to project space - a beautiful environment which can provide humans with their needs- food (ripened pawpaw and sauce), knowledge (laws), recreation (ride a horse) and rest. The garden generally is a place where plants, fruits and vegetable are grown and - a metaphorical representation of fertility and care for the environment and peace. In this text, the garden is a microcosm of the larger environment and what it can provide humans if well nurtured. The garden door which is presented as magical, leads to Singapore where beauty is the hallmark

and satisfaction is gained. Singapore is a city-state in Southeast Asia, comprising one major island and several islets, situated south of Malaysia and a former colony of Britain. Singapore gained independence in 1965 but unlike many colonized countries, she has been able to find herself and been able to deliver herself from all gestures that arouse colonial memories. In this poem, Singapore is symbolic of a place of beauty and restoration from colonization. The visual imagery drawn in this rhyme flaunts what would become of the environment if the citizens utilize their resources. Singapore has utilized her assets in the environment to build the haven that exists when you walk through ‘the garden door’.

Though this rhyme has rich ecopedagogy to build an ecocitizen, the text is not postcolonial or Africa eco-friendly. This presentation does little to address the issues of imperialism that denied the African of geographical peace and does not build in the child the desire to make Africa a haven, rather, it builds in the mind of the child migration to a better place. This builds in the child the desire to leave Africa to go to another continent that will provide him with all the beauties of life. The double page illustration shows a door with a few flowers behind it and across this door are tall buildings. On the second half is a human riding a horse, a table with sliced pawpaw and a sauce on it and a book lying next to it. These images complement the textually description given about Singapore. This work sets out to glorify the beauty and satisfaction Singapore offers human kind.

Conclusion

This analysis was conducted to ascertain the claim that irrespective of the theme of the African writer and irrespective of the genre, the environment

will be key in every literature and it has been so for a long time, although subtly and as a result, readers might have failed to unearth that aspect. This research embarked on this analysis to answer the research question: what is the environment of children's literature and how does Atukwei Okai construct the environment with words and pictures for children in 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010). The analysis revealed that Okai creates his environment physically and predominantly with people, astronomical/ celestial objects (predominantly the rainbow), plants, animals, and water bodies. Humans however dominate making the environment more anthropocentric. On the other hand, children and women lead the category of humans. The children in the illustration model the way for the child readers. It can be concluded that women reoccur in these presentations because they are in harmony with nature, care for the environment and serve as models for the children in sustaining what is left of nature. In the analysed verses and chants for children, women dominate in making the children ecocitizens as they are seen taking the children into the ideal environment where they would develop love for nature and other creatures. This relationship between the female and the natural world makes the centre stage of the fast-rising ecofeminist movements. Howarth in *Some Principles of Ecocriticism* says that Ecocriticism finds its strongest advocates in feminist and gender critics, who focus on the idea of place as defining social status (p. 81).

The social environment is created in the relationship held towards one another while the cultural environment is created in the beliefs and the way of life of the people. The relationships established are between humans, human and animals, humans and plants, human and water bodies, humans and

astronomical/ celestial objects. The dominant relationship exists between human and the astronomical/ celestial objects precisely the rainbow. Children are excited about the colours and its magical symbolic appearance which does not only tell a good time to play but also of how an ideal world should be like. In as much as the physical environment dominates, the cultural and social environment is also made relevant in the texts. The social and cultural environments are built in the relationships, the responsibilities, the religious pursuits and offerings, the myths and beliefs and even in the form of the rhymes (lullabies, praise poetries and others).

Atukwei Okai did not set out to write ecocritically or purposely to represent the environment to the child, obviously because he does not state it. However, the elements and indicators provide the child with the knowledge about nature and the environment like many postcolonial African literatures. The environmental ideologies raised in the poems span anthropocentrism, which dominate the studied materials; anthropomorphism; and anthropogenics which in effect fosters sustainability and or ecocatastrophes. This is obviously seen in the number of times human activities and pre-eminence reoccurs in this analysis.

The author's presentation of these texts is very critical as it determines what the children readers can see, hear, feel, taste, grasp and relate to. Considering the ages of the readers, it becomes appropriate to employ the right language and devices to communicate the intended ideas. In these analyses, the poet mostly used sound images to drive the message to the child. This can be justified by the genre (poetry) and also because they are meant to be memorized and recited. Besides the pictorials that may be easily seen by the child with no

sight disabilities, the sound brings into existence the subject matter which the visually impaired can comprehend. These elements appeared in the form of repetitions, rhythm, rhyme, onomatopoeias, alliterations, assonance, meters and beyond. These sounds are used to confirm the beauty or otherwise the mood of the environment credited and to reinforce the meaning projected in the illustration.

The use of other metaphors and images enrich the work and foreground the projection of the environment. To create an anthropomorphised environment, personification is used to make non-human objects (trees, animals, places, water bodies and celestial bodies) more relatable to humans using vivid descriptions, feelings and emotions. The use of personification makes it easier for the child to understand other nonhumans and their ways of life. In these texts, personifications have been used as a tool to create emotional connections between readers and characters. This same element while was used to depict nonhumans positively, it was used other times to belittle some nonhuman subjects (especially animals) as they are inadequately projected or projected purposely to be ridiculed.

Children's Literature can challenge the human relationship and understanding of nature. Children's literature can nurture an ecocitizen who does not only have a pleasant relationship with fellow humans but has equal respect and value for animals, plants, water bodies, celestial bodies and all other nonhumans. The responsibility is placed in the hand of: the author to deliberately factor in their writings ecoconscious concepts; the teacher to teach the essence of a relationship between all human and nonhuman subjects in literature; the parents to buy and read to the child literatures that speak to the

environment and the nation to look forward to raise Ecocitizens who will help sustain the earth. African Children's literatures speak to the environment but in the real world, where human beings live, humans dominate all elements of nature.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF ‘THE ANTHILLS IN THE SEA (VERSES AND CHANTS FOR CHILDREN)’

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed Atukwei Okai’s ‘A Slim Queen in a Palanquin; Verses and Chants for Children’ (2010) as an ecocritical material and to ascertain what and how the environment is represented in children’s literature to the child reader by the African author.

This chapter shall take the same course as the previous chapter but focus will be on a different text of the same author, *Anthills in the Sea; Verses and Chants for Children* (1988). The various texts shall be analysed to ascertain what and how the environment is created for the child reader with influence from ecocritics, postcolonial ecocritics and semiotics scholars.

At the end, the researcher hopes to answer the second half of two research questions: what is the environment of children’s literature as created in Atukwei Okai’s *Anthills in the Sea; Verses and Chants for Children* (1988) and how does Atukwei Okai construct this environment with words and pictures for children in *Anthills in the Sea; Verses and Chants for Children* (1988)?

Analysis

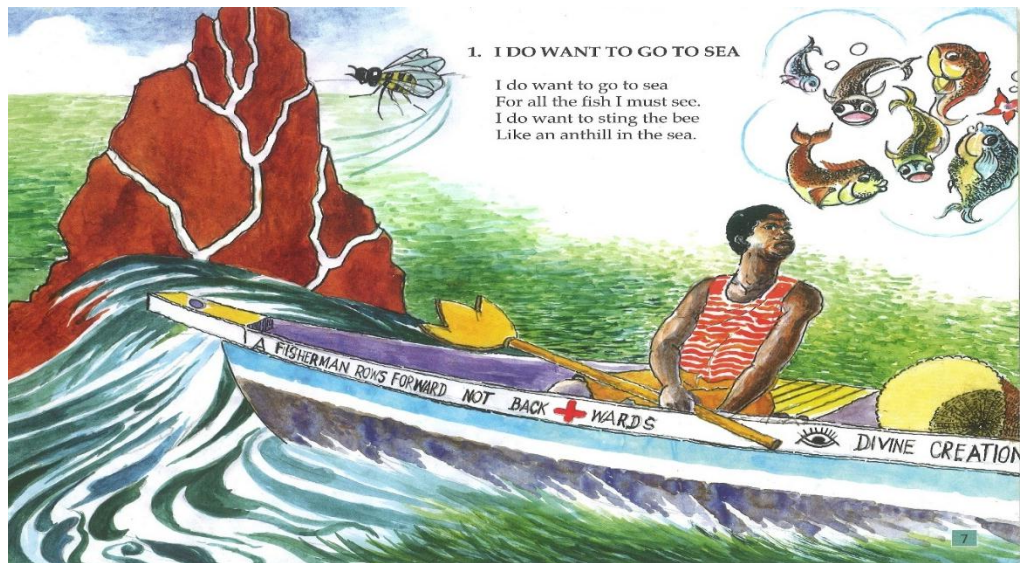


Figure 4.1. I do want to go to sea

“I Do Want to Go to Sea” is a four line rhyme that expresses the wishes of a persona about going to sea. This strong desire to go to sea is fostered by the different fishes the persona ‘must see’ at sea and also because of the desire to sting ‘the bee/ like an anthill in the sea.’ The illustration to this rhyme is presented on a single page with a fisherman on a canoe with a paddle in his right hand and his head in a position as though in deep thought. In the canoe is a basket, perhaps to keep his fish. Above him are images of different types of fishes which fills the persona’s thought as said in the second line, ‘[f]or all the fish I must see,’. Right ahead of him on the sea is an anthill and next to it is a bee which also represents the bee the fisherman wants to sting. On the fisherman’s canoe is written; ‘A fisherman rows forward not back [+] wards’ and spaced from this expression is a single eye drawn and next to it is the inscription, ‘Divine Creation’.

The verbal and visual references complement each other except for the voice and the image of the persona. The rhyme obviously written for the child

uses a childish tone as projected in the entire verse characterised by wishes and wants:

I do want to go to sea
For all the fish I must see.
I do want to sting the bee
Like an anthill in the sea.

The anaphora 'I do want' expresses a strong desire to do something which can be fulfilled by someone or something. Again, the persona tells that he wants to go to sea to see the fish and not to catch the fish which will be an appropriate register for an adult or fisherman. The contrast lies with the image of the paddler of the canoe who appears as an adult- he looks bigger compared to the children images used in the text, he rides alone (showing maturity), the inscription on the canoe tells the paddler is a fisherman. This premise becomes necessary for the ecocritical analysis of the text which offers multiple reading approaches. The natural environment is the sea, a place which is often disregarded when nature is spoken of. The persona expresses his desire to go to sea and he is specific on what he wants from the place – to see all the fish and to sting the bee. The lines denote that the persona frequents the place since he knows there are different fishes in the sea and the possibility of seeing a bee. This stirs a desire in children to want to have this experience of the sea. Read ironically, the word 'see' is contradicted by the basket that lies in the canoe which shows the fisherman's intent to catch the fishes as opposed to the word just see. The question posed is why the desire to see and yet carry a basket?

This text brings to mind ecological issues associated with overconsumption by human beings and destruction of water bodies. In Ghana a close season law was passed in 2002 and implemented for the first time in 2019. This law places a ban on fishing for some time to save some species that are

going into extinction due to over fishing and poor fishing practices. This act is not to say human beings should stop eating fishes but rather to control the rate at which the fishes are caught and eaten and to allow the fishes go through their normal breeding cycle – it may be strange but fingerlings are sometimes caught and served as meals – that is, they are not allowed to go through the breeding cycle. Fortunately, the images of the fishes in the text are of those which are big and perhaps matured. The child reader may not only develop reverence for the fisherman but for the sea and all the fishes it gives to make their meals tasty.

Another concept recognised here is the possibility of fishing without destroying the water bodies. One issue which bedevils the environment especially to the detriment of mankind is the use of strong chemicals like DDT, for fishing. The fisherman here tells the child reader the need to go fishing with harmless equipment like his, the basket. Again, the sea in the illustration looks clean unlike the ones in Ghana and other African countries which are dirty and have become dumpsites for waste. The fishes have to share the sea with plastic materials and tins which later poison or choke them to death.

The child reader in this presentation is given a number of ecocritical routes; however, it is unknown which of them will win his admiration since the text does not give clear directions and effects of the positive or negative actions at sea. The child reader in this text knows the advantages of the sea and where fishes are gotten from but not told the need to guard the sea to ensure the availability of fishes to see or eat in the future. Again, the child may learn that, it is possible to fish with a basket without destroying the sea or harming the fishing first. However, it is not made explicit when that is possible because with

current attitudes of fishermen, fishes avoid staying close to the shore. The ecopedagogy depends on the parent or teacher who assists in this reading.

The next desire of the fisherman raises a thematic concern associated with man's exploitation and superiority over other living creature. The persona as part of going to sea, seeks to 'sting the bee/ like an anthill in the sea'. This simile shows what the persona wishes to do to the bee just like the fragility of the anthill in the sea. This stream of consciousness that runs in the persona's thought shows how mean humans can be and how they can use their privileged authority to the disadvantage of other nonhuman creatures. This representation of world orders provides the child with the sense of superiority over other nonhuman creatures and the permit to be violent against other creatures. This text is both anthropocentric and anthropomorphic – while the fisherman's voice and thought takes the centre of the presentation, the essence of the sea to human survival is unearthed.

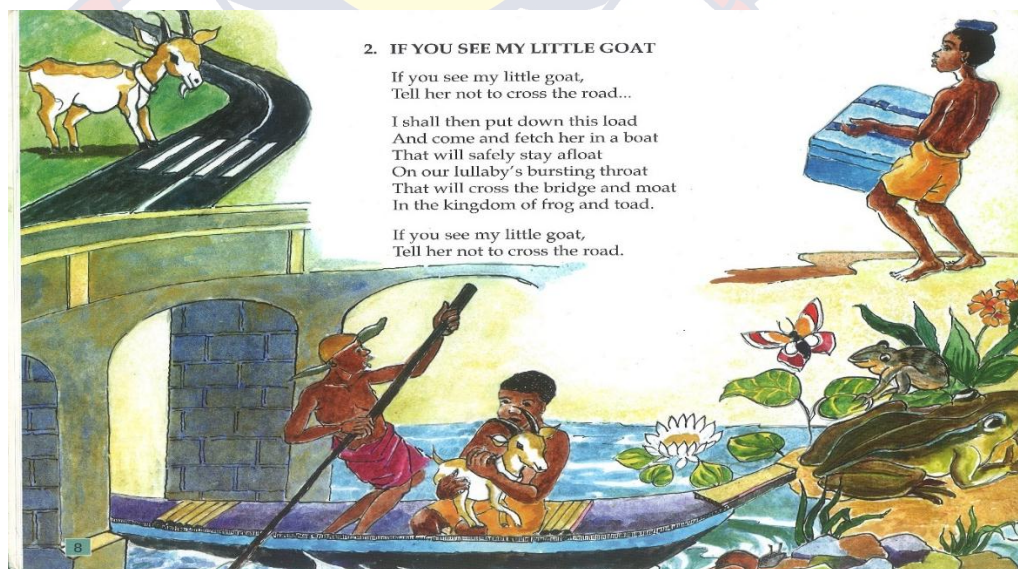


Figure 4.2 If You See My Little Goat

In “If You See My Little Goat” the persona sings of his lost goat. He sends a message through his listeners [you] to this goat;

If you see my little goat
Tell her not to cross the road...

If he gets to know where the goat is, he ‘shall’ put down his load and go to fetch the goat in a boat. Although he is not aware of the station of the goat, he is cautious of the harm that exists in the society which is metaphorically represented by the road. On the boat, which is safe, he will celebrate his reunion with the goat, they will sing with their lullaby bursting throats which ‘will cross the bridge and moat/ in the kingdom of frog and goat’. This is symbolic of the joy that takes place after two creatures are united. The verbal account is corroborated by visuals of the text. The illustration is in various sections, there is the image of a boy holding a load; across where he stands on the page is a goat standing along the road. In the middle of the page is a water body with the boy carrying his goat and an elderly man paddling the boat under a bridge. On the rocks in the water are frogs and plants, and a butterfly.

The ecocritical concepts raised here are both pro environmental and anti-environmental. The relationship between the human and the goat speaks in favour of the kind of relationship that must exist between humans and other nonhuman creatures. The persona (boy) seeks his goat like he would seek a treasure and in the process gives the goat a human reference ‘her’. The boy wants the safety of the creature which also tells of human’s responsibilities towards non-human animals. This anthropomorphic ideology is affirmed by how the boy puts away his load and carries the goat in his arm in the illustration. The child reader learns to take responsibility for other creatures and to pet other animals like the example that has been set by the boy in this text. The persona

(child) again seeks to celebrate with his goat when it is found; irrespective of their bad voices to the hearing of all. This reunion between the two can be alluded to the biblical parable of the lost sheep that was found by its owner. The parable says the owner calls his friends and neighbours to celebrate that found sheep. Irrespective of this metaphorical representation, the allusion sits well with the illustration as the boy intends celebrating with his goat after their reunion.

Another element is the road which is man-made. The road is symbolic of humans who have no regard for other creatures and can as a result of selfish desires destroy these nonhuman creatures. This caution of the boy to the goat to stay off the road speaks to human cruelties to animals. The zebra crossing on the road is symbolic of safety; however, the disrespect of humans towards animals does not make it safe for the goat that stands at the zebra crossing in the illustration. This disrespect for animals has birthed the numerous societies or associations that protect various groups of animals in the world today like the Ghana Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (GSPCA) which propagates the care for animals like the cat, dog and donkey among school going children.

Anti-environmental of this mode of representation is seen in the human biases towards other creatures. Ecocriticism fosters a good relationship between humans and all creature since all are interrelated. However, the boy is bias towards the goat as it is presented as a pet. This anthropocentric concept exhibited in the text points out how humans are kind to other creatures they can only benefit from either of meat or labour or for companionship. The boy in celebrating with his pet, the goat, does not consider the disturbance he causes

other humans or animals creature as he purposes to sing through the ‘kingdom of toad and frog’.

To sum up, the imageries in the text teach the child reader the need to love others; treat others with respect and to be responsible for other creatures; celebrating others and not enforcing human superiority over other creatures.

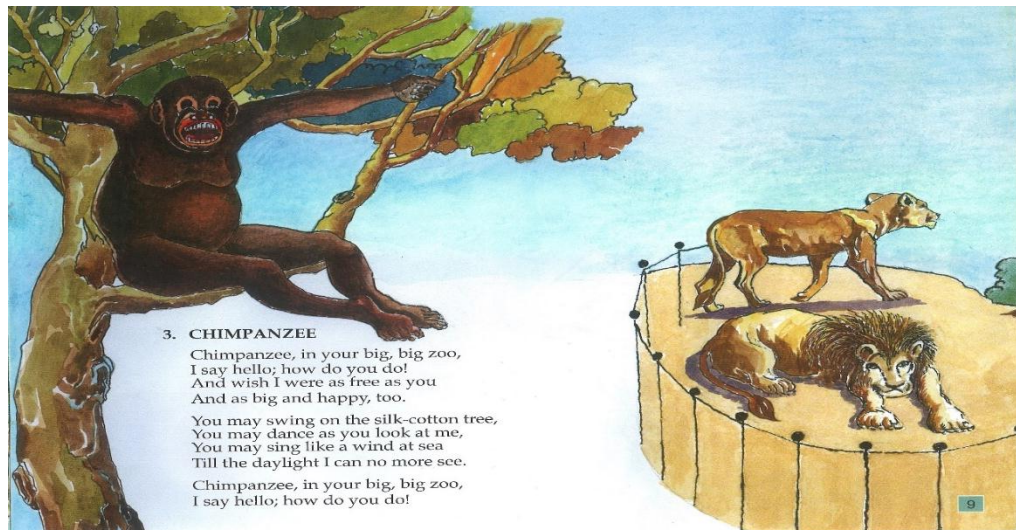


Figure 4.3. Chimpanzee

This rhyme is titled “Chimpanzee”; Chimpanzees are apes of equatorial Africa with some physical and mental features similar to humans. The persona talks to the chimpanzee in this text like it will talk to an acquaintance;

Chimpanzee, in your big, big zoo,
I say hello; how do you do!

The persona courteously addresses the animal and asks of its state of being to establish the relationship that exists between the persona and the animal. Although the reaction of the chimpanzee is not stated, the persona goes ahead to express his thought; “[a]nd wish I were as free as you/ And as big and happy, too”. This gives an idea of who the persona is since the line expresses a wish for freedom – it shows how restricted the persona is while the fourth line makes it obvious that the persona is small or perhaps a child and unhappy. The voice

in the first stanza is melancholy and as a result he/she craves the life of the chimpanzee. The free life of the chimpanzee which the persona has taken note of includes the chimpanzee swinging on silk trees or dancing or singing for as long as it wants. This freedom is perceived in the repetition of, 'You may', indicating the possibilities and liberties of the chimpanzee. Again, the pleasantries that began the rhyme are repeated to tell how desperately the persona wants to engage the chimpanzee and to be like it. This rhyme may be childlike in the eyes of the adult but to the child, animals are understanding and good choices to share their woes with. Ironically, the chimpanzee is presented as having physical freedom but it is denied the verbal freedom, that is, it has no voice to tell how it really feels in response to 'how do you do!'

In the visual representation, a chimpanzee sits on a tree on the left of the page while the opposite shows a lion and a lioness in a cage. The setting is a zoo – a place where animals of different origins are kept for people to come and see. Zoos are operated to provide entertainment, education and for economic purposes. Zoe Jacques (2015) believes that, 'the zoo is a monument to a city's ability to control and rule the animal'. The critic believes that, operating a zoo, is a country's way of denying animals their freedom, however, scientists believe zoos are ways of guarding endangered species and a way of studying behavioural patterns of animals. The critic argues that zoos expose the irony and injustice in human behaviour towards some animals who are too big, fierce and naughty and, therefore, not allowed in the home. Jacques' assertion makes the illustration above unfair to certain species. While some animals like the chimpanzee are given some liberty, others like the lion and the lioness are in strictly locked cages and have been denied the freedom to play like the

chimpanzee. They latter unlike the chimpanzee are inactive and look gloomy. While the zoo limits the animals, the child persona still admires the place and what the chimpanzee makes of the little (limited trees) it has. The repetition of 'big' emphasizes the size of the zoo and the rhyme of the text accentuates the mood on the ironically caged animal: zoo/too; do/you; tree/me/sea/see. The child's admiration for the animal is a way of showing regard for other creatures besides humans.

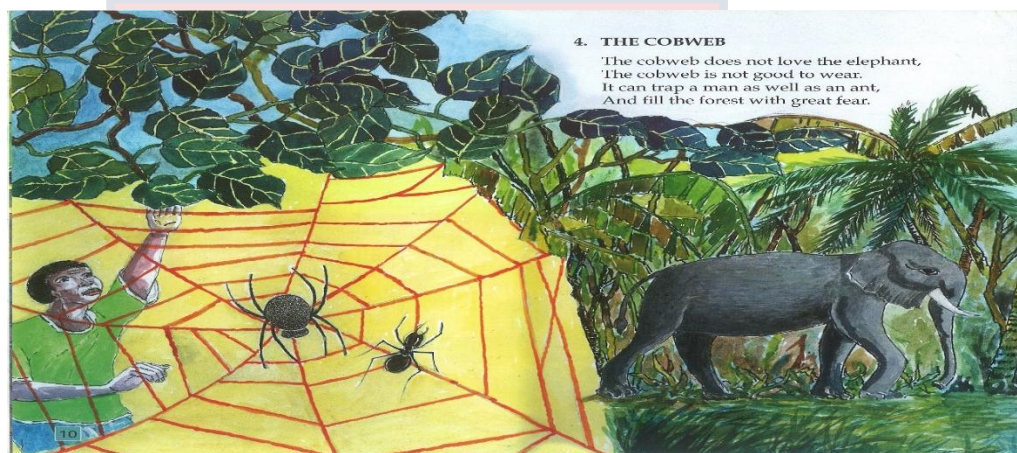


Figure 4.4. The Cobweb

The title of the rhyme is amusing and unusual. A cobweb is a network thread spun by a spider, and usually collects dust. It entangles and obscures movement and is significant of a dirty place or a place or path that has not been used in a while. The speaker recites the displeasure caused by the cobweb in the four-line rhyme:

The cobweb does not love the elephant
The cobweb is not good to wear
It can trap a man as well as an ant
And fill the forest with great fear

The language of the rhyme is in the negative as each line tells of the ills and distractions the cobweb creates for all creatures; from superior animals like humans to huge animals like the elephants and even small insects like the ant.

In the forest, it also creates fear obviously to 'man', 'elephant' and the 'ant'. Though the voice is in the negative expressing challenges [seen in the constant use of the adverb 'not'], the nature of language is environmental. It speaks of a place and the elements that make up the place. Though forests may not be physical anymore due to human actions, this rhyme draws on one of the favourite settings of children's text and African literature - the forest. It draws on a real issue like the discomforts created by cobwebs and mentions various elements that make up the ecosystem- animals, human, forest.

The accompanying visual gives a vivid understanding of the displeasure created in the verbal account. There is an illustration of a cobweb spun in the forest. The web has trapped the man and the ant as they move. The elephant on the other hand is moving away from the cobweb perhaps because it may trap it too. The cobweb is symbolic of power and the ills other creatures can cause. The environmental concept projected here speaks to the fact that in as much as humans can cause the discomfort of other creatures with their superiority, other creatures also cause the discomfort of humans and others -- in this presentation, the spider uses its web to discomfort others. This may also remind Ecocritics that though humans are the cause of most ecocatastrophes to the environment, other disorder are caused by natural occurrences and sometimes by other creatures.

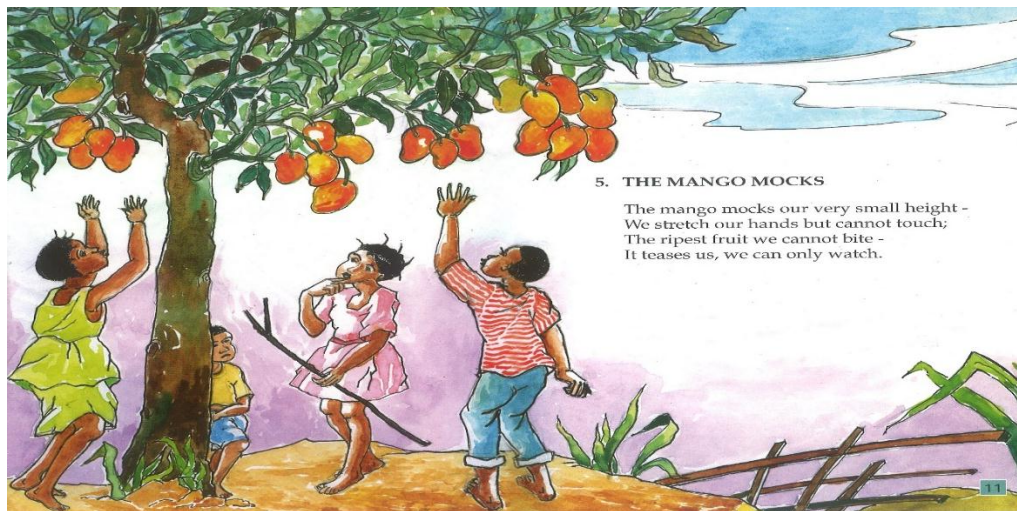


Figure 4.5. The Mango Mocks

According to Arabella Buckley(1879) ‘For a plant is born, breathes, sleeps, feeds, and digests just as truly as an animal does, though in a different way. It works hard both for itself to get its food, and for others in making the air pure and fit for animals to breathe. It often lays by provision for the winter. It sends young plants out, as parents send their children, to fight for themselves in the world; and then, after living sometimes to a good old age, it dies, and leaves its place to others’(Jaques, 2015).

The plant is a very important aspect of the natural world and to the survival of all other creatures of the earth. The rhyme titled, *The Mango Mocks* is a four line one stanza piece sung by children(personae) on how their physique limits their access to the fruit producing tree. They believe the mango mocks their height which makes it impossible to pluck the ripened fruits. All they can do is to watch from a distance what their mouth cannot taste. This text like the cobweb tells the child reader the limitations humans contend with irrespective of their superiority in the natural world. The visuals show a tree with ripened mangoes. Four children stand under the mango tree expressing their disappointment. While two of them have their hands up in attempt to pluck the

fruits, one stands back with a stick in her hand with the other hand to her chin as though thinking of how to have access to the fruits. The fourth child looks sad and leans against the stem with a grim face and makes no attempt to plug the mangoes. Trees/ plants produce foods for mankind and as a result the survival of humans depend on trees. The children in this presentation realize how hungry they can go without trees in their environment and obviously the need to plant more trees and protect them.

On the other hand, the rhyme puts the children in a situation where they begin to think of the tree from a different perspective- either as mean or unkind to children – since they are unable to eat from the mango tree. This representation could also create in the reader’s mind a dislike for trees because of the consumption reluctance the mangoes pose to the children. In some setting the children may retaliate by breaking the branches or by throwing stones at the fruit. The persona worsens it by employing unpleasant verbs to describe the mangoes – teases/mocks - thus, painting a negative image of the mango tree. Further, this creates a mood of pain and disappointment which could be extended to a reader who may have had such an experience. If Massey’s assertion that literature influences the child’s responsibility towards the environment is true, then equally, this experience can create a hatred for the same environment which does not meet the needs of the child.

This could be read as ways other creatures like the tree rebel against humans or perhaps a way of telling the child the need to guard the tree so that when they are of age, it will still provide food for them.

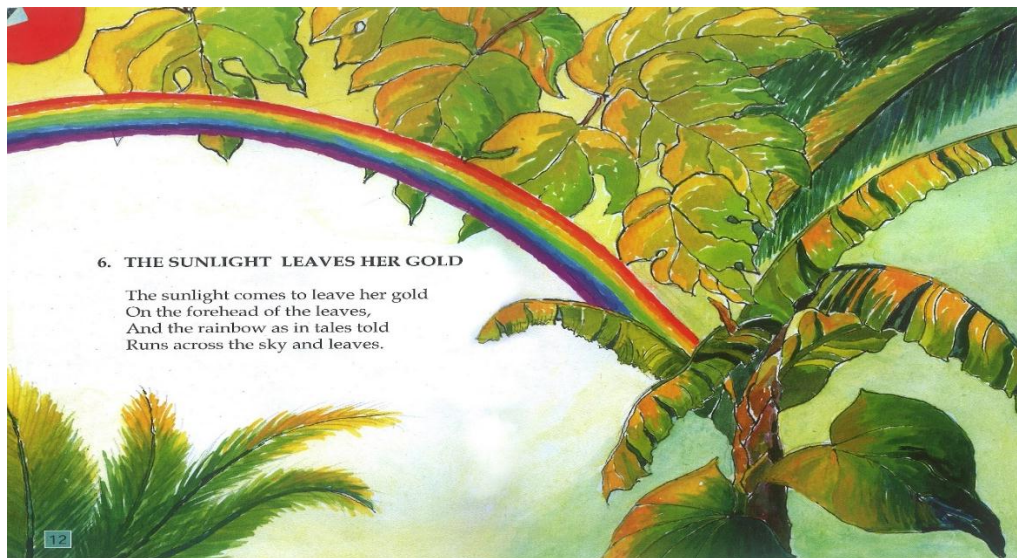


Figure 4.6. The Sunlight Leaves Her Gold

The sunlight is the beautiful glow that emanates from the sun. This text for children, “The Sunlight Leaves her Gold”, speaks of the beauty of this part of nature and the relationship that the sunlight establishes with other creatures. Survival on earth by all creatures is dependent on the sun: without the sun, the earth would be lifeless since it’s the source of heat and light. Sunlight aids the conversion of green plants into food, not to talk of the other forms of energy it provides. The text says ‘[t]he sunlight comes to leave her gold/[o]n the forehead of the leaves. Gold is representative of wealth and beauty and a metonym for the food process that the sunlight offers the green plants in the production of food for human being. Its relevance to the plant earns the sunlight the pronoun, ‘her’ – like a mother. This mild way is how the poet chooses to present a sophisticated subject to the child who will not understand the big word, ‘photosynthesis’. The last two lines say, “[a]nd the rainbows as in tales told/[r]uns across the sky and leaves”. The sunlight is a combination of the rainbow colours. This explains the presence of the rainbow after the sunlight. This affirms the ascription that ecocriticism is interdisciplinary or a hybrid

drawing from all angles including science, environmental history, geography, philosophy, cultural studies and literature, among other disciplines to foster a relation that must exist between all creatures. Karlsen (2018) believes that literature must draw on the real science theories to raise an Ecocitizens and this is seen in this presentation. For him to learn proper environmental care, literature must draw from the facts or the realities of society. In other words, the child, after encountering a text like this will further appreciate nature and the theories. Although some children readers may not get this insight at some stages, this will make more meaning at an older stage.

The visual that accompanies this account is colourfully illustrated on a single page showing the beautiful light that emits from the sun which extends to the leaf, giving it a golden colour. Across the page is a rainbow showing its band of colours across the sky. The utopia created in this text arouses ecoconscious thoughts in the mind of the child who begins to appreciate and respect all aspects of nature including the sun which sustains the survival of humans by helping plants make their food. In a more critical lens, this text is ecocentric - dwelling on the interrelatedness of all creations. The absence of man is also a way of telling human beings nature can exist without them but not vice versa.



Figure 4.7. The Hen is in Her Pen

Okai presents to children another situation from the environment that most children can relate to. It is usual to find fowls in households in the Ghanaian or African setting either being reared for sale or for family consumption. In some households, parents make the cleaning of the coop and the feeding of the fowls the responsibility of the child. This becomes a way of engaging the child with a spirit of responsibility. The poet employs this household practice and makes it a part of this presentation. *The Hen is in her Pen* is a two stanza rhyme that combines ideas like they will run in the mind of a child who is developing mentally.

The hen is in her pen,
The birds have flown away.
The good moon knows just when
To come for us to play.

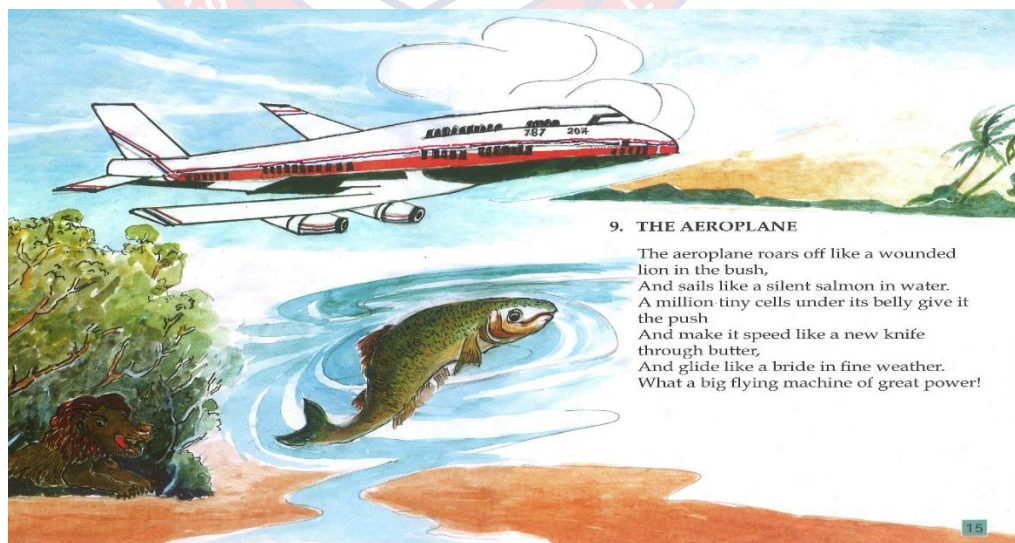
The first line tells the current position of the hen while the second line says the birds have flown away. These lines give a seeming flashback on what could have happened earlier, the second line suggests some birds had touched the earth earlier but had flown away at that moment. The reciter sings of the arrival of the 'good moon' for him to play with someone; hence, 'us'. In this text the obvious

antecedent of 'us' is the speaker and the hen since they are the two left after the birds depart. However, 'us' could also refer to the persona and other children with whom he [the persona] plays. The moon wins the admiration of the persona and his playmate because the moon is the source of light under which he plays with his playmate- the hen. The next stanza rhymes:

My fingers number ten
They mould my lovely clay
My eyes are two but then
They see all night and day.

The subject of the rhyme changes to concentrate on the reciter who mentions the number of fingers he has and how well he can see with his eye. To clear the ambiguity in the text, reference is made to the visuals to ascertain with whom the speaker calls 'us'. In the middle of the page stands a boy next to the hen's coop. He holds in his hand a board with clay on it, which he molds with his fingers. In the sky is the moon while the birds fly away on the other side of the sky. This makes it obvious that the child sings of his play with the hen in the first stanza. The concepts projected here are anthropomorphic until the second stanza starts. In the first stanza of the rhyme, the child shows a sense of love and respect to the creatures he encounters. He refers to the hen as 'her' and not 'it', giving the fowl a human reference. He goes to the hen's pen to play and not vice versa. This shows the friendship and reverence the persona/boy has for the animal. This presentation shows how human beings can observe and learn about other creatures. It also shows the kind of relationship the reciter has with the hen – that of equals or friends. He calls the moon 'good' this similarly tells the essence and the reverence he places on the moon. This representation serves as an example for the child-reader in choosing his words for other creatures and regarding them as equals.

The cordial relation and the tone changes in the second stanza of the rhyme; the child who has gone to the hen to play now shifts attention from the hen to himself. The self-centred approach is seen in his use of the words or phrases: ‘my fingers.../[t]hey (fingers) mould’, ‘my eyes... they see’ while nothing is said of the hen who takes a centre stage only to listen to the human being. This may be argued as a way of educating the child on the uses of his body parts, but the question raised is how about a few lines to tell of the relevance of the hen to human beings. This attitude of ‘we’ and the ‘othering’ championed by Edward Said is of concern to multicultural and postcolonial critics; it becomes unethical when this abhorred concept is made to infiltrate children’s literature where the child is made superior to the animals. The hen has not only been locked in a pen but it is been made to play to the tune of the child because it is the ‘other’ and has no option. The child is passing on the lessons and observations he has made from adults to his relationship with the hen and the poet makes it possible by making the child and his needs paramount with little or no dedication to the animal. This is not a good way of nurturing an ecocitizen.



9. THE AEROPLANE

The aeroplane roars off like a wounded
lion in the bush,
And sails like a silent salmon in water.
A million tiny cells under its belly give it
the push
And make it speed like a new knife
through butter,
And glide like a bride in fine weather.
What a big flying machine of great power!

Figure 4.8. The Aeroplane

The moving aeroplane in the sky delights the child with its loud sound and lights. Aeroplanes are significant symbols of the advancement of the transportation system in the world. This trope-filled rhyme projects a technical technological tool which works to the comfort of mankind. There is the use of simile and other comparative devices in the lines to draw a comparison between the various elements mentioned in the text. The sound of the aeroplane is compared to the roar of a wounded lion while its movement in the sky is measured up to the sail of a silent salmon in water. He foregrounds his comparisons with alliterations and consonance to make it believable and to ease the technicality of the content of his discussion. This comparison of the aeroplane with nonhuman creatures attempts to bridge the known with the unknown. Ironically, this seeming comparison may be fruitless as the child may be familiar with the actions of the aeroplane and not the lion or salmon which have been referenced to bring meaning to the child. The plane is personified to possess cells in its belly which like the human being gives it energy and fuels its movement. Since the technical names may make the language sophisticated and overrated for the child, personification and the use of similes and metaphors make appropriate the presentation. Humour is also utilized to add to the speaker's excitement about the aeroplane, the speaker says the speed of the aeroplane compares to new knife through butter and glides like a bride in fine weather. The use of these sound and visual imageries lays bare the speaker's love and admiration for the aeroplane.

The visuals speak to the verbal account recounted in the presentation of the rhyme as the image of an aeroplane in the air takes the centre of the page. On the ground is a water body with the image of a fish – the illustration makes

it difficult to state the position of the fish, that is, if it has dived or it floats on the water. To the left corner of the page is a lion with his mouth opened perhaps expressing a roar.

The aeroplane represents the technological advancement in human history and culture. There is no need denying the impact aeroplanes and aviation have had on people and added to the wealth of individuals and countries but it has as well left some pangs on the environment. The effect of technological development has caused detrimental effects on all living things; it has added to the depletion of the ozone layer and has caused climatic changes as a result of the excess greenhouses gases emitted.

The child is encouraged to engage in technological development as a way of meeting the standards of the western world, however, no pedagogy is given on how to sustain the world that would tolerate all of these advancements. Although the poet subtly mentions the noise pollution created by the aeroplane it understates the effect by measuring the noise of the aeroplane to the roar of a wounded lion. This is inadequate to enlighten the child.

Irrespective of the unsolved ecocatastrophes that befall the world, the poet presents a sensitive issue from an angle that considers other creatures and minimizes the extent to which humans can dominate with their intellectual power. The comparison of the technical technology to living creatures is a way of telling the child the relevance of nature to the understanding and creation of technology. The lesson picked up may vary but the child is enlightened, thus, nature is the sources of motivation of man-made artefacts. The shape of the aeroplane can be said to be modelled after the shape of the fish as proven in the illustration; how the plane flies in the air is also compared to the sail of the fish.

Similarly, the engine of the aeroplane is compared to the belly of animals. The poet presents a sophisticated topic to the child in a language that best suits children.

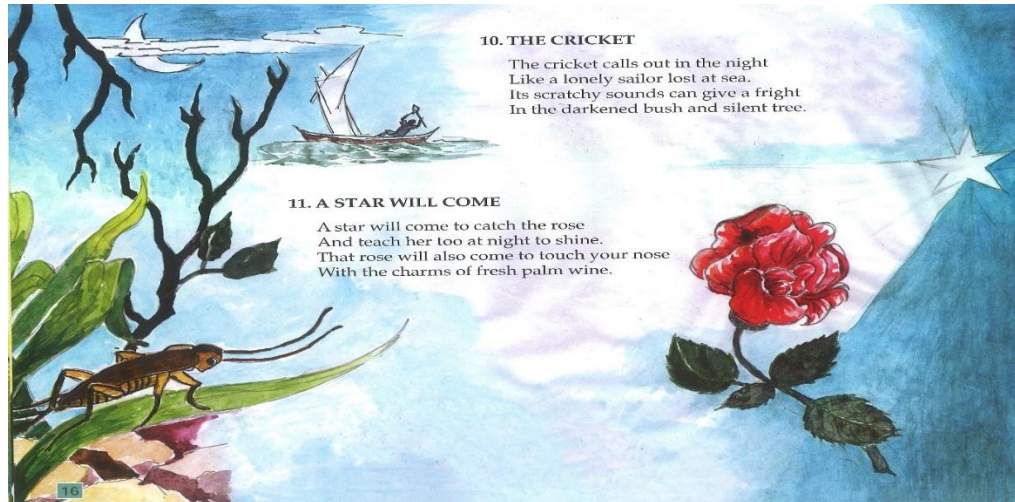


Figure 4.9. The Cricket & A Star Will Come

The single page contains the image and text for the rhyme *The Cricket* as well as that of another verse, *A Star Will Come*. The half that illustrates the former verse shows a cricket on the leaf of a plant while a sailor sits on a boat at sea. The other half of the page for the latter rhyme also shows a red rose which is directly under the shine of a star.

A Star Will Come speaks to the beauty of natural phenomena – the stars at night which all hope to see and the rose which all love to see and smell. The four-line verse sings:

A Star will come to catch the rose
And teach her too at night to shine.
That rose will also come to touch your nose
With the charms of fresh palm wine.

Stars are natural luminous bodies which show up at night in the sky. This rhyme sings of one of these beautiful astronomical objects and its relation to the earth from above. The first line is used to show the customary actions of the star as

expressed in the verb ‘will’, that is, the reciter shows certainty of the coming of the star. This makes the star a symbol of hope and an archetypal image of trust which nature can count on. However, the infinitive ‘to catch’ used in that line, quickly creates another image of the star in the mind of the reader.

A Star (Subject) will come to catch (Verb Phrase) the rose (Object)

The rose appears like the sufferer of the actions of the star who has perhaps pursued it for long. The second line completes and clears the doubt that was created in the first line; the star does not catch the rose to harm it but to teach it to shine too. The star is personified to be a teacher who passes on some of its qualities to the rose. The rose will also extend its new personality which has ‘the charms of fresh palm wine’, to the nose of the listener. After this reaches man, the rhyme ends. Nothing is said of how the listener (human) could also extend this feeling to others – the transfer ends with man. Human being is portrayed as selfish as it truncates the cycle of interdependence in creatures.

The child learns that all things in nature are dependent on one another; even the happiness of human beings are dependent on others.

The Cricket

Crickets are common characters in nature writing like in the works of William Wordsworth, John Keats and Du Fu. They are often used as characters in Western children’s literatures like in Carlo Collodi’s *Talking Cricket* (1883), *The Adventure of Pinocchio* (1883), Charles Dicken’s *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), George Seldon’s *The Cricket in Times Square* (1960), *The Very Quiet Cricket* (1997). Crickets are insects kept as caged pets in some parts of the world and eaten by another group in other parts of the world. Insects may not be popular in African literature since they often used symbolically to

represent the coming of the Whiteman to the Black Land. Atukwei Okai uses his medium to familiarise the child reader with an insect, the cricket, which may be common in the environment but not in literary texts. The cricket in this representation is a metaphor of a harmless creature which calls out at night with its frightening voice. The four-line verse reads:

The cricket calls out in the night
Like a lonely sailor lost at sea.
Its scratchy sounds can give a fright
In the darkened bush and silent tree.

The persona tells of this lonesome cricket who calls out at night to an unsaid destination like a sailor lost at sea. This line paints the image of a sad cricket who seeks a companion or it cries to find its way home. This trajectory may arouse some feeling of pity in the child reader for this creature. The next lines caution the child reader of the unpleasant nature of the cricket's voice, this perhaps is the reason for its loneliness. This projects the cricket as an annoyance to human beings since its noise is unfriendly and frightening; this goes to explain or justify the reason humans have not opened their homes to the cricket like they have to some domestic animals.

Adults may find the cricket unpleasant but children have compassion for it since they relate better with different animal species. This rhyme has given the child knowledge of another of the earth's creatures which is unpopular with humans. The cricket is metaphorically represented as the vulnerable creature that needs the attention of the human beings. Unfortunately, no remedy is given to the child on what to do to help the cricket. The reader may therefore decide to show pity on the cricket or abandon it because of its fierce noise and other human perception held about insects.

The cricket is not the only insect presented in this collection of verses and chants, the poet also presents two others - the grasshopper and the caterpillar are perhaps a way of drawing the child's attention to these creatures.

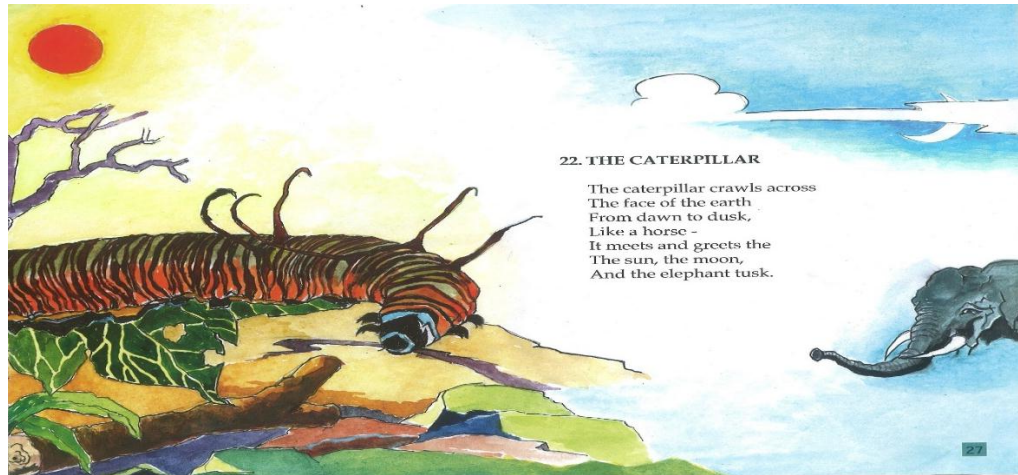


Figure 4.10. The Caterpillar

This rhyme like the previous one sings of a rear kind of nonhuman creature, the caterpillar – a larva of a butterfly or moth. Besides noted to metamorphose into butterflies it is also disliked by humans because it is noted to feed on crops. As argued before, insects are generally disliked by human beings because they are socially prejudiced as destructive and generally categorized as pest. Irrespective of the harm they cause to humans, insects are part of the ecosystem and help in the ecosystem cycling; in pollination; decomposition; and in some situations, some insects destroy other insects that are harmful to humans. To humans, these are not enough and necessary reasons for which they [human beings] must have a good relationship or associate with insects.

The poet appropriately adopts this species which does not add to the favourites of humans as a way of telling the reader of these marginalized species. The rhyme sings:

The caterpillar crawls across
The face of the earth
From dawn to dusk,
Like a horse -
It meets and greets
The sun, the moon,
And the elephant tusk.

The run-on line creates a mental picture of the length of the insect and how far it can move across the face of the earth. The caterpillar is presented as a strong being which takes no rest as it moves from dawn to dusk. It is compared to a horse - horses are known to be bigger, faster and stronger – this comparison suggests to the reader the strength that the crawling and feeble looking caterpillar has within. It is bestowed with the good practice of greeting others as it moves through the day, it greets the sun and night, it greets the moon and in the hinterlands, it greets the elephant. The illustration shows a caterpillar, though the full body is not shown, it is seen lying on the ground with leaves around it. The image of the leaves shows the caterpillar has eaten parts of it. The branches of the tree in the illustration have no leaves also supposing the caterpillar has eaten them all. This affirms human's perception of caterpillars as destructive insect. This image does two things in the mind of the child – it educates the child on what the herbivores insect eats or the child begins to dislike the caterpillar like adults do because it destroys plants. Scientific research shows that caterpillars are important for agriculture irrespective of their destructive features. This study suggests that if humans use pesticides to reduce their population, the population of birds reduce since they feed birds and some other animals. They believe that plants need insects to make food for the increasing human population.

Not to tag this analysis as a jeremiad to the insect life or to justify the destructive nature of caterpillars, the question that comes to mind is, what should caterpillars eat, when they also through pollination ensure plant growth? They work for their food as much as the human being. On the other hand, increasing populations have increased human settlements in extinct areas that should be the natural inhabitants of some animals. This could be one of the reasons humans have to share their food with some insects which may be the indigenes of the settlement. It is also argued that human actions that have resulted in climate changes may have caused the constant movement of some animals since they are unable to adjust with certain temperatures (Jankielsohn 2018). This poem introduces the caterpillar to the child although humans hold anthropocentric perceptions of it. The poem tries to preach another consideration for the caterpillar although it may not offer safety or security like some animal species offer humans. However, it offers some services to plants which provide food to humans and in some settings, it serves as food and a good source of protein.

Another of such insect which does not have the appreciation of human is the grasshopper. The grasshopper like the caterpillar is a plant eating insect and like the sound making cricket it makes a whirring or buzzing sound which irritates humans.

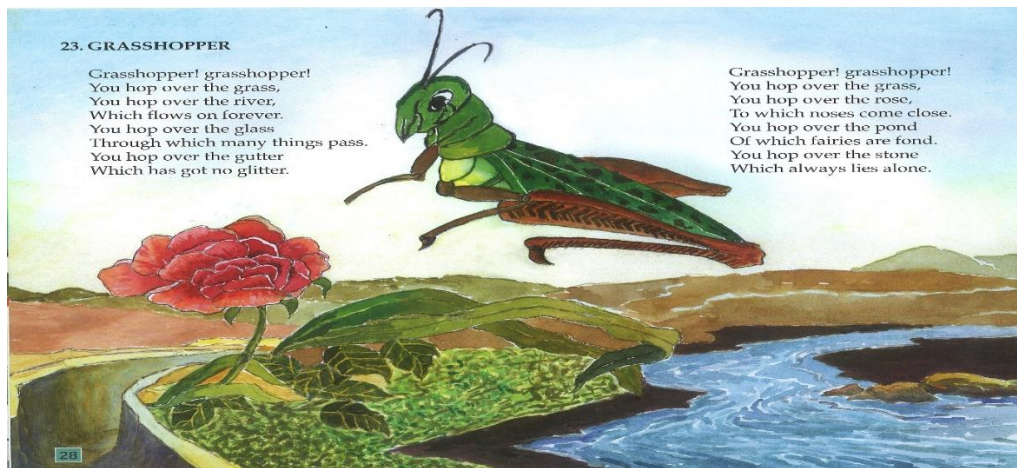


Figure 4.11. Grasshopper

“Grasshopper”, like the title states obviously, is a rhyme about a grasshopper. The reader is introduced to the multifaceted grasshopper. This grasshopper, like its name denotes hops over the ‘grass’, ‘the river’, ‘the glass’, ‘the gutter’, ‘the rose’, ‘the pond’ and ‘the stone’. The grasshopper’s constant movement is emphasized by the repetition of ‘[y]ou hope over...’ eight times in the rhyme. The grasshopper is seen as a happy creature since it hops or jumps from one place to the other. Again, it is projected as a strong species which survives at many places – on the land (grass) or in water (river). While it can hop over things that may not have pleasant smell (gutter), it can as well hop over pleasant smelling things (rose). Although not clearly stated, the persona is not happy about the places or things the grasshopper hops over;

You hop over gutter
Which has got no glitter. ...
You hop over rose,
To which noses come close.

The persona’s tone shows that he does not like the grasshopper to hop over the gutter because there is nothing good about the place. This same tone is heard in the line where the persona talks about the hop over the rose which humans bring their noses. The gutters in the community are supposed to be swept and kept

clean for the health and safety of human beings but that is often not done in our communities posing health problems to humans. The persona's disapproval which is heard in the tone implies the grasshopper's act can pass on diseases to human beings who bring their noses close to the rose. The poet in a refined language tells the child the implications of human negligence in the society.

The illustration shows a clean environment in which the grasshopper's action cannot harm any being. In the illustration is a clean blue river, a green grass and a rose plant with a red rose flower and a clean gutter. This tells the possibility of having a clean environment. This environment can be argued to be clean because of the absence of humans. Again, the grasshopper has the freedom to live and enjoy itself because the environment has not been evaded by human beings yet. The gutter in the illustration is symbolic of the fact that humans will take over the place in future.

Human superiority is exposed in this setting and the lesson of all beings having an entitlement to a place in the ecosystem is brought to bare.

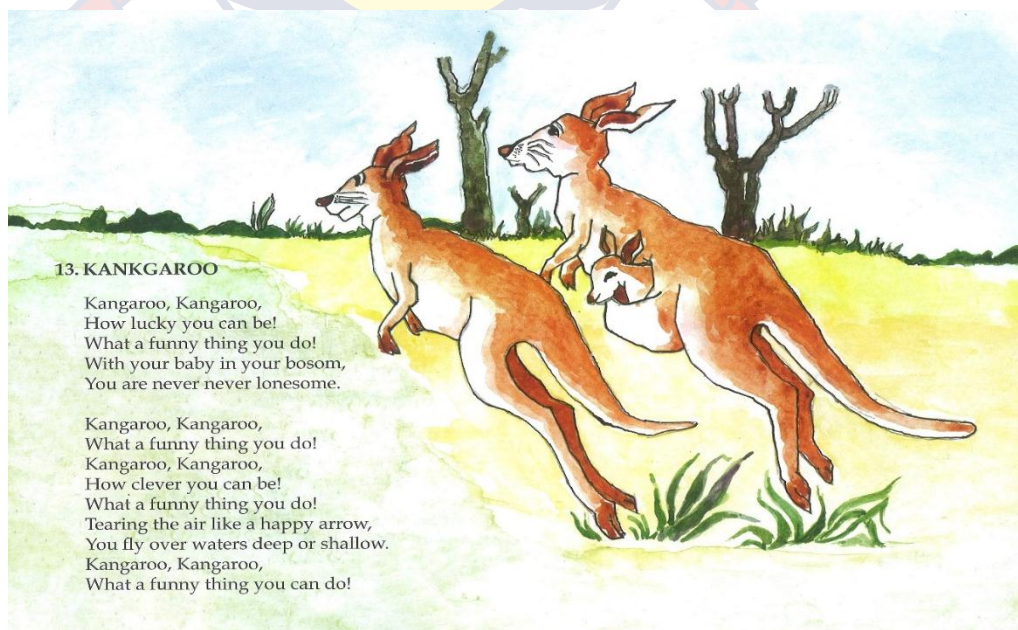


Figure 4.12. The Kangaroo

Again, the analysis centres on the life of a nonhuman creature - the kangaroo- a hopping animal that bounces on its hind legs. The thematic field focuses on the life of the kangaroo in its milieu. The persona who admires the creature describes the kangaroo in the first stanza as lucky, funny, never lonesome and a lot more. The persona believes the kangaroo is lucky and funny although it is not explicitly stated why that description, the subsequent lines talk about the baby in the bosom which does not make the kangaroo lonely. The female kangaroo has a pouch within which it keeps its young ones during their early developmental stages. Perhaps this accounts for the human description of the creature as funny and lucky especially because humans do not have that characteristic. This mixed feeling and tone betrays the speaker as jealous of the kangaroo;

How lucky you can be!
What a funny thing you do!

The second stanza begins with the repetition of the first and third lines of the first stanza;

Kangaroo, Kangaroo
What a funny thing you do!

In this stanza, the kangaroo is described as clever and three times as funny. The speaker (human) describes the kangaroo as funny because of the things done by the kangaroo which the speaker finds unconventional to the human life. While humans carry their babies in the arms or at their back or on their hip the female kangaroo carries their joeys in a marsupial where they complete their postnatal development. Again, this stanza finds funny the way the kangaroo locomotes; '[t]earing the air like a happy arrow' and is able 'fly over waters'. Its hops and bounces are exaggeratedly termed 'fly', emphasizing the human admiration for

the kangaroo. This text provides another lesson to the child reader especially those in areas that the kangaroo species are rare. The visuals show three kangaroos – male and female with a joey in its pouch hopping into/over a water body. This draws the focus of the reader to theme of motherhood or relationship in the animal world. Like humans, nonhuman creatures preserve relationship like the mother who takes responsibility of its young ones or the male kangaroo who stays close to its family to prevent it from prey. This draws a thin line between humans (bigger animals) and the smaller animals. This again draws on the fact that the psychological make-up of animals cannot be underestimated. The child reader may learn from this illustration the need to relate well with other humans like the animals relate with one another. The surrounding created in the surrounding is a shore or bank with sand, a few trees that have no leaves or fruits, a few shrubs and some hills. Since kangaroos are herbivores they may not survive in such an environment, however, the illustration and text project the freedom the animals have in that environment which is free of human interferences or other superior creatures.

Humans often define animals by comparing them to mankind. However, in this representation the human similarity is presented to the child reader. The anthropomorphized presentation describes the kangaroo with the adjectives - lucky, funny, clever, which are mostly used to describe humans. [These personifications create a different perception of the animal in the mind of the child. The child through this text is given an invitation to consider animals as creatures with emotions, self-value and with a sense of responsibility just like human beings. In this text, the myth or notion of the animal being inferior to man and without emotion is demystified.

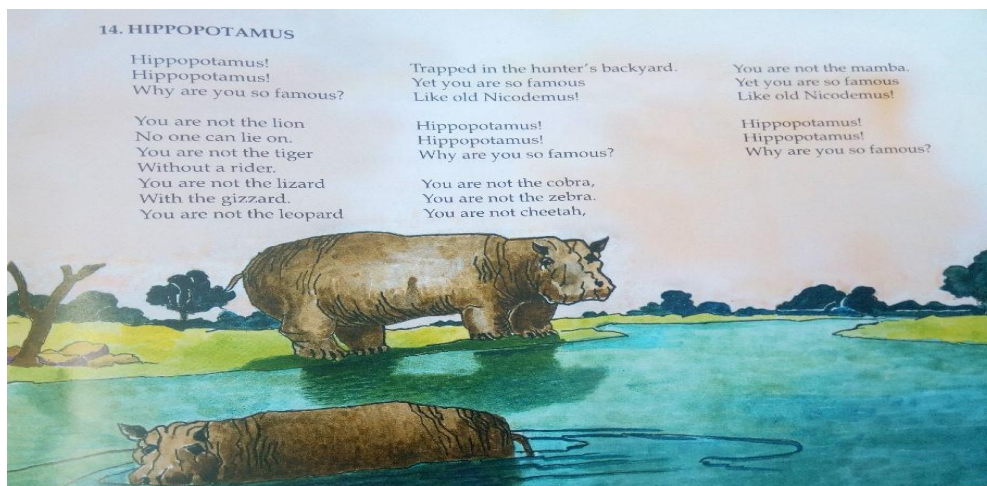


Figure 4.13. Hippopotamus

The poet presents another extinct animal rear to humans physically but popular by name, that is, the hippopotamus. The hippopotamus is a large amphibious animal native to rivers of sub-Saharan Africa. Although many people may not have seen a hippopotamus in their lives, the animal is popular or often mentioned. The persona, like many people, wants to know why the animal is famous, so repetitively, he throws in the lines: ‘why are you so famous? / ...Yet you are so famous.’ In seeking the answer to the above, the persona confronts the hippo in a conversation. The structure of this conversation is couched in comparative statements which bring out the hippo’s limitations or strengths based on the persona’s perception followed later by the question on its fame:

You are not the lion
No one can lie on.
You are not the tiger
Without a rider.
You are not the lizard
With a gizzard.
You are not the leopard
Trapped in the hunter’s backyard
Yet you are so famous
Like old Nicodemus

The persona tries to find answers to his question by comparing the hippo to other animals thereby making the hippo look superior or inferior to them. This approach makes room for the ecocritic's concept of 'utilisation' where one creature is preferred because of what it can offer mankind and human's stereotypical description of other creatures. The lion in this text is presented as unfriendly; hence, no one can lie on, the tiger is presented as lonesome because it has no rider, the leopard is presented as vulnerable because it is trapped in the hunter's backyard and so on. Ironically, these negative descriptions are what make these animals famous and make the human being appear civilized. In other words, an animal is popular because of what human beings like or do not like about it or what the animal has or does not have. The animals are denied the voice to defend themselves and have to rely on human description of them. The concern of the reciter is that the hippo does not possess these features of the other animals, yet it is equally famous. This question will run in the mind of a child who may know the cobra, zebra, cheetah, mamba for something but nothing about the hippopotamus besides its peculiar names. In this text, the popularity of the hippo is alluded to a biblical character, Nicodemus, who is noted for preparing the body of Jesus Christ for embalmment. Although the two have no similarity, they are all common characters by name. Unfortunately, in this presentation the reciter's question is unanswered at the end of the work, the hippopotamus is not given a voice to talk about its being and the poet does not make room to educate the reader on the species. Like the adults, the child may form his own perception of the hippo now and live with it.

The visual illustration shows two hippopotamus in their natural setting – in a river surrounded by grassland and vegetation. They are not caught up in

the human world like the prey [leopard] mentioned in the rhyme which has been caught up in the hunter's backyard. The illustrated environment may provide some education on the hippopotamus to the child reader; thus, the child will know what the habitat of the hippopotamus is. The environment illustrated is symbolic of places on earth where mankind has not evaded yet. This gives the child reader a glimpse of what the earth was and what it could be if human beings stop destroying the environment around them. Similarly, it shows that although man has taken the earth through several transformations, there are still places that are intact and must be preserved for the survival of animal species.

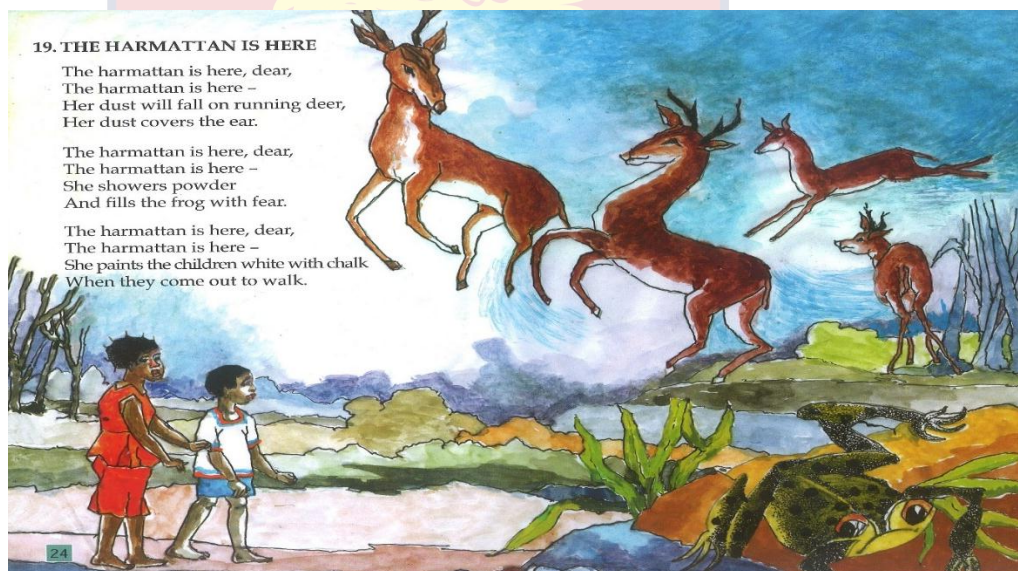


Figure 4.14. The Harmattan is here

“The Harmattan is Here” is one of the verses and chants in ‘The Anthills in the Sea’. Unlike the other verses and chants, the rhyme has a thematic focus on season – harmattan. The harmattan is a season in West Africa which is felt most during the latter parts of the year through to the early part of a new year. It is marked by dusty and dry wind which is said to blow from the Sahara Desert. It causes several effects on all creatures, humans experience cracks in the skin or nose bleeding or eye infections or respiratory problems. The air becomes dry

such that it affects crops and in some cases, it causes bush burning. Although those extreme cases are not captured in the text, the persona gathers the experiences of the season into the lines of the rhyme. The persona tells a listener, whom he addresses as 'dear', of the presence of the season and what it will do, she says:

The harmattan is here, dear,
The harmattan is here-
Her dust will fall on running deer,
Her dust covers the ear,
...She showers powder
And fills the frog with fear.
...she paints the children white with chalk
When they come out to walk.

This friendly tone in the conversation tells that the speaker is conversant with the season and its effect while the listener has little idea of what this season is about. It therefore becomes justified to say the former is an adult or parent or a teacher who passes on the knowledge of harmattan to the latter, a child, who knows little or nothing about that time of the year. The persona paints a gloomy picture of the season to the child who is being cautioned or educated. According to the verses, this time of the year affects the deer, the frog as well as children. The desiccant takes away the moisture from the skin and makes the skin look white as chalk while the dust in the air settles on the ear of animals like the deer. The frog is frightened perhaps due to the drying up of water bodies. The weather plays a key role in maintaining our vegetation and protecting various species since all beings depend on the weather. The desiccating effects of harmattan on soil, vegetation, animal, humans and others make the season fierce; hence, the caution by the persona. In this presentation, the characters mentioned are presented as vulnerable since they can do little to save themselves from the harsh weather. The adult who makes the voice of the text has out of experience

learnt to fight or prepare for the season and wants to pass this experience on to the child. The animals like the child are also unable to prepare for this season showing how susceptible this group of people are. It is also a way of telling the child that there are some concepts in nature that humans cannot take away but can prepare themselves for. The environmental concepts employed in this collection go beyond animals, the trees and oceans that have been seen in previous analysis but this text dwells on something new, the climate and the season. The climate determines man's survival as much as the other element of the ecosystems, it becomes imperative that human actions that affect the climate be halted to ensure sustenance and a habitable environment.

The visual accompaniment shows a deer jumping in the skies with a frog on a stone at the right edge of the page. Two people are seen in the illustration, the female is older while the male is a child. The female could be the persona and the mother of the little boy while the little boy could be the listener whom the persona refers to as 'dear'. In the illustration, there are a few shrubs but the tree has lost all of its leaves signifying the effect of the weather. The environment created here is one in which like creatures fight for their kind.

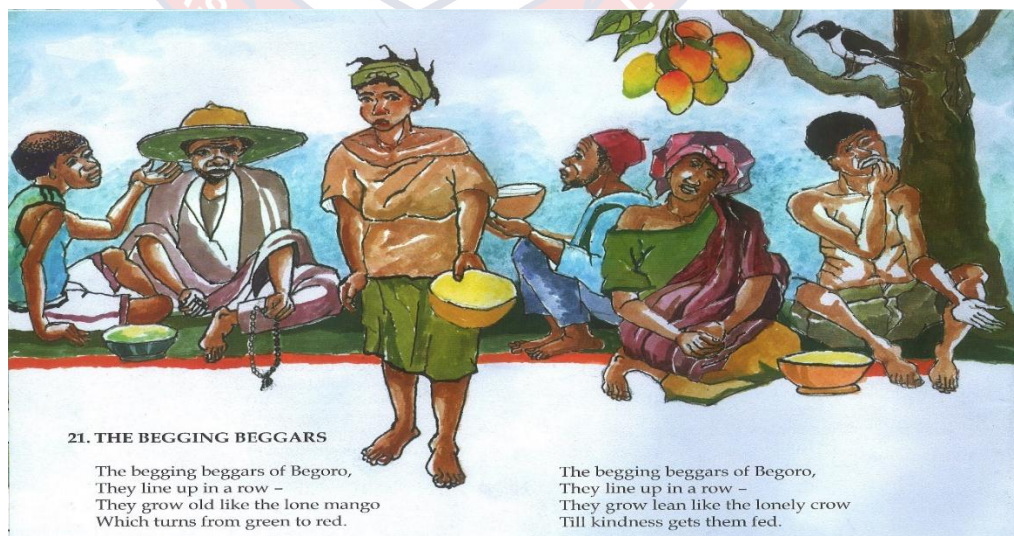


Figure 4.15. The Begging Beggars

The beggar lives by asking for charity from other people. In the African community, beggars are seen in public places, on the streets, at religious centres while others move from place to place. The beggars cut across all ranges of people – old, young, strong, the physically challenged, visually impaired and hearing impaired and people beg for various reasons. This social reality is what forms the focus of this writing. The beginning line is a phrase that says:

The begging beggars of Begoro

The persona addresses a specific group of people who beg for alms at Begoro, a town in Ghana. The use of ‘begging’ pre-modifies the ‘beggars’ therefore emphasizing the role of the beggars. This description creates a visual image of the beggars and what they do as well as an auditory image which is emphasized by the alliteration in the lines marked by the plosive /b/ and repetition of words preceded by /beg/. This is a real prototype of Okai’s mastery of sounds and letters in his writing. The thematic focus of this rhyme dwells on how these beggars have to survive on the road until they receive out of the kindness of other people. Although this rhyme talks about human challenges, like Wu (2016) and Caminero- Santangelo and Myers (2011) have stated in their writings, in every African text is the concept of the environment. The persona compares the aging life of the beggars to a lone mango and how lean they grow to a lonely crow. The use of this comparative makes room for the child to know and to understand the life of the beggars with reference to the familiar objects - the mango and the crow.

The visuals show six adult beggars, five of them seated with their collectors in front of them and one female standing or walking with her collector

in her hand as they sit under a mango tree with their melancholic faces. Although other humans are not consistent in helping the beggars, the tree is providing support by giving the beggars shade. On the tree are ripened mangoes and a crow on one branch. It is not written or illustrated in the text any of the beggars eating the ripened mangoes but it implied the benefits that man can derive from the tree – shade and food. In the hardest moments of man's life, the tree provides support, this throws light on the saying that 'when the last tree dies, the last man dies'. These beggars foreshadow the African continent in years to come if sustainability measures are not put in place now. Again these beggars can be compared to humans in the world today, like human beings the beggars do not value what they have in the environment. They do not recognize that mangoes can provide food for them meanwhile the crow on the branch does, considering how it stirs at those ripe fruits.

This foreshadow provides the child the insight of how life will be if humans cease to take responsibility of their environment and to value what they have now. Poverty is one of the challenges of the African community because like the beggars, we have failed to realize the opportunities in our environment. We rather prefer to look outside our continent to beg for alms like these beggars of Begoro than to appreciate the opportunities in our environment.

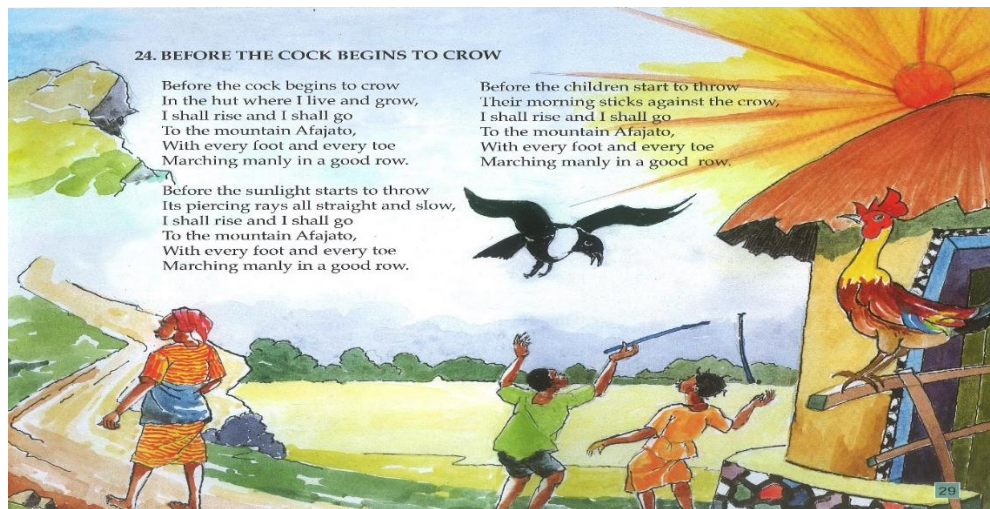


Figure 4.16. Before the Cock Begins to Crow

“Before The Cock Begins to Crow” is a rhyme in which the persona tells of her journey to ‘Mountain Afadjato’ at a particular time in the morning. The persona marks or tells time by observing the cock’s crow, the setting of the sun and when children come out to play. The setting of this text can be called a pre-modern one or in a rural setting. Another point that justifies the setting is the means by which the journey will be embarked - by foot and toes of the persona. This is corroborated in the illustration which shows a woman who walks barefooted on the path again symbolizing the time before technological transportation and moments when shoes were not common. The twenty first century child is taken aback to this era of little or less technology. The persona does not tell why she is going to Afadjato but her decision to start before the cock’s crow, before the sun begins to throw and before the children start throwing their sticks against the crow shows the distance and the urgency with which she embarks on the journey. Afadjato is the highest mountain in Ghana situated in the Volta Region of Ghana. The environment in the illustration is a typical rural setting where the rooster sounds its crowing call to awaken people and a place where children play outdoors. On the right corner of the page is a

hut, other huts are not seen but the beautiful morning sun is seen on the top right side of the page as well as the vegetation that surrounds the community. This type of isolated settlement is common in rural settings – it affords households the opportunity to rear animals, start a backyard farm and to give the children space to play and be curious. Gurholt in *The Wilderness Children: Arctic Adventures, Gender and Ecocultural Criticism* (2018) defends that, ‘children raised through free play and in a healthy natural environment can fulfil their innate potential and develop into curious, active and self-motivated citizens.’ The children seen in the visuals are outdoors to play and to enjoy the sun as opposed to the modern-day child who stays indoors to play with technologically developed games. Although it is unclear why the persona goes to the mountain, it could be symbolic of a place of solace for the woman and a way of encouraging the child reader to see the things in the environment. In the text, while it is pro-environmental to see the children outside interacting with the environment around them, they pose as threat to the other beings in the environment. They are seen throwing their sticks at the crow which is a daily routine hence the persona is able to use that to mark the future;

Before the children start to throw
Their morning sticks against the crow,
I shall rise and I shall go

When the children begin to show dominion and authority over other beings, the fear for the future strikes since they show adults’ trait which have destroyed the ecology. It is common to find children in the community running after animals like the goat, the lizard, the bird and others as a way of playing with these animals or as a way to amuse themselves. Sometimes, these animals are attacked by children when they [the animals] pose a problem like destroying crops or

some things of theirs or when they go after other animals. The crow in this illustration may have received this reception for unknown reason however, if there was a chick around, their actions would have been justified but in this text, no chick is seen or mentioned. This presentation violates the ecocritical perception of fostering fair relations between humans and other creatures and shows the order that exists in the world- where humans have authority over animals.

It is unclear what Okai hoped to have portrayed, however, this is not encouraged in ecocritical projections. Locke in his writing sounds this warning to parents, that “childish cruelty must not be tolerated, not to insects, not to birds, not to small animals, not to pets, not to each other” (Perkins. 2003, p. 20) and hence it must not be encouraged in children’s writing as well.

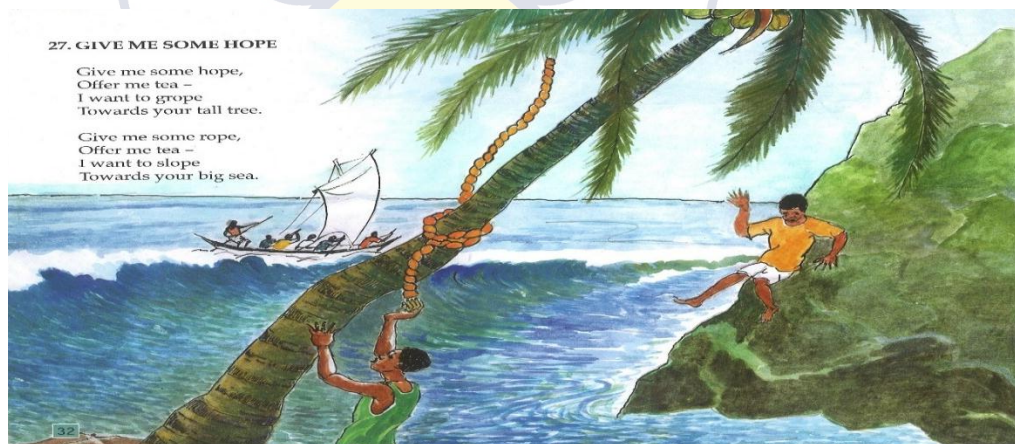


Figure 4.17. Give me some hope

Give me Some Hope is the last rhyme for this ecocritical analysis. The sound and theme of this rhyme is different from all that have been analysed. This chant is like a prayer to an unknown subject from whom the persona makes requests and expresses his desire. The rhyme combines imperative sentences and statements with imperative functions to put out the persona’s request. For instance in the first stanza, the beginning lines are in the imperative without a

subject showing the power or authority with which the persona makes the request.

Give (V) me (O) some hope (O)
Offer (V) me (O) tea (O)
I want to grope
Towards your tall tree

The persona's request for hope is symbolic of the presence of despair or little hope at the time of recitation and the request for tea also symbolises the presence of some lack - hunger, thirst and tiredness. In the second stanza the persona requests for a rope and tea and he expresses the desire to want to slope towards the unknown person's big sea. The last lines tell that this unknown person to whom the persona speaks owns not only the sea and the tree but has the solutions to the persona's need.

The visual illustration captures the sea on which some people ride in a canoe, a hill on which a boy 'slopes' into a sea and a coconut tree with fruits under which a man stands holding a rope he has tied to the tree. The visual corroborates with the voice of the text and what the persona wishes to do. Although the theme is abstract the visuals give the child the opportunity to see parts of nature around them. The despair human believes that tea (which is from the plant), the tall tree and the big sea can offer him some relief and hope. This shows that everything is important in this world and man needs these things for survival and for the hope of tomorrow.

This analysis shows that the persona (human) acknowledges that all that exist in this world belongs to someone and not man. This unnamed person can be the Supreme Being or a supernatural being who has power over everything and all situation. In the previous analysis, human has dominated over everything and everyone but for the first time in this material, humans are seen giving

reverence to another being showing the hierarchy that exists in the universe – world order.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher purposed to find what the environment is in Atukwei Okai's verses and chants for children as published in his The Anthill in the Sea and how the environment is represented to the child. Eighteen verses with their illustrations were analysed and the researcher found that the environment was created with human beings, animals, water bodies, mountains and natural illuminants –sun, moon, stars and a Supreme Being without any religious affiliation. Okai uses sound schemes, comparatives, imageries and symbols to put out the environment to the reading child. Seven of the poems talked about animals while the rest talked about the human and the environment made of other elements like trees or water bodies or animals. While the poet projected the various animals, the child was educated on these animals but these animals were mostly denied the voice to speak for themselves. Human superiority over other creatures was paramount; however, during the analysis of some rhymes, it was realized that humans are not the only beings that destroy the ecology or pose threats to other creatures. There are other animal actions as well as natural phenomena like the weather that affect other beings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the second objective of the research writing by analysing Atukwei Okai's "The Anthills in the Sea; Verses and Chants for Children". In that chapter, the study set out to consider how Okai presents the environment to the reading child as well as the elements with which he creates the environment in the various verses and chants.

The fifth chapter, which is the last chapter of this thesis, attempts to provide a summary of the study, the findings of this study and the implications of the study as well as to provide probable areas for further research.

Summary of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters. In chapter one, the background to the study was established, the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the justification of the study and the biography of Okai, the methodology to be used for the study, the definition of key terms and the delimitations were discussed to set the tone for the research. The study purposed to find out how the environment is represented in an African text for children knowing they represent the next generation of people that will need to sustain the earth. Atukwei Okai's "Anthills in the Sea" and "A Slim Queen in a Palanquin" were selected for this study. The objective was to find out the representation of the environment and how it is presented to the child.

In the second chapter, ecocriticism, semiotics and the content of children literatures were reviewed. To understand how the environment is presented in the selected texts, ecocriticism as the theoretical framework of the thesis was

extensively reviewed. Ecocriticism is generally seen as the relationship between human and other creatures in a work of art. This informed the analysis which also presented the human relationship in the environment. Since the selected text had two modes of communication, semiotics was reviewed again to inform the researcher's interpretation of the visuals in the text and to enable a vivid interpretation of the visual signs in arriving at complementary meaning.

The third and fourth chapters analysed the selected texts to ascertain the projection of the environment in the verbal and visual accounts of the literatures. Sixteen rhymes were analysed in the third chapter while seventeen were analysed in the fourth chapter. Using ecocriticism as the framework, all elements were reviewed to ascertain their representation in words and in visuals. The literary analysis mostly dwelled on the use of tropes, the phonological arrangements, semantic and syntactical structures and also importantly on the visuals.

Key Findings

During and after the study, the researcher made crucial findings which answer the following research questions:

1. What is the environment of children's literature as created in Atukwei Okai's 'Anthill in the Sea' (1988) and 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010)?
2. How does Atukwei Okai construct this environment with words and pictures for children in his 'Anthill in the Sea' (1988) and 'A Slim Queen in a Palanquin' (2010)?

To address the research questions, it was realized after the analysis of thirty – three rhymes that Okai creates an environment from the African point

of view through ordinary language of the African child and scenic illustrations that will appeal to the child reader. The environments created in these texts either promote positive environmental or negative environmental concept.

The factors that influence life and form the environment in the selected children's rhyme are biotic factors like human beings, plants, animals and abiotic factors as light, air, water, land, soil and so on.

Okai's texts make room for both pro and anti-environmental concepts depending on how the poet and illustrator put their ideas across and the interpretations derived of them by the reader. The study observed that humans and human actions are dominant in the presentation which may be appropriate for a children's material, however, the situation in which human dominance over nature is presented as ideal makes the environment anthropocentric. In some of the selected poems, while man enjoyed the benefits of other elements, the poet did not make room to acknowledge some of such element but dwelt on the persona and his emotions at that moment. In some materials, humans were seen as the cause of ecocatastrophes which are as a result of either over population or urbanisation or the invention of modern technologies or myths or religion. Other anthropocentric environments dwelt on human dominance and destructive actions.

The results of such anthropocentric environments are ecocatastrophes which affect the poor in society and the vulnerable like the animals and plants. The human dominance leaves some poor humans homeless and hungry while some plants and animals go into extinctions. This corroborates Stern's (2006) prediction that poor countries like those in Africa may suffer the most when nature begins to die although these poor countries contributed nothing to the

destruction of nature. It is observed that while one destroys the environment, it is another that suffers the action like children may suffer the effect of the depletion of nature caused by adults. One rhyme out of the thirty-three talked about beggars in our societies. Though the African society has its perception of beggars this ecocritical study points out how destruction to land, water bodies and plants through selfishness, unfair social and economic stratifications and war can render people homeless and make them beggars.

Another finding made in this study is that not only humans but animals and some natural occurrences destroy nature. With this, some scientists have proven that such destructions are as a result of human actions.

The study observed that in some of the rhymes and illustrations a full complement of the environment was represented. In these represented environments, the human is seen living harmoniously with the other physical elements of nature. This may be termed an anthropomorphic environment and this is the ideal environment ecocriticism promotes. In such anthropomorphic environments, the trees, water bodies, animals of all species, the celestial bodies as well as humans are treated with respect by each other. The environment shows how harmonic humans can live in the environment with others. This finding demonstrates how interdependent all elements of the environment can live to the sustenance of the earth, and for the safety of all the physical elements of environment.

In the study, some environments had a full complement of the environment represented in the visuals and in the rhyme however they did not project any pro-environmental concept. Also, it was observed that human relationship with the other elements of the environment is based on the human

need of them. This makes it obvious to see humans discriminate amongst some creatures basically because they do not have a voice and right and do not provide companion and safety like the dog or meat like the goat. It was seen that, humans regard creatures that are of direct importance to them at that moment forgetting the existence of the other. For instance, humans placed priority on domestic animals than on insect and wild animals; this explains why some animals are in extinction as well as some plants.

The other representation is when other elements besides humans are made the centre of the rhyme. In the analyses we meet animals forming the centre of the representation; their ecological setting and life is communicated to the child reader as it is in real life. This makes room for strong environmental education to the child who learns about other creatures and their relevance in the environment. Ecocritics believe that the poet can help in sustaining what is left of the ecology by placing in such writings a human being and teaching the child reader the role he must play in making the earth habitable for the other element.

Other key findings were made in attempt to answer the second research question. The created environments of the people in the rhymes are informed by the culture, seasons and religions in Africa. The poet uses poetic language amidst imageries to communicate these concepts to the reader. The Indigenous African Cultures portrayed in the rhymes define the relationship between humans and other creatures. The study shows that human relationship with the environment is based on myths held about the environment and the religion and culture of the people. This finding is justified by Whites' (1967) suggestion that, "what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about

themselves in relation to things around them”. This suggests that the culture and training of the human being determines the individual’s regard for the environment.

Okai creates his environment in the indigenous African Environment and in the Postcolonial African setting. The environment in some selected poems depicts rural African settings where families live in huts and children come out to play when the sun is up. The children are seen singing oral African folktales that help them appreciate the environment in which they live and the physical elements in that environment as well as the relevance of other humans. In the study it was observed that outdoor games build in children a connection to the land and a desire to cultivate the soil. Journey to forest areas and reserves also gives the children the knowledge of such places, though the poet does not mention the need to reserve those places, the child is placed at a crossroad of preserving it for such future pleasures or destroying the place like adults have destroyed other places.

Another aspect of the African culture which the study unearths is the role of the adult in passing on information. In this study, adults were seen as the custodians of the environment and the teachers of child about the environment. Parents are seen at sea with their child, at reserved areas with children and in the community with children as they teach or tell them about that particular environment. Women are seen with babies and children as they sing to them lullabies that connote the beauty of the environment. Men also take the children outside the immediate environment- to sea, on adventure, and so on. Predominantly, in the analysis, women are seen playing key roles in churning eco-conscious children compared to the men. This comes to affirm the eco-

feminist movement that believes that the dominance over the environment and women are consequences of the same factors therefore one must not be liberated at the expense of the other (Buckingham, 2015). This perhaps explains the role of women in the study.

Okai's rhymes are typical African works which centre on the environment and the African culture. They draw from the soil, land, water bodies, animals, plants, lights and all other things found in the environment to create pleasure and to inform readers who will become preservers of the earth tomorrow. Though at some points they violate the dictates of ecocriticism, the writing in general seeks to create a fondness between the reader and his environment and that is the fundamental principle of ecocriticism and ecocritical writing.

Implications of the Study

This study has established the love of Okai for his environment and the quest to foster this love in the young readers. The research findings have implications for Postcolonial African Writers, Curriculum Writers, Children's Literature Writers and writers all over the world. This interdisciplinary study has implication for how postcolonial writing may be used as media for environmental education. The study proposes the various forms environmental education can take place in literature and how to form ecocitizens out of the readers. It is a charge to all writers, especially Feminist writers who relate the freedom of the woman from patriarchal dominance to the freedom of the environment from human beings.

For Children's literature writers and School curriculum writers, they could employ the multimodal approach which draws from ecocriticism,

semiotics to communicate to the young generation issues regarding the environment and the need to have a positive relationship with all factors of the environment. They could make environmental concepts clear and understandable to the child without interpretations from others. Curriculum writers could deliberately make reading material ecocritical and provide ways of reading materials that would make obvious the need to have a relationship with the environment across all subjects. This would make the children of school going age conscious and aware of the relationship that must exist between all elements of nature and their role as children in sustaining the earth. They may also consider using children's literature as means of teaching children about the environment.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study has considered the representation of the environment in a Ghanaian children's literature and have come out with findings that contribute to scholarship. To make children's literature and ecocriticism relevant in literary studies, the researcher suggests that further studies be carried out in Ghanaian Literatures to ascertain the representation of the environment for adult readers. A study can also be done by comparing Okai's representation of the environment to the child to that of his texts for adults. The findings of such studies will establish the ecoconsciousness of Atukwei Okai and challenge other writers to deliberately champion the course of ecocriticism.

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