ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALAWIAN INDIGENOUS ORAL CULTURAL FORMS

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (LITERATURE) THESIS

WITNESS HASSAN MDOKA

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

JUNE, 2022

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MALAWIAN INDIGENOUS ORAL CULTURAL FORMS

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (LITERATURE) THESIS

WITNESS HASSAN MDOKA
(B.Ed. MA in Lit., University of Malawi)

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Malawi, Zomba, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

JUNE, 2022

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature at the University of Malawi, Zomba. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. Where the work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

WITNESS HASSAN MDOKA

_____

Full Legal Name

_____

Signature

_____

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Te undersigned certify that this PhD thesis is the candidate's own work and it has been submitted with our approval.

Signature_____Date_____

Professor Syned Makani Mthatiwa (PhD)

Main Supervisor

Signature_____Date_____

Dr Damazio Mfune Mwanjakwa

Co-Supervisor

Signature_____Date_____

Dr Innocent Ngulube

Course Coordinator

Signature_____Date_____

Associate Professor Nick Mdika Tembo (PhD)

Head of Department

DEDICATION

To my mother and my father who joined the ancestors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to Professor, Dr Syned Makani Mthatiwa, and Dr Damazio Mfune-Mwanjakwa who, for all my numerous shortcomings in the course of writing this thesis, never wavered in being supportive to me. Each time I sought guidance, Prof. Mthatiwa's office was open for me where he and Dr Mfune, philosophical and scholarly as they are, passionately showed me the way.

Words fail me in expressing my deeply felt gratitude to Prof. Mthatiwa for his untiring assistance and guidance. The comments he made greatly helped shape the direction of this thesis which otherwise would have ended in the garbage bin. WhatsApp, phone calls, emails and his office were always accessible to me. He is one of those rare humble academics that when you meet your life is transformed by the quest for knowledge and the search for scholarly writing.

Dr Mfune-Mwanjakwa, again, words are inadequate to express my profound gratitude to him, but only deeply felt. To have this thesis pass through his hands is a rare privilege that I will live to remember and be proud of. His comments and probing questions, biting at times, awakened my line of thought and brought me to my senses. A living example of academic humility and erudite philosophy it was a blessing to have him by my side. My troubled PhD journey was assured of a destination. *Ndogolele kwagumbala magasa*.

To the Vice Chancellor of The Catholic University of Malawi, Rev. Fr. Dr George Buleya, for authorising the grant that garnered the support for my study from the whole institution, words are inadequate to express my gratitude to him. A PhD is an expensive endeavour but the financial and moral support from The Catholic University of Malawi made it possible for me to accomplish it. Rev. Fr. Dr Philip Mbeta encouraged me to soldier on and I did. I salute Professor Nandin Patel and Professor Victor Chipofya for the encouragement they gave to me. I pay tribute to the late Rev. Fr. Dr Dominic Kazingatchire who combined academic prowess with sound human resource management as he constantly asked me about my academic progress, I felt his innermost support for me. Our quintessential separation from him is

immense. I also acknowledge the special contribution made by the Registrar of the Catholic University of Malawi, Mr Francis Nkhoma, through whom my study funding was approved. I express my gratitude to Associate Professor, Dr Asante Mtenje who introduced me to my supervisors, members of academic and administrative staff and the library the day I enrolled as a PhD candidate. Her words of encouragement are a symbol of her own academic achievements. Associate Professor, Dr Nick Tembo's interest in seeing me finish my thesis in time soothed me to continue working hard on my project. When I told Professor Pascal Kishindo about my PhD candidature in indigenous knowledge and folklore, he generously gave me two books whose contribution to this study is central. My indebtedness to him is without measure, but only deeply felt. To my colleagues, Gerald Nthara of Mzuzu University, and Saizi Kimu of Malawi University of Science and Technology, their moral and material support gave me wings with which to fly.

To my wife, Abiti Saizi, those *nsondo* songs you sang were serenading and your interpretation, culturally sound as you supplemented what *Nankungwi* had said. To my four children and my two granddaughters, I am your epitome of the love of knowledge. Seek knowledge wherever it is even in your old age.

To Rachael Warren, I have never known a heartening workmate. Books and other resources came flowing to me from the Department of Anthropology. I learned from her about the overlapping territories in ecocriticism, zoocriticism and cultural ecology with the whole gamut of anthropology. Finally, I am grateful to all members of academic staff and library of The Catholic University of Malawi for their unflinching support for my study.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms reveal people's environmental consciousness or indigenous ecological knowledge and how that knowledge can be utilised for natural resources management. The study analyses the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales. It assesses how animals are represented in Malawian proverbs in seeking justice when settling disputes and personality building where animals are used as measures of human behaviour and vehicles through which the people traverse the environment. The study also explores the roles of animals in introducing children to their local environment through the Yawo people's *jando* and *nsondo misyungu* songs. The use of animals as carriers of cultural values in *jando* and *nsondo* songs reveals the people's embeddedness in their environment. Furthermore, the study evaluates the representation of traditional animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* among the Chewa as the embodiment of their cultural and environmental values. The findings of this study reveal that since oral discourses derive from the repertoire of the collective community, they reflect the people's collective cosmovision and indigenous ecophilosophy. The findings also reveal that the indigenous oral cultural forms mirror the people's ecological thought and thereby making animals reflections of how people imagine the environment. I argue that the representation of animals in Malawian oral cultural forms does not only reveal people's environmental consciousness, but it also shows their familiarity with animals and their acknowledgement of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and animals and/or nature. Further, the depiction of animals in oral cultural forms reflects people's cosmovision consisting of an indigenous ecophilosophy which considers the physical, spiritual and natural forces as intertwined, an attitude that can be harnessed to promote environmental sustainability and resilience. However, since animals embody people's values, some of those values undermine the integrity of animals. What this means is that animals are sometimes used to ridicule humans in ways that belittle them. This implies that human-animal relationships are richly textured with complexities. My approach is, therefore, analytical and my use of ecocriticism, zoocriticism and deep ecology is modified to fit into the cosmos of Malawian indigenous perceptions about the interconnectedness of ecological entities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INDIGENOUS ORAL CULTURAL FORMS, ECOCRITICISM, ZOOCRITICISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

1.1 Background to the Study

The representations of animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms reflect how oral literature acts as a historical account of the people's understanding of animals. We live in an era of environmental crises where some animal species are fast disappearing from the face of the earth. It is imperative to dig into the past and from there draw lessons about how people represented animals and how such representations reveal their attitudes. From the Palaeolithic period to the ancients or antiquity, humans had close links with numerous species of animals from which they generated moral values. What this means is that in folktales, fairy tales, fables, proverbs, myths and folksongs, animals not only entertain, but they are also sources of indigenous moral values. Through observation and experience resulting from close interactions with animals, people deduce animal behaviours and actions and apply them proportionally to human behaviours and actions. People generate indigenous knowledge and moral values not only from animals, but also from plants, water, land and celestial bodies. The study argues that the representation of nature, in genral, and animals in particular, does not only reveal the people's embeddedness in their environment and their environmental knowledge (awareness), but it also shows their familiarity with animals and their acknowledgement and/or appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and nature/animals. Furthermore, the depiction of nature/animals in the oral forms discussed in this thesis reflects the people's cosmovision consisting of an indigenous ecophilosophy which considers the physical, spiritual and natural forces as intertwined, an attitude that can be harnessed to promote environmental sustainability and resilience.

The close relationships that "humans had with numerous species of animals" (Kalof 1) in the past is no longer there because forests and animals have disappeared at increasing rates. Love (2003) observes that, globally, the "rate of extinction of plants and animals [is] estimated at 74

species per day and 27,000 each year" (15). Malawi is greatly affected by an accelerated rate of deforestation and loss of wild animals. Although we live in "an age in which human consciousness has long been conditioned by literacy, [and oral discourses] seem ridiculous, these oral discourses reflect the fact that for most history, humans felt located within the cosmos" (Callicott and Frodeman xvi). What this entails is that humans were not alienated from nature and the environment. With the people's "cosmos-grounded ethics" (Callicott and Frodeman xx) the environment had its beauty and integrity justly balanced. Indigenous people's ways of knowing the natural environment are reflected in their oral literatures: myths, songs, legends, fables, worldviews, religious beliefs and values, folktales, riddles, and proverbs among others. Indigenous oral cultural forms depict a period in history of abundant natural resources.

Mulwafu (2010) mentions the availability of abundant natural resources in precolonial Malawi in terms of land and water, and a rich array of forests, animals and different types of fish but without "exploitable mineral resources" (19), that is, without mineral resources rich enough to be mined. However, this was "because of the policies that Government pursued since attaining independence in 1964" but "Malawi has a variety of known mineral resources that include uranium, heavy mineral sands, strontianite, rare earth minerals, phosphate, bauxite, gypsum, vermiculite, precious and semiprecious stones, limestone, dimension stone, silica sand, sulphides and coal" (*Mines, and Minerals Policy of Malawi* 1). During the precolonial period, the colonial settlers in Malawi put in place different mechanisms of environmental conservation in which the natives were on the receiving end.

In precolonial and colonial periods, the state of the environment in Malawi was not as pitiable as it is now. Mulwafu observes that ["i]n the postcolonial period – that is, the period after 1964 – the conservation tempo subsided and became, at some points, almost non-existent in the public discourse, only to re-emerge in the 1990s as a result of the democratisation movement" (3-4). Although the discourse of conservation has re-emerged, forests and animals continue to disappear at an accelerating rate and this is despite the fact that "the Malawi Government has taken various measures to safeguard the country's natural resource base" (Malunga iii). These include, *inter alia*, "the enactment of the Environmental Management Act of 1996; the Forestry Policy of 1996; the Land Policy of 2002; the Water and Sanitation Policy of 2005; and the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of 2008" (Malunga iii). Despite the various attempts to

formulate environmental policies, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, waste management and pollution remain key environmental challenges in Malawi. Samuel (2019) argues that:

> Despite the pervasiveness of the climate crisis, and the scientific consensus on its anthropogenic roots, scientific warnings and international mobilisations have failed to incite adequate climate policy to curb emissions and repel climate threats. Scholars have identified key factors limiting the effectiveness of this largely scientific body of climate change knowledge: namely, the manipulation of scientific uncertainties; the universalisation of environmental threats; the distortion of the local; the externalisation of the environment; and the exclusion of alternative perspectives and knowledge systems. (52)

What this entails is that the failure of the scientific approaches to protect the environment from destruction and pollution is due to, among other reasons, the inadequate consideration of local contexts and the marginalisation of indigenous ecological knowledge. In colonial, precolonial and postcolonial Malawi, indigenous knowledge systems have suffered from neglect. From 1964 to 1994, the period during which Dr Kamuzu Banda was the most powerful man in Malawi, the major environmental threat was tobacco. Moyo (2000) explains that "Malawi embarked on a massive effort to develop its estate farm sector from 1969 onwards" (59) with devastating effects in deforestation. While Mulwafu puts the rate of deforestation in Malawi as the highest in Southern Africa, Chadza (2015) says that "Malawi is facing one of the fastest deforestation rates in Africa, estimated at 2.6% per annum" (1). Yaron *et.al.* (2010), and Kambewa and Chiwaula (2010) blame Malawi's deforestation on the use of firewood and charcoal as major sources of energy in a country that has no reliable electricity. For Coutts *et.al*. (2019), the "main drivers of deforestation in Malawi are a rapidly growing and extremely poor population converting forested land to support small-scale subsistence agriculture for food provisioning and income and using wood as a primary energy source" (3). Despite the Malawi Government's attempt to empower "communities to manage natural resources" (Kayambazinthu 53), Malawi's environment remains vulnerable with deforestation being proportional to wildlife loss and loss of indigenous ecological wisdom.

The Government of Malawi's *Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity* (2019) explains the importance of conserving not only biodiversity but also cultural diversity in Malawi realising that "[de]spite playing a role in the conservation of biodiversity, traditional knowledge systems, innovations and practices have not been adequately promoted and

documented" (3). The inadequacy in the promotion and documentation of oral literature and linguistic diversity in Malawi can be traced to the self-styled leadership of Dr Kamuzu Banda during the thirty years of his rule (1964 – 1994). Most of the oral literature promoted during this period consisted of praise songs about his personality and his leadership style. Wiseman Chijere Chirwa (2001) observes that "songs were composed for praising the power, wisdom and excellence of the Malawi Congress Party, and particularly its leader, Dr Banda" (1). Malawians of other ethnic languages were accused of speaking incorrect Chichewa. Accordingly, "[a]nyone who expressed ethnic identity apart from the president himself was condemned as a 'tribalist' bent on undermining the 'four corner stones' of the Malawi Congress Party" (Themba Moyo 137). Although Kishindo (2001) explains that "Language planning in 1968 in Malawi, just as elsewhere, was inevitably coloured by ideological imperatives – and the driving imperative was nation building" (265), the use of Chichewa as a national language has totally failed to build this nation as observed from tribalistic and regionalistic tendencies among Malawians.

As Mapanje (2011) observes, during the reign of Dr Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship, students in oral literature and academics had to request government approval in order to conduct research in "folk stories, riddles, proverbs, and songs [people] sang at initiation ceremonies, weddings or beer-drinking parties, including the games they played during their childhood" (Mapanje 132). Kamuzu's support for Malawian traditional dances was thus contradictory. Morris (2012) expresses similar observations as Mapanje when he says that "during the reign of President Banda political tensions were rife, and Kamuzu Banda specifically prohibited any contemporary social reseach" (vi). As such Kamuzu Banda's "own attitude toward Malawians was somewhat colonial" (Moss and Johnson-Freese 273). By combining the colonial and African mentality, Banda exploited Malawians. Nazombe (1983) observes "Banda tried to further the cause of African culture by reviving traditional dances, and by restoring to respectability old customs and the activities of secret societies such as *nyau* or *gule wamkuku*. Unfortunately, as these were ethnic manifestations rather than a national heritage, their preservation detracted from, instead of promoting, national unity" (70). Doubly suffering from colonial and missionary psychic numbing about the people's cultural values and Dr Kamuzu Banda's despotism and colonial mentality about indigenous cultures, some people erroneously perceive Malawian oral literature and cultural practices as a dark cloud hovering over uninformed communities.

Kamlongera (1984) laments the dearth of support for oral cultural forms by African governments, "[m]oves to rescue indigenous culture from disappearing in African countries usually involve proclamations made by politicians" (159) but never to be implemented. Kamlongera further explains that "if indigenous performances suffered in the colonial period, they lack support in independent Africa" (206). And, as if the colonial and postcolonial suffering was not enough, from 1994 onwards indigenous oral cultural forms have greatly suffered from the effects of globalisation.

In the globalised context, the role of oral literature in disseminating ecological wisdom has waned. Deforestation goes hand in hand with the disappearance of wild animals. The current loss of biodiversity notwithstanding, we need to rethink our cultural values in order to regain our environments. Obiora and Emeka (2015) have argued that:

> For us to understand the importance of African indigenous or traditional knowledge systems in contributing to ecological sustainability, we need to have an understanding of the African worldviews, its cultural heritage, values and ecological constructs. We also need to understand African myths [proverbs, folktales, fables, legends, folksongs] that explain the various cultural practices of the African people (88).

Our understanding of African myths, proverbs, folktales, fables, legends, folksongs and cultural practices is incomplete without considering the roles of animals and the various ways they interact with humans. The bulk of African indigenous wisdom is derived from the natural and spiritual environments in which "both the visible and the invisible elements of nature are interlinked; human life and the life of other creatures are one with the divine" (Obiora and Emeka 91). In this non-dualistic, holistic, moral and spiritual formulation of nature, humans and animals exist as creatures whose appearance on earth is not by mere chance but presupposes a Creator with divine intentions for the creatures.

Indigenous knowledge is characterised by "its practicality and dynamicity, derived mainly from contextual and cultural changes, which requires indigenous peoples to renegotiate constantly with their environment, maintaining their knowledge system in constant evolution" (Magni 5). Because of its flexibility and adaptive potential, indigenous ecological knowledge can contribute to consciousness raising in the contemporary global environmental crises. Indigenous traditional knowledge is defined as "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and

belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment" (Berkes *et.al*. 1252). This experience and observation-based knowledge is generated from the environment and animals are part of the physical environment.

The role of animals in environmental education cannot be overemphasised. It is through different oral discourses about animals that the elders narrate to children stories that help shape their attitudes towards the environment besides raising their "awareness of management of land utilisation, [and] endangered species" (Ahi *et.al.* 2). Since oral literature draws its materials from human interaction with the physical environment such as land, plants, animals, soil, mountains, forests, rivers/water, for instance, children learn to internalise them as parts of their cultural symbols upon which their livelihoods depend. Oral narratives help in community bonding, passing on community values, broadening the people's awareness of their cultures and stretching the people's imagination. As Ahi *et.al*. (2014) observe, the "[e]nvironment and nature are the concepts important to all cultures. Education of children who are environmentally friendly, sensitive to the environment and voluntary to do something for environment should be a common target of all cultures" (12). Focussing on human-animal relationships in oral literature brings us close to the environment from which both humans and animals find their sustenance and humans produce mores through which their environmental consciousness is reflected. Significantly, in folklore, both humans and animals are perceived as "persons" and animals are depicted as "non-human persons" (Sztybel 49). The conceptualisation of animals as persons in folklore accords them, via imagination, approximate ethical values applicable to humans.

Dederen (2008) is of the view that "[like tales of other peoples around the world], African tales of animals, humans, fantastic beings, villains and heroes […] portray and thoughtfully reflect on human nature. They comment on the moral strengths and weaknesses of human beings, they praise their solidarity and expose their differences and divisions" (211). In other words, oral discourses of animals help mirror the socio-political and economic conditions in the human society. Creany (2013) notes that "[a]nimal symbols project our deepest fears, wishes and conflicts, so that our own image is mirrored in them" (27). The various ways through which humans and animals relate to each other and to the environment as depicted in oral literature reflect the significant roles animals have played from time immemorial. The animal tales are

set in specific environment and reflect how the characters relate to their environment. Creany (2013) also observes that:

> Animal tales assume a variety of literary forms, including fables, *pourqoui* tales, beast tales, and transformation tales, such as animal bride stories. […]. *Pourqoui* tales explain how something in nature came to be, and these tales carry a strong lesson about behaviour, even if they lack a stated moral (29).

When "tales [that] explain how something came to be" involve animals in their mythopoeia, like Malawian creation myths, they help shape people's attitudes about those animals and the way they primordially relate with humans. Animal tales are, therefore, inescapably connected to the environment and natural phenomena constituting the people's conceptualisation of their cosmogony. They constitute a significant part of indigenous people's knowledge of the world and cultural heritage as the basis of moral values that are environmentally oriented. The various forms of Malawian folktales or animal tales are largely moralistic in nature and they are not divorced from the environment.

The proverb is another significant oral discourse the ubiquity of which makes speakers of particular languages easily internalise key proverbs in their languages. Girardi (2012) significantly notes that the study of "proverbs is called paremiology (from the Greek *paroimia*, 'proverb')" and in Latin the term "proverb" is derived from "*proverbium*, meaning 'words, put forward' or 'common saying'" (5). Proverbs about animals and the environment, generally, constitute the bulk of folk wisdom and Malawian proverbs and metaphors are so engrained in environment that we use them consciously or subconsciously. Since proverbs are key in passing on educational values to listeners, Costandius (2007) asserts that "[p]roverbs are based on symbolic or metaphoric language. Metaphors used as an aspect of teaching method could be effective because they could enhance the conceptualisation of abstract ideas" (4). Proverbs involving animals and other aspects of the environment are crucially important in enhancing moral values with environmental sensitivity in which abstract animal metaphors concretise into what society upholds. Mphande (2001) explains that "African proverbs are short sayings which contain the wisdom and experiences of the people of old" (6). Most of these proverbs depict animals and they are environmentally oriented.

As Mthatiwa (2011) explains that "[a]nimals are part of the physical environment/nature, and the fact that many species have become extinct while others are on the brink of extinction,

makes it imperative that we undertake studies geared towards understanding our attitudes to animals that emerge through forms of cultural production, in this case literature" (1). This contextualises why this study reads animals in Malawi's rich cultural heritage with the application of ecocriticism.

Glotfelty (1996) defines the term "ecocriticism" as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). In other words, ecocriticism engages in textual analysis highlighting how the human and non-human worlds are interdependent and interrelated. Heise (2006) notes that "*ecocriticism* has imposed itself as a convenient shorthand for what some critics prefer to call *environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism,* or *green cultural studies*" (506, italics in the original). All these different names of the same theory are Anglo-American where environmental challenges have resulted from industrialisation and technological developments which have alienated humans from nature. Environmental literary criticism in Africa has developed from the colonial legacy on the African continent, the effects of globalisation and the waning of indigenous ecological knowledge.

Examining the representations of animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms entails that this study is concerned with analysing the relationship between literature and the environment. Zoocriticism involves the analysis of the representation of animals in literary texts. In other words, it is animal-focused ecocriticism. Huggan and Tiffin (2010) extend their focus on postcolonial ecocriticism to zoocriticism that draws from animal studies, philosophy and religion. As an emerging approach to the reading of literary texts, it focuses on the relationships between humans and animals and how animals relate to their habitats and their means of livelihoods. Zoocriticism advocates for animals in what Baker (2000) calls animal-endorsing in literary texts that criticises their exploitation.

Zoocriticism is also known as "animal studies" and it is variously referred to as "human-animal studies" and "anthrozoology" which "explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them" (DeMello 4). Indigenous people's representation of animals is also concerned with animal rights since what they say about animals implies a concern for their rights. Deep ecology is "the ethical and religious attitude of valuing nature for its own sake and seeing it as divine or spiritually vital" (Barnhill and Gottlieb 1). Deep ecology shifts from an anthropocentric (human-centred) view of the

environment to an ecocentric view (earth-centred). Ecocriticism, zoocriticism and deep ecology have various points of convergence that emphasise on ecological wholeness through a symbiotic interplay of ecological entities.

1.2 Aim of the Study

This study analyses the representation of animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms and argues that these oral genres constitute the basis for the people's environmental consciousness and their knowledge of the environment in which animals are central in generating ecological knowledge. The study does not merely analyse but it also evaluates the various ways through which humans and animals interact positively or negatively in the selected Malawian oral discourses. Specifically, I analyse the representation of animals in Malawian folktales, proverbs, *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs, and the *Nyau* animal masks of the Chewa *Gule Wamkulu* and I argue that long before Western eco-philosophers became interested in the environment through ecocritical and deep ecological formulations, the indigenous people in Malawi had already generated ecological wisdom of great repute and in which animals are centrally positioned. This is reflected in the people's cosmovision through which the social, physical and spiritual worlds are interrelated and interdependent.

Omonzejie (2013) explains that "[i]n African human societies, animals as part of the physical environment play an important role in the conceptualisation of spirituality and belief systems. The manner in which they are depicted in narrative fiction often reflects the attitude of a people about animals embedded in their religion, culture and life philosophies" (71). People's attitude about animals as reflected in their religio-cultural and philosophical formulations shed light on how they are perceived and treated. Significantly, I demonstrate and thereby prove, the existence of Malawian indigenous awareness of the connectedness between humans, animals, and their natural environment, and furthermore, prove that this connectedness has cultural, religio-political and philosophical implications.

Through the analysis of Malawian folktales, proverbs, Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs and *Gule Wamkulu* animal masks, the study investigates the human-animal relationships depicted in these oral genres. Folktales, proverbs, *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs and *Gule Wamkulu* animal masks are some of the oral discourses and performances in which the utilisation of animals is ubiquitous and my selection of these genres and cultural practices is purposive and judicious. Through the examination of Malawian oral genres, this study aims to demonstrate

and prove that Malawian oral literature carries indigenous ecological knowledge that is originally Malawian. By being "Malawian" in origin in this study I refer to the people who inhabited the land from the pre-colonial era and from whom the current inhabitants trace their genealogies. In Malawi in particular, and Sub-Saharan Africa in general, "[o]ur worldview is basically based on spiritual relationality and the language of myths, parables, fables, proverbs, song and dance" (Musopole 8). The selected oral genres and performances analysed in this study come from different linguistic groups with unique cosmovisions and ecophilosophies. The study engages in advocating for cultural preservation in response to the call by the Government of Malawi to "preserve important cultural and traditional knowledge for future generations" *(Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biodiversity*, 3). In preserving cultural traditions, folktales, legends, fables, myths, proverbs, folksongs, tongue twisters, ritualised religious performances and riddles, *inter alia*, are important. Mbiti (1969) posits that philosophical systems in Africa are found in "religion, proverbs, oral traditions, ethics and morals of the society" (2). Mbiti further asserts that "[t]o be is to be religious in a religious universe. That is the philosophical understanding behind African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions, and social relationships" (262). The preservation of cultural values entails the preservation of carriers of philosophy with its religious ontology in which God, the spirits of the ancestors, animals and plants are integral to people's cosmovision.

This study does not merely document indigenous oral cultural forms in Malawi, but it also examines human-animal relationships in order to conceptualise humane values derived from the people's environmental embeddedness. Living in era of global social media information, the youth who constitute the majority of Malawians, need the "once upon a time" tales, pithy proverbs, traditional songs and the cryptic *Nyau* language, put in an intellectualised form that draws their attention. By focussing on indigenous environmental knowledge in Malawian oral genres, this study proves that indigenous people have always been close to their land and have listened to the various voices therein and from which they have generated ecological wisdom.

Today, as deep ecologists such as Naess, Barnhill, Gottlieb, Devall and Sessions, among others, are looking for holistic eco-philosophical and spiritual values in Asian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism (Barnhill and Gottlieb 2001), there is a lot of untapped environmental thought in our own cultural values. As Said (1993) notes that for any group of people with cultural roots and whose past bequeathed them language as a vehicle for cultural values, the past cannot be really "over and concluded" (3). In reflecting the past, it is

important to consider how humans have generated environmental knowledge from the various ways through which animals are represented in indigenous oral cultural forms and performances to account for environmental restoration.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

We live in a century where environmental resources are diminishing at alarming rates despite Malawi having "closed forest resources covering about 30 percent of the land, abundant water resources and remarkably diverse flora and fauna" (*Malawi State of Environment* xvi). In Malawi the "overriding environmental issue is land degradation" (Halle and Burgess 6), with the consequent loss of biodiversity. Studying Malawian oral literature through the application of the theory of ecocriticism as a "cross-disciplinary field of environmental humanities" (Siewers 205) can contribute to the ongoing environmental discourse especially about how animals are represented and what human-animal relationships entail for the people.

The study of the representations of animals in Malawian oral literature contextualises the African view about animals that contradicts Descartes, for examples, about animals' lack of rationality, *cogito*, and sentience that "justified animal vivisection" (Kalof 97). When Descartes said, "I cannot share the opinion of Montaigne and others who attribute understanding or thought to animals. […] all the things which dogs, horses, and monkeys are taught to perform are only expressions of their fear, their hope, or their joy; and, consequently, they can be performed without any thought",[1] little did he imagine that his "mechanistic philosophy" will have far reaching consequences in alienating people from the environment and the spiritual world. Rapport and Overing (2000) observe that:

> Consciousness has been of modern philosophical concern since René Descartes (1596–1650) formulated what became known as the *cogito:* 'I think therefore I am'. Thereafter, the centre of philosophical gravity shifted from the cosmos to the individual human being; forces which controlled human behaviour and destiny were felt to arise more and more from within the individual, while belief in the spiritual life and activity previously felt to be immanent in the world outside – gods, planets, herbs, humours, church ritual – grew feebler (65).

[1] "Letter to Marquess of Newcastle, 23 November 1646," *Descartes: Philosophical Letters* edited by Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 206-207, quoted by Linda Kalof, 2007:97.

This illustrates why Anglo-American ecocriticism critiques modernity, technological achievements, industrialisation and anthropocentrism. This is also why Anglo-American ecocriticism advocates "a shift of emphasis in the way we imagine the self, from the self as an atomised individual with hard-boundaries to […] a self that is as conceptually inseparable as it is materially inseparable from the larger ecosystem that sustains its physical body" (Kerridge 354). Bujo (2003) deconstructs the Cartesian "*cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore, I am) to *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* (I am related, therefore we are)" (22) which reflects the African view of the interrelatedness of ecological entities and thus, humans are not the possessors and controllers of nature but rather humans must obey the rules of nature.

Indigenous ecological knowledge is rooted in people's cosmovisions of entangled interconnectedness of humans with the physical and divine environments. With *Namalenga* as the divive source of all creation (*chilengedwe*) that functions as a whole "[h]umankind like the rest of the natural world was [and still is], as part of the natural patterning of creation, in a state of goodness with potential for good action" (Khalid 9). Advocating for goodness, justice and appropriate moral values are central to the African philosophy of *uMunthu* reflected by the proverb *nzeru umati n'zako n'zokuwuza*; the wisdom you say you have has been imparted to you by others. This informs a philosophy not only of collective responsibility, but also a philosophy generated from the repertoire of the collective community. *Nzeruzayekha anaviika nsima m'madzi;* his/her-own-wisdom dipped *nsima* (Malawi's staple food) into water, because in the African context, wisdom is sourced out and obtained from others.

By exploring the environmental consciousness in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, I also evaluated the people's environmental embeddedness as reflected in the various oral genres that I undertook to discuss. The rationale behind this exploration was not only to help contextualise the various ways through which Malawians have imagined and interacted with animals in their cosmovision, but it was also to posit that interest in the environment is not a "white" people's enterprise only, a position that bears the mark of Anglo-American environmental literary criticism.

Buell (2011) observes that "early ecocriticism's enthusiasm for restoring contact between modern humans and the natural world – and for preservationist initiatives advocating this in the public sphere – has to a large extent given way to indictment of preservationism as an imposition of the privileged (white, affluent, Eurocentric)" (xiv). While environmental preservation and conservation are important in the restoration of environmental sanity, these

should not be imposed on the underprivileged poor whose environments have been and are still being exploited. In any case, already African ecophilosophy is not an imposition but is generated from the environment and it is not divorced from the people's spirituality. It is worth noting that "knowledge and land are intimately bound to one another is a belief widely shared among indigenous peoples, as is the accompanying belief that the natural world is alive, spiritually replete" (Whitt *et.al.* 3). Indigenous people's knowledge is generated from their environment and, as such, it is plausible to assume that they take hemselves to be responsible to it.

People's embeddedness to their environment positively correlates with their ancestral lineage and their closeness to the land. The stories people tell are generated from their land and such stories are about their land as bequeathed to them by their ancestors. Indigenous ecophilosophical values are preserved in the stories people generate from their environment and their sense of belonging to their land is based on the fact that it is the land of their ancestors. Because "[i]ndigenous responsibilities to and for the natural world are based on an understanding of the relatedness, or affiliation, of the human and non-human worlds" (Whitt *et.al*. 4) environmental conservation measures shall not come from the West thinking they fit into the African cosmovision.

The examination of Malawian indigenous oral discourses for environmental consciousness helps contextualise the rich array of natural resources prevalent in the past as compared to the scarcity of these resources now. Therefore, the central argument behind this study is that Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms reveal the people's environmental consciousness. These indigenous oral cultural forms also provide a significant platform for arguing that the people's interest in the environment has primordial origins that transcend the current Western ecocritical, zoocritical and deep ecological concerns. Furthermore, Malawian oral literature provides fertile ground for the study of human-animal relationships that can help bring awareness to the challenges of environmental degradation.

Love (2003) is of the view that one way to achieve meaningful literary criticism is through marrying it with science while focusing on the environment in the literary text. Reading oral literature using ecocriticism, therefore, increases its "credibility" and relevance in the contemporary culture. The people's knowledge deciphered from the environment reflects their awareness of the biotic and abiotic entities and the various ways through which they are interrelated and this entails that from time immemorial indigenous people have not been

"nature sceptical" (Love 163). Although in Malawi "[r]ecords indicate a total of 5,000 – 6,000 plant species, 188 species of mammals, 69 species of amphibians, 124 species of reptiles, 648 species of birds and 600 species of fish" (Millington and Kaferawanthu 2005:3), the current discourse is the discourse of biodiversity loss. It is significant to note that "[e]nvironmentalism is about the story of a loss but mere expression of anxieities about this loss is not enough: we need some sort of activity, both physical and intellectual to repair it" (Mazumber 3). This provides a vital point of departure for this study – the need to intellectualise biodiversity loss and how indigenous oral cultural forms have potential to restore the environment.

1.4 Literature Review

The literature available on Malawian oral literature such as folktales and proverbs and indigenous cultural practices such as *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs and traditional animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu*, reveal that no studies have used an ecocritical approach. Key concerns in studies about oral literature in Malawi have involved compilation of various oral genres in order to preserve them for future generations in the light of the dying interest in oral discourses in the globalised context. Critics who have analysed Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms have placed their emphasis elsewhere and not on the environmental consciousness of the people, their environmental embeddedness, or the human/animal relationships in oral discourses. The editorial to *Kalulu: A Bulletin of Malawian Oral Traditions* (1982) explains that the "articles in this issue bear witness to the flourishing research interest in Malawian oral traditions […]. Equally, they illustrate the richness of the Malawian cultural heritage and appeals for the need to vigorously record, preserve and develop these traditions for self-knowledge and a better understanding of the Malawian character" (1). None of the research papers in oral literature in this bulletin focuses on indigenous ecological knowledge and the representation of animals/and nature in Malawian oral literature. Kishindo (1982) observes that early writings by missionary educated African writers such as Nthala's, *Nthondo* (1933), Phiri's *Kalenga ndi Mnzake* (1958) and Paliani's *1930 Kunadza Mchape* (1971), "show Christocentric bias" in representing African values and philosophy mainy because "the authors were born in colonial era" and that "the missionaries [owned] the publishing houses" (15). The colonisers and missionaries used Africans as vehicles for marginalising their own cultural values.

Although Singano and Roscoe compiled and edited *Tales of Old Malawi* (1974) and Kumakanga collected and compiled proverbs in *Nzeru za Kale* (1946) and various other

researchers in oral literature have undertaken to preserve it through compilation, Nazombe (1983) explains that "[b]y 1882 Duff MacDonald had compiled two volumes on the customs and folklore of his Yawo and Nyanja neighbours in Southern Nyasaland" (10-11). What this implies is that there has been tremendous work on compiling and recording Malawian oral literature for the purpose of preservation. These compilations and other books in Chichewa or Chinyanja, Nazombe (1983) observes, "have constantly served as […] storehouses of tradition" (10). These respositories of Malawian oral literatures have not been studied from an environmentalist stand point.

Kings Phiri (1982) asserts that "[i]n the overall study of *Nyau*, the emphasis so far has been on its social, educational and religious role and function in Chewa society" (55). Studying *Nyau* or *Gule Wamkulu* from the perspective of human-animal relationships is a rarity that the present study ekes out. Studies on the Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* initiation ceremonies have mainly focused on *kututa liwu* (literally, to remove the ash), in which accoding to Banda and Kunkeyani (2015), a man symbolised as hyena (*fisi* or *litunau*) is chosen to sleep with girls in order "to sexually initiate girls to complete the rites into womanhood" (3). The importance of *jando* and *nsondo* songs as vehicles of environmental wisdom and the teachings about hardwork, tolerance, self-control and honesty outweigh the "hyena" phenomenon. Munthali *et.al*. (2018) in their research on *jando* and *nsondo* initiation ceremonies in Traditional Authority Liwonde in Machinga district focused on "the interlinkages between teenage pregnancy and child marriage" (8) that come about, according to them, as a result of *kusasa fumbi* (vii) (literally, to remove the dust), a practice similar to *fisi* as already highlighted. Studies in Malawian oral literature and cultural practices tinged with 'colonial' funding reflect a Eurocentric tendency. In a foreword to Finnegan's *Oral Literature in Africa* (2012), Turin argues that "[t]he study and appreciation of oral literature is more important than ever for understanding the complexity of human cognition" (xvii). In the same vein, Finnegan (2012) observes that now "African arts and culture receive their just and overdue worldwide acclaim. Now too oral literatures flourish in multi-coloured frames […] produced and performed in multiple new and old and wondrous forms and in their full diversity of settings, with the same vibrancy as in the past and their long trajectories into the foreseeable future" (xxvi). It is now that the discourses of oral literature and indigenous practices participate in the topical issues of protecting the environment from destruction and pollution.

Manda (2015) examines the role of folktales not only in cultural identity but also in fostering community development through communicating societal values. In departing from Manda, I analyse Malawian folktales from a literary environmental perspective and demonstrate the people's environmental consciousness using human interconnectedness with animals/nature as the basis of indigenous ecological thought. Folktales play an important role in societal cohesion and the animal tales reflect the complexity in human-animal relationships. Timpunza Mvula (1982) observes that the "Chewa folk narrative is characteristically a *cante-fable,* a tale that is narrated and chorused. […]. The term *nthano* (folk narrative), is collectively used to describe myths, legends, folktales and fables" (32, italics in the original). The Malawian *nthano* or *vidokoni* (Tumbuka) includes a wide range of oral narratives. Hangertner-Everts (2008) has collected Malawian myths and folktales and organised them based on thematic content. She observes that "[o]ral literature contributes to maitaining cultural values and commonly and widely practised ways of social behaviour, to excercising social/political control and authority, as well as to forming social institutions" (10). This study departs from the interest in the functions and classifications of oral literature including the various storytelling skills that preoccupy Hangertner-Everts.

Morris (2000) has studied how Malawians conceive animals/nature and human-animal/nature relationships from anthropological perspectives. Morris observes that the "Malawian conception of nature […] has certain affinities with that of the early Greeks as theorised by Aristotle. Malawians are not animists: they do not conceive the world as 'animate' […]. What Malawians convey instead is a sense in which the natural world – the earth, the fungi, the plants, the animals – is believed to possess intrinsic powers and potentialities" (152). Obviously, the conceptualisation of the natural world among Malawians is not mechanistic but possessing inherent potency and possibilities. Morris also notes that "Malawians do not make a *radical* distinction between humans and animals, but rather conceive of humans and animals as sharing many attributes" (37). The various ways through which animals are represented in Malawian folktales, proverbs, folksongs and animal masks (*Nyau/Inyago*) reveal how humans and animals share many attributes. This illustrates why, as Morris further notes that "it is believed in Malawi that the act of killing a game mammal is akin to that of homicide, and that the 'blood' (*chirope*) of the mammal may enact a kind of vengeance" (*Wildlife and Landscapes in Malawi*, 294 – 95). This also explains why within socio-cultural perspective, hunting and killing animals involve the observation of rituals in which care is taken not kill wild animals haphazardly and that taboos are strictly observed. Morris (2004) "explores the role of insects in the social and

cultural life of matrilineal people of Malawi" and he observes that "it is the insects that are the truly dominant life-form, for their numbers on earth are quite staggering" (1). Human-animal/nature interactions are thus, crucial in generating indigenous knowledge.

The only work on ecocriticism/zoocriticism in Malawi, and the first of its kind and magnitude, is Mthatiwa's "Human-Animal Relationships and Ecocriticism: A Study of the Representation of Animals in Poetry from Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa" (2011). With his call that "[e]cocriticism can and should be practised anywhere and its methods applied to any genre" (14), I find the impetus to apply ecocriticism to my reading of Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms. By analysing the representation of animals in the poetry of two Malawian poets, Jack Mapanje and Steve Chimombo; three Zimbabwean poets, Chenjerai Hove, Musaemura Zimunya and Bart Wolffe; two South African poets, Douglas Livingstone and Chris Mann, through ecocritical/zoocritical theoretical formulations, Mthatiwa's study opens avenues for animal/nature studies since its richness provides fertile ground for further studies. Mthatiwa rightly argues that "the place that these poets (the three Zimbabweans, two Malawians and two South Africans) accord animals in their exploration of social, psychological, political, and cultural issues, and how as symbols in, and subjects of, the poems, animals in particular, and nature in general, are used for the poets' conceptualisation and consideration of a wide range of ideas, among others, regarding questions of justice, identity, heritage, and belonging to the cosmos" (1). The various symbolic meanings deciphered and conceptualised from animals entail a rich array of wisdom that people generate from animals.

This study explores human-animal/nature relations in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms in the light of the people's cosmovision in which the physical and the spiritual environments, the human and the non-human are interconnected. Mthatiwa's observation that any literary piece of work fits into an ecocritical analysis is also expressed by Slovic (2009) who notes that "not a single literary work anywhere utterly defies ecocritical interpretation, is off-limits to green reading" (225). This is surely encouraging to budding ecocritics. Having levelled the ground for ecocriticism and its applicability to my study, I wish to return to Mthatiwa's proposition that ecocriticism's "methods [be] applied to any genre." But what is ecocriticism? What are the methodological implications of applying ecocriticism to the interpretation of literary texts?

Glotfelty (1996) says this about ecocriticism's method, "[j]ust 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" (xviii). Ecocriticism, as a politically oriented mode of literary analysis, just as feminism and Marxism are, has a wide scope not only because the concept of environment is broad but also because it "takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature" (xix). By "an earth-centred approach to literary studies" it implies that ecocriticism places its emphasis on ecocentrism and the relationship between literature and ecology.

Rudd (2007) notes that "[e]cocriticism has its roots in the ethical and political concerns of ecology and environmentalism. Like feminism, therefore, it draws its energy from a clutch of attitudes and beliefs not all of which will be regarded in exactly the same way by all practitioners, and not all of which will be to the fore in any given reading of a text or topic" (8). By drawing "its energy from a clutch of attitudes and beliefs" that are at variance with each other, ecocriticism renders itself a flexible theory with interdisciplinary relevance. Despite its wide range of application and interpretation of literary texts, Zapf (2016a) is of the view that, "[t]wo basic axioms of an ecological epistemology, connectivity *and* diversity, need to be taken seriously both in ways in which ecocritical issues and subjects are explored and in the ways in which ecocriticism positions itself within the wider spectrum of contemporary academic disciplines" (4). This emphasis on "connectivity *and* diversity" is important in ecocriticism since it is a theoretical formulation that pays attention to both the diversity and the interdependence of humans, non-human organisms and non-living things.

The "eco" in "ecocriticism" is derived from "ecology" which implies that it is an ecological literary criticism. Howarth (1996) explains that "*Eco* and *critic* [are] both derived from Greek, *oikos* and *kritis*, and in tandem they mean 'house judge'", and that "*oikos* is nature 'our widest home' and the *kritos* is an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order" (69). The close link of ecocriticism with "home" and the making of decisions and judgements about that "home" is important because it entails human trusteeship of the environment. Douglass (1998) observes that since the word "ecology" refers to "the science or study of interconnectedness," an ecocritique is "but a consideration of the ways in which we perceive the interconnectedness of things" (136). The "interconnectedness of things" in ecocriticism makes the theory convenient. Douglass further notes that "ecocriticism is reading with attention to treatments of nature, land, and place, informed by a desire to understand past and present connections

between literature and human attitudes regarding the earth" (138). With oral literature, understanding "past and present connections between literature and human attitudes regarding the earth" is not farfetched because it is rooted in people's cosmovisions. Ecocriticism thus, opens up spaces for what Estok (2009) calls "ambivalent theorising" (2). By this Estok means that "[t]he more we talk about representations of nature, the more it becomes clear that there is a need to talk about how contempt for the natural world is a definable and recognisable discourse" (2). What this entails is that the discourse of environmental activism goes in hand in hand with the discourse of aversion to nature as observed in such local expressions as *nyanja yakalipa* (the lake is angry), *mvula/mphepo yawononga katundu wa anthu* (the rain/tornado has destroyed people's properties.

Similarly, Westling (2012) explains that "[w]hat is new about ecocriticism is its implicit congruence with the sciences that tell us about Earth's history, the relation of humans to other life forms, balances and disruptions in living systems" (75). Examining the various aspects of the "confluence" and "congruence" implicit in an ecocritical approach to a literary text also entails, like poststructuralism, that meaning is open-ended. Therefore, as Slovic (2015) opines, the "strongest tendencies in contemporary ecocriticism are the application of environmental perspectives to local literatures around the world or the comparison of literary works across languages and cultures" (8). Ecocriticism opens up trans-disciplinary application of theories to the interpretation of literary texts.

Rudd (2007) posits that there is no "single, uniform outlook" in ecocriticism because "[c]entral to ecological thinking in general is a recognition of the importance of diversity – of species, of environments and even of approach. Balance is achieved not through the eradication of one thing and the total dominance of another but by a constant movement that keeps everything in play" (3-4). Various ecocritical theorists agree about multiple concerns in ecocriticism that inform the theory's eclecticism from which it gets its strength. Gaard *et.al.* (2013) assert that "ecocriticism grows stronger through its intersections with the environmental sciences, environmental politics and philosophy, literary and cultural studies, postcolonial theory, globalisation theories, and queer theory" (1). By consciously or unconsciously drawing from these "intersections" the ecocritical analysis becomes not only delightful as the literary text responds to cross-disciplinary issues that unite in their environmental concerns, but it also shows that ecocriticism's versatility prevents a rigid approach to literature.

Zapf (2016) observes that "in the early twenty-first century […] the eco-didactic orientation and polemical opposition to theory has been superseded by an opening of ecocriticism to various branches of cultural studies and, consequently, by a rapidly increasing theoretical and methodological diversification" (45). Key to the "rapidly increasing theoretical and methodological diversification" in ecocriticism is to focus on how nature is represented in the literary text while drawing from science and other related disciplines. In its "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (Rueckert 1996:107), ecocriticism is a scientific approach to the literary analysis. Science, therefore, becomes nobody's monopoly because "[e]very knowledge production is science. Science is thus a human enterprise and belongs to all. The science of indigenous knowledge production is foundational to understanding the social, spiritual, metaphysical and physical worlds of indigenous people" (Sefa 49). The human-animal therianthropic masked dancer who stands and performs on two poles almost five metres high, in *Gule Wamkulu*, for example, employs indigenous science. *Gologolo* (lizard) who climbs a high slippery pole and swings on a rope as he performs in *Nyau* also uses indigenous science rooted in the knowledge of the environment, gravity and pendulum.

This illustrates why Buell (2005) defines ecocriticism as "the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyse the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation" (239). Mobilising "all sciences [to] come together" in solving the world's environmental challenges entails that ecocriticism has a great agenda involving what Garrard (2004) describes as the "production, reproduction and transformation of large-scale metaphors" (7) where several "tropes" such as pollution, pastoral, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling and earth are called into play.

For Garrard (2004) "[t]he study of the relations between animals and humans in the Humanities is split between philosophical consideration of animal rights and cultural analysis of the representation of animals" (136). Rather than focusing on "animal rights", this study dwells on the "cultural analysis of the representation of animals." Garrard (2004) further identifies anthropomorphism and theriomorphism as constituting key metaphoric constructs through which animals are represented in culture distinguishing the two terms as, "[t]heriomorphism is the reverse of anthropomorphism, and is often used in contexts of national or racial stereotyping, such as when Nazis depicted Jews as rats" (141). While in indigenous oral cultural forms, animals are represented in anthropomorphic terms, that is, suggestive of

human attributes such as speech, dressed in suits and marrying female human brides, theriomorphism is used in despising fellow humans. Humans who wear theriomorphic animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* as symbolic of the spirits of the ancestors represent the "philosophical-spiritual position" (Zapf 46) of nature. Garrard, however, expresses concern that "[a]nthropomorphic animal narratives are generally denigrated as 'childish,' thereby associating a dispassionate, even alienated perspective with maturity" (141-42). Garrard's observation here relates to this study in that usually we tend to vilify the anthropomorphic representation of animals in oral literature as children's narratives. Yet, these oral narratives are rich sources of indigenous ecological thought. Oppermann (1999) is of the view that as "more and more environmental theorists make a call for an inward transformation in the humanities, literary theorists cannot ignore the presence of interconnectedness between nature and culture" (44). Culture, thus, thrives in nature.

Buell (2005) sums up the bagginess of an ecocritical approach to literary texts with the words, "[t]he environmental turn in literary studies is best understood, then, less as a monolith than as a concourse of discrepant practices" (11). Ecocriticism "as a concourse of discrepant practices," that is, different kinds of practices in confluence despite their contradictions, is not an easy theory to get hold of. Douglass (1998) observes that "[f]or the moment ecocriticism is […] more of a methodology than a coherent critical theory" (138). As a "methodology" ecocriticism "implies […] ecological literacy" (Howarth 69) and it "seeks to redirect humanistic ideology, not spurning the natural sciences but using their ideas to sustain viable readings" (Howarth 78). By drawing from different kinds of disciplines, ecocriticism is a theory whose relevance and applicability to the interpretation of texts takes a wide array of interconnections.

By taking into account a wide range of subjects as Glotfelty puts it, "nature per se is not the only focus of ecocritical studies of representation. Other topics include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, […] technology, garbage and the body" (xxiii). Ecocriticism is open to a variety of interpretations of literary texts that focus on how the human and nonhuman worlds relate with each other. For Timothy Morton (2010), ecocriticism "affects all aspects of life, culture, and society. Aside from art and science, we must build the ecological thought from what we find in philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, religion, cultural studies, and critical theory" (11). Ecocriticiam is open to different kinds of textual interpretations and analyses that converge on how the literary text represents the environment and the ways the human and the non-human worlds interact.

Barry (2002) explains that ecocriticism/green studies "does not have a widely-known set of assumptions, doctrines, or procedures" (249). Despite its lack of "a widely-known set of assumptions, doctrines, or procedures," what is clear is that its "earth-centred approach to literary" and cultural studies implies ecocentrism as opposed to anthropocentrism. One key ecological concept is examining the symbiotic relationship in the text. Heise (2006), however, observes that "ecocriticism coheres more by virtue of a common political project than on the basis of shared theoretical and methodological assumptions, and the details of how this project should translate into the study of culture are continually subject to challenge and revision" (506). Ecocritical practices agree on an ecocentric approach.

Eckersley (1992) describes "an ecocentric perspective" as "an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations in which there are no absolutely discrete entities and no absolute dividing lines between the living and the non-living, the animate and the inanimate, or the human and the nonhuman" (49-50). Although this is conceptualised as quintessentially undividable, every entity is unique and has its own niche. Rudd (2007), however, is of the view that "[e]cocriticism strives to move away from the anthropocentrism which creates a value-system in which the only things that are seen, let alone valued, are those that serve some kind of purpose in human terms. This in turn raises the difficulty of how we may speak for the Other (all that is not human) without either perpetuating the human/non-human divide or absorbing that Other into the human" (5-6). The ecocentric vis-à-vis anthropocentric debate notwithstanding, ecocriticism provides new possibilities with "ecological concepts" for analysing literary texts that otherwise would not have been there.

Kerridge (2012) explains that "[a]n ecological approach to culture will be guided by this principle of looking for interconnections, and by the related ecological concept of the 'niche': the set of conditions, including climate, food, shelter and the numbers of competitors and predators, that makes it possible for a species to survive in an ecosystem" 12). The interconnections in the ecosystem within which organisms have different niches exhibit ecological wholeness. Kerridge further says that in "an ecological approach to culture," "[l]andscapes, climate, weather, plants, animals and children acquire new symbolic meanings precisely insofar as they are threatened, which can change the way we read historic texts, shifting the balance – always under negotiation anyway – between reading those texts with the aim of historical understanding, and reading them according to our present day sensibilities" (13). Reading oral genres "according to our present day sensibilities" is extremely rewarding

because as historical texts that reflect how the people interacted with the natural environment, we are able to relate them to the current state of environmental degradation.

Since this study focuses on human-animal relationships and the representation of animals in Malawian oral literature, the use of the term "[z]oocriticism" is also important. Majumber (2017) explains that "zoocriticism is one of the fastest growing subfields within ecocritical literary studies. It is concerned with how the relationship between human beings and animals gets reflected in literature" (373). This entails that zoocriticism examines how animals are represented in literature. In dealing with how human-animal relationships get "reflected in literature," Majumber also notes that "zoocriticism traces its roots to animal studies, a formation that draws on philosophy, zoology, and religion" (374). Ryan (2020) observes that "zoocriticism invites attention to 'animal texts' representing animal life, zoological histories and ethics, and human-animal relations" (5). The field of animal studies is also known as human-animal studies or anthrozoology and it is thus, "an interdisciplinary field that explores the spaces that animals occupy in human social and cultural worlds and the interactions humans have with them" (DeMello 3). Majumber (2019) notes that zoocriticism "is concerned with how the relationship between human beings and animals gets reflected in literature. […]. Thus zoocriticism is oriented towards heightening the readers' awareness and even towards inciting them to social and political action" (41). In Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, human-animal relations occupy significant positions in the lives of the people in generating ecological wisdom that reflect the people's socio-political and religio-cultural values.

Despite the methodological challenges, ecocriticism and/or zoocriticism offers rich possibilities for approaching literary texts and the theory fits into my thesis especially because "many traditional societies do not hold the view that people are separate from nature" (Sutton and Anderson 2). This inseparability of people from nature in traditional societies entails the recognition of their oneness as integral parts of nature resulting from their environmental embeddedness. This view links closely with deep ecology.

Montaño (2006) presupposes that the "death of anthropocentrism" (181) is the birth of ecocentrism. Montaño explains that "Deep Ecology arises as a new perception to visualise the inexorable changes that humanity currently confronts. This new scientific-philosophical-religious approach claims for a new treatment for the Earth" (181). Deep ecology, however, is also an economic and ideological approach in which humans become sacrificial victims for the flourishing of the non-humans. Malthus (1798 [1998]) posits that "[p]opulation, when

unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetic ratio" (4) and adopted by deep ecology what this entails is a drastic reduction in human population for the non-human to thrive because population growth exceeds agricultural production. Rather than being misanthropic in its approach as deep ecology does, indigenous ecophilosophical thought takes a philanthropic approach.

African oral literature does not only reflect the continent's richness in its cultural heritage but it also shows the people's embeddedness in their environments. Because oral literature heavily draws from the environment its educational core values have transformative effects on people's behaviours and actions. Sone (2018) brings this point home when he correctly explains that "oral literature is at the centre of mind transformation because, like the function of literature itself, it promotes ethically driven actions by stating what ought to be and not just what is" (2). This is a significant point that Sone raises and because oral literature transforms the mind, its reading from an ecocritical perspective aligns it with contemporary environmental issues and helps us develop a positive attitude to environment/nature. Sone argues that "[a]s Africans, to envision the future, we need to understand the lessons of our past, and to act in the present; we must be sensitive to current cultural complexities enshrined in our folklore" (2). In my view, key to our sensitivity to "current cultural complexities enshrined in our folklore" is the question of human-animal relationships and the representation of animals, rather than focussing on oral literature simply as an academic discipline as Sone suggests.

African oral literature is rich with environmental overtones because of the people's closeness with nature. Chadwick and Chadwick (1968) observe that "Africa opens up a field of research [in oral literature] which is perhaps richer than any other continent" (501). Part of Africa's richness in oral literature is its continued relevance and applicability in contributing to the debates in contemporary environmental discourses. In Africa, humans, "animals, plants, and virtually all other elements of nature" (Ogunjimi and Na'Allah 12) are inseparably interconnected. In this study, I join these and other voices that have contributed to the representation of the "treasury" (Courlander 1996) of the African continent, through reading animal-human relationships in Malawian oral literature while exploring the environmental consciousness and embeddedness of the people whose cultural productions constitute the core of my analysis.

What indigenous people think about animals as represented in folklore reflects their attitudes towards real animals. Generally, this assumption presupposes anthropomorphism, and in which

case, "the practice of giving nonhuman animals human characteristics is thousands of years old and can be found in the myths, folktales, symbolism, and artwork of peoples around the world" (DeMello 32). That animals express different emotional states just as humans express is the indigenous stance represented in folklore through figurative language. Bekoff (2000) expresses similar views concerning the emotional states of animals:

> Pythagoreans long ago believed that animals experience the same range of emotions as humans (Coates 1998), and current research provides compelling evidence that at least some animals likely feel a full range of emotions, including fear, joy, happiness, shame, embarrassment, resentment, jealousy, rage, anger, love, pleasure, compassion, respect, relief, disgust, sadness, despair, and grief" (861).

Although Bekoff gives few examples of animals that express some of these emotions such as elephants, chimpanzees, ravens, whales and dogs, for example, he expresses optimism about animal emotions through human language manifested in anthropomorphism, (using human terms to explain animals' emotions or feelings" (867). The use of emotions in representing animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms is based on anthropomorphism and this is how indigenous people conceptualise animals and as Bekoff asserts that "[t]o claim that one cannot understand elephants, dolphins, or other animals because we are not one of them leaves us nowhere" (866). In oral literature, the emotions that Bekoff lists may or may not be there in the animals, but they are represented in human language.

Singer (1975 [2002]), laments the quandary about animals in the Western culture. He says, "[w]e have seen how, in violation of the fundamental moral principle of equality of consideration of interests that ought to govern our relations with all beings, humans inflict suffering on non-humans for trivial purposes; and we have seen how generation after generation of Western thinkers has sought to defend the right of human beings to do this" (213). Singer's concern of human infliction of suffering on non-humans is only if it is for trivial purposes and he does not provide any normative guidelines in terms of what people ought to do. Singer emphasises that animals are sentient entities and he illustrates this with a stone and a mouse, the latter having "an interest in not suffering" (7-8). However, I find Singer's notion of identifying a similar pattern in racism, sexism and speciesism (9) objectionable because the first two terms entail discrimination based on differences in race, sex and gender in which one group of human beings treats other human beings as if they were not humans. The third term,

speciesism, which is human discrimination of animals, is not analogous to the first two terms, *racism* and *sexism*. However, Singer's argument that humans should treat animals with respect is valid.

Human equality with animals is improbable; the life of an animal is not equal in value to the life of a human being. It is not human moral equality with animals that makes humans to have obligations towards animals. Where humans are required "to extend equal consideration to animals too" (Singer 1), this extension presupposes inequality and the question of "equal consideration" precludes "equal treatment." Furthermore, by virtue of having the capacity for suffering if kicked, the mouse is not equal to the human being. Although colonial discourse referred to the natives in racist terms as animals such as monkeys, for example, a reading of oral literature regarding human-animal relations reveals that differences exist between humans and animals. It is therefore, incorrect to conceptualise human liberation in similar terms as animal liberation.

Sztybel (2010) notes that "using the liberation movements on behalf of blacks and women as models, the animal liberation movement rejected *speciesism* (arbitrary discrimination on the basis of species or species-characteristics) as well as racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism [discrimination in favour of the able-bodied]" (49). Humans and animals belong to different species and although folktales use animals for their instrumental value by representing them as grooms of human brides, animals are a taxonomic group that cannot interbreed with humans. The questions of animal equality with humans and animal rights do not arise in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms which fall within "natural history." Huggan and Tiffin (2010) explain that "[t]he genres of natural history also stress differences between ourselves and other animal groups, although they are sometimes deliberately anthropomorphic. Inevitably, too, wild animal behaviours – mothering, playing, fighting, eating – will to some extent be read or seen anthropomorphically; but natural history genres tend also to focus on difference, however great their affective appeal" (152). Although animals are represented in anthropomorphic terms and by means of metaphors and allegories animals speak to facilitate human-animal relations, their representations transcend fables and they reveal people's environmental consciousness.

Regan's (1983 [2004]) concern is "animals rights" which is "more than a philosophical idea; [but] it is also part of the name of a burgeoning social justice movement, the animal rights movement" (xiv). It is not easy, however, for humans and animals to enter into a dialogue to

negotiate terms of justice. Cochrane (2012) hints at the difficullty some thinkers express about animal right because "animals are unable to respect the rights of others or claim rights for themselves, two supposedly necessary conditions for possessing rights" (1). This challenge notwithstanding, Regan acknowledges animal consciousness, the "attribution of conscious awareness to animals is so much a part of the common sense view of the world that to question animal awareness is to question the veracity of common sense itself" (3). Unfortunately, like Singer before him who only focuses on sentient animals, Regan is concerned with the rights of mammalian animals. The concern in oral literature is not with sentient and mammals only but extends to invertebrates and other species that are non-sentient.

Ryder (2010) finds utilitarianism and rights theory as having "major faults" (402). He argues that "rights theory principally because of its difficulty in resolving inevitable conflicts of rights, and utilitarianism because it allows the infliction of agony on one or a few individuals if that action causes mild pleasure to such a large number of others that the total of their pleasures outweighs the pain of the victim(s)" (402). Every animal ethics is thus problematic and this is largely because "[o]ur relationship with other animals is complex, and our treatment of them is as controversial as our treatment of other human beings" (Lynn 422). The huge inequalities among humans constitute the key paradox facing humanity today and the challenge worsens when it comes to the human treatment of animals.

Moran (2000) notes that "human consciousness is always caught within the context of the 'life-world'" (66). People's experiences, especially those involving animals and the "intentional acts" (Moran 66) of the indigenous people, shape their selfhood and the ways they relate to the natural environment as they adapt to changes over time. Ganyi (2016) asserts that "an awareness of the African environment can only come from knowledge of the culture, customs and knowledge systems which are immensely found in the oral literatures of African peoples" (17). Malawian indigenous people are grounded in "the knowledge of the culture, customs and knowledge systems" as reflected in their oral cultural forms whose worthwhileness for analysis using ecocriticism cannot be overemphasised. Of particular importance now is how Malawian indigenous people relate to their environment from which they generate ecological wisdom rooted in long experiences of interactions with nature.

Interestingly, such profound ecological wisdom is conceptualised in the people's own language. Mfune-Mwanjakwa (2016) makes a significant observation in ways we use language

to reflect our consciousness when he says "[c]ommon observation suggests that Malawians (and, perhaps, Africans, generally) have difficulty linking the knowledge they supposedly gain in school with their immediate environment and their lived experiences in it. In other words, there seems to be a yawning gap between what they 'know' and what they are supposed to 'understand' – by which is meant what they practice in their environment and lived experiences" (2-3). This "yawning gap between what [people] 'know' and what they are supposed to understand'" exists mostly in the "school" setting but in folklore lived experiences are reflections of indigenous knowledge. The ecocritical stance of interpreting Malawian oral cultural forms provides a wide array of interconnectedness through which human-animal/nature interactions are culturally embedded in people's consciousness.

Barry (2002) explains that while the theory is referred to as "ecocriticism" in America, it is known as "green studies" in Britain. America's "ecocriticism" develops from American transcendentalism and the British "green studies" from British Romanticism (249 - 250). Common to both romanticism and transcendentalism is their emphasis on emotional impact of literature and eclecticism and thus, rendering the theory defective. Interestingly, there is no perfect theory. Dodie (2011) notes that one central assumption of ecocriticism is that "[b]ecause all life is interrelated, the impact of human activity on the environment should be minimised" (344). The human impact on the earth is enormous and it is the responsibility of the human to arrest the situation. The earth-centeredness of ecocriticism entails the critical concern for the earth as the subject that currently matters.

O'Brien (2013) observes that "everyday practices of ecocriticism and nationalism are radically conjoined and often difficult to separate" (169). I agree with O'Brien who calls for an ecocritical practice that responds to the concerns of specific cultures in the globalised context, "[e]cology today […] has come to be seen less as a descriptive study of relations between organisms and their environments than as a prescriptive doctrine about the importance of conserving a balance of those relations in specific environments or bioregions. The scope of this doctrine is theoretically global; that its practical application is frequently inflected by national concerns is evident from looking at contemporary environmental issues and politics" (169). Ecocriticism addresses broad environmental concerns in literary texts focussing not only on how the human and non-human world are interrelated but also on how nature is represented. Childs and Fowler (2006), identify "two main impulses or strands to ecocriticism", the "first addresses itself to the growing canon of 'eco-literature' that has emerged in response to the

global environmental crisis" while the second "involves re-reading the existing literary canon in ecocritical terms" (65). In both of these strands, the ecocritical reading and re-reading of literary texts deals with how the environment is represented and the various ways through the human and the nonhuman worlds interact.

The concept of interconnectedness in ecocriticism because of its marriage with ecology relates with the values of deep ecology. Two key principles of deep ecology are "biocentric egalitarianism" and "metaphysical holism" (Devall and Sessions 67-69; Naess 1995) that emphasise the interrelated wholeness of organisms as equal entities the ontological interconnectedness of which culminates in self-realisation, identification and commonality of all life forms (Yang 30; see also Fox 1990). In order for the "nonhuman life" to flourish, folklore does not demand the elimination of the human as deep ecology does. Principle four in "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology" (1984) by Arne Naess and George Sessions states that "[t]he flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease" (4). This view is rooted in capitalist misanthropy in which the reduction of human population is thought to be a means of economic success for the remaining few.

To have a programme to reduce human population substantially for the thriving of nonhumans is to wrongly suggest that human beings exist by chance and that this world does not have enough sustenance for every creature. Indigenous lore in its cosmovision perceives the human and nonhuman worlds as ineluctably interrelated and interdependent. The call to reduce human population entails deep ecology's engagements with the capitalist ideologies rooted in misanthropy of panic existence and self-elimination rather than taking on the roles of environmentally responsible citizens and guardians of the earth. It is worth noting that "bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, [are] bodies that arguably operate against the interests of the majority of the Earth's population (human and otherwise)" (Wong 332) and therefore we need not normalise misanthropic concerns of deep ecology; especially its concept of ecocentrism. Gray *et.al*. (2018) explain the challenges of ecocentrism, "[t]he changes that the ecocentric worldview demand are many, but high up the priority list are humanely transitioning to a far smaller human population, dramatically curbing our voracious appetite for carbon, swiftly moving from industrial agriculture to genuinely sustainable and humane food systems, and greatly shrinking the world's economies" (130). Yet, this world has enough means of subsistence for the entire human population and animals including birds. Miller Jr. and Spoolman (2008) observe that

"[i]t takes about 27 tractor-trailer loads of resources per year to support one American, or 7.9 billion truck loads per year to support the entire U.S. population. Stretched end-to-end, this number of trucks would go beyond the sun" (17).The point raised here is that global inequality is huge and this affects the environment in negative ways and the reduction of human population is by no means a solution to the environmental crises.

Having discussed the literature available on ecocriticism drawn from different ecophilosophical formulations, the theory that guides this study remains ecocriticism and zoocriticism with some concepts drawn from deep ecology. I refer indigenous oral cultural forms to a body of ecological knowledge generated within the Malawian cultural context and passed from one generation to another by the word of mouth. Through many years of experiences of interacting with the nonhuman worlds, indigenous people have gathered significant ecological knowledge that helps shape environmentally friendly humans who consider all other creations as "beings." Risiro *et.al*. (2013) argue that "[i]ndigenous people had their own ways of conserving the environment apart from the use of sacred places, taboos and totems" (22). The question of the interconnectedness of ecological entities is not farfetched in oral discourses. In the indigenous context, the "world in which humans live […] that provide insight into a multi-scaled world of plants, animals, and micro-fauna (and even sacred mountains, lakes, or rivers) that are considered 'beings' are all connected and entangled together" (Adamson and Monani 4). Indigenous people's cosmology considers the divine world and the physical world as reciprocally interconnected.

Indigenous ecological knowledge takes a unitary worldview in which the human and nonhuman worlds are ineluctably interrelated through the lens of cosmovisions. Adamson and Monani further explain that, "cosmovisions are articulated within specific histories, geographies, and contemporary contexts, they are an active means to negotiate the practice of daily survival. They serve as philosophical engagements to navigate the everyday ethics of living in wider worlds with humans and nonhumans alike" (8). Language is also important in articulating the discourse of the environment because "we need to acknowledge not only that language shapes our perception and understanding of the environment rather than giving us a transparent view of the environment but also the language itself is the product of social process" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 5). The imperial legacy on the African continent implies that the perception of the environment challenges the Anglo-American literary environmental formulations.

Vital (2008) argues that Anglo-American ecocriticism "has tended to refelect the interests and concerns of the countries in the North. […] there is no good reason not to develop an African ecocriticism, one which engages in debating what a society's assigning of significance to nature (in varieties of cultural products) reveals about both its present and past" (87). This is what provides the impetus to this study because "imperialism not only altered the cultural, political and social structures of colonised societies, but also devastated colonial ecologies and traditional subsistence patterns" (Ashcroft *et.al.* 69). With the advent of colonialism, Western diseases, livestock, trees and crops appeared in Africa. This illustrates why Slaymaker (2007) argues that "Black African writers take nature seriously in their creative and academic writing but many have resisted or neglected the paradigms that inform much of global ecocriticism" (685). Therefore, in using concepts from ecocriticism and deep ecology to the analysis and interpretation of human-animal relationships and the representation of animals in Malawian oral cultural forms, this study privileges the voice of the indigenous people. This is because it is from their indigenous eco-philosophical point of view and/or cosmovision that the oral genres are narrated and nature is represented based on the people's observational and experiential knowledge of environmental phenomena. It is worth noting, however, as Caminero-Santangelo and Myers (2011), assert that:

> African studies has long resided at the margins of global literary studies, including in the field of ecocriticism. While Africa arguably may occupy something of a more central post in global environmental discourses, upon closer examination, particularly from the standpoint of literary criticism of those discourses, what we see is an imagined Africa occupying a place-in-the-world assigned to it in the age of imperialism: nature, absent of people, and Edenic, in need of salvation from its own inhabitants (15).

This passage has been quoted at length to show how African environments are suffering from the effects of colonialism, postcolonialism and globalisation. In exploring indigenous oral cultural forms, this study is premised on marginalised environments which are crucially important to the ecocritical discourse. The imperial image of Africa invites reading Anglo-American ecocriticism from the perspective of deconstruction in what Caminero-Santangelo (2014) says that "African literature can challenge dominant Western assumptions regarding African environments and environmentalism" in order to "interrogate widely accepted definitions of environmental writing and the underlying constructions of nature and

conservation embedded in them" (4). In doing this, African environmental literary criticism has no obligation to accept Anglo-American ecocritical discourse indiscriminately.

As a continent that has greatly suffered from "global warming, overfishing of oceans, disposal of toxic waste" though "most Africans are not the primary sources of these problems, nor do many Africans generally benefit from the resource exploitation that engenders them" (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers 9), African environmental literary criticism is sceptical of Western environmental literary discourse for it "has been predominantly a white movement" (Glotfelty xxv). This entails that African environmental literary criticism must be cautious of white domination and therefore, privilege afro-ecophilosophy; a body of collective knowledge generated by indigenous people from the environment through many years of experiences and observations and drawing inferences and conclusions.

1.5 Chapter Breakdown

In the chapters that follow, I seek to examine environmental consciousness in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms through the various ways animals are represented. This examination also considers the habitats and sources of livelihoods for the animals. In chapter two, I focus on the first objective of this study, to analyse the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales. I focus on the environmental knowledge of the people, their environmental embeddedness and their awareness of animals as projections of indigenous ecophilosophical values. Animal characterisation in folktales mirrors experiences and the socio-political, cultural and economic problems that humans face.

The various ways through which humans and animals interact as characters in the Malawian folktales studied here reflect human perceptions of animals as existentially symbiotic neighbours. The folktales depict the various interrelatedness between humans and animals that reflects human consciousness of ecological wholeness. Animals as characters in folktales have crucial roles in shaping expected behavioural patterns among humans. The representation of animals is a result of people's close observations of how animals behave. In mirroring the socio-political, cultural and economic experiences humans face in their communities, human-animal interactions constitute a significant source for generating indigenous environmental thought. The choice of the folktale as the first analytical chapter is based on the narrative form of this oral genre to be followed by the epigrammatic proverb which also carries a narration in chapter two.

The second objective of this study is to assess how animals are represented in Malawian proverbs and the various ways through which animals are used in seeking justice and personality building. This is the primary focus of chapter three. I analyse Malawian proverbs in order to assess the intricacies of ecological interconnectedness between humans and animals and the nature of ecological knowledge the people generate from proverbs. Animal-oriented proverbs are important in settling disputes, building human personality, and there are other proverbs used in respecting or disrespecting animals proportional to human behaviour and actions. Some proverbs deal with insects and their various interactions with humans. In indigenous oral discourses, the interest in insects is primordially coexistent with the origins of humans and animals. In the people's cosmovision, humans, animals and plants are spiritually interconnected; this interconnectedness includes relational human-insects interactions.

In proverbial lore, insects function to explain whether human behaviour is appropriate or not. Overall, the proverbs involving animals analysed in this chapter are illustrative of my argument that in folklore animals are sources for generating ecological knowledge. The various aspects of the physical environment are intricately represented in concise words to show the richness of the environment in constituting the basis of human knowledge. This kind of sensitivity of humans to the environment carries symbolic and metaphoric implications through which human attitudes to nature become positive rather than hostile. By conceptualising human conditions in terms of animals in proverbs, the human-animal interactions are either positive or negative depending on the instrumental (and, in some cases, intrinsic) value the animal is deemed to embody. The ellipsis feature of the proverb determines the placement of this chapter after the narrative folktale.

The theatrical characteristic of initiation ceremony song performances guides the choice of placing chapter four where it is. In this chapter, I explore the role of animals in introducing children to their local environment through *jando* and *nsondo* animal-oriented songs. The people's environmental consciousness is reflected through the performances of animal-oriented songs during *jando* and *nsondo* initiation rites as cultural practices. My interest in Yawo songs is in the representation of animals – birds, reptiles, insects, and mammals – in teaching the initiates acceptable modes of behaviour and conduct besides introducing boys and girls into adulthood. I argue that animals play important roles in eco-pedagogy and introducing children to their environment through eco-cultural values.

By generating such wisdom from human interactions with and observations of animals, it entails human recognition of their roles in bonding humans to their environment in which interconnectivity of living entities enlivens the ecosystem. Songs involving animals introduce children to the values of their society through their own environment. Animals help children to conceptualise them as compatriots depending on the same environment for survival. The Yawo folksongs used in *jando* and *nsondo* utilise the environment in generating wisdom the elders instil in children a sense of identity and belonging as they grow up as responsible citizens in partnership with nature. The animal metaphors in this chapter focused on moral education in *jando* and *nsondo* songs.

The involvement of the living dead in the form of spirits reincarnated as animals in the drama of the living as therapeutic performances guides the choice of *Gule Wamkulu* to wrap up the discussion of how animals are represented in oral literature in the spiritual realm. Chapter five focuses on the fourth and final objective of this study, to evaluate the representation of animals and animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* (*Nyau*) cultural practices among the Chewa as reflections of the people's environmental embeddedness. Among the Chewa, animal masks are the reincarnations of the spirits of the dead who participate in the drama of the living in animal forms. The chapter examines and analyses the role of the drama of animal masks not only in raising ecological consciousness about the plight of the environment in Malawi, but also in contextualising the cyclical nature of human existence understood within the Chewa cosmology. On the metaphysical level, the animal masks are symbolic of the spirits of the dead that participate in the drama of the living in the form of animals.

I argue that among the Chewa animals are the quintessential partition through which the living and the dead interact. Animal masks are, therefore, archetypes of rebirth and through their involvement in what is termed mystery play, humans and animals reconcile and coexist. Through the disharmony between humans and animals that came about by the human invention of fire, a symbol that recurs in Malawian creation myths, animal masks symbolise reunion that ensures continuity of life. By placating the dead through their involvement in the drama of the living as animal masks, the stories behind the animals reawaken the living to their responsibilities towards the environment. *Nyau* always operates in the liminal space between the dead and the living on the one hand, and between humans and animals, on the other. The continued secrecy of *Nyau* is dependent on the availability of bushes, forests (*dambwe*), from

which animal masks operate. Despite their ultra-conservatisms within *Nyau*, this cultural and religio-political institution responds favourably to the contemporary environmental challenges.

In the sixth and final chapter, I bring together several aspects of the central argument of this study; that the representation of nature, in general, and animals, in particular, in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms does not only reveal the people's embeddedness in their environment and environmental knowledge (awareness), but it also shows their familiarity with animals and their acknowledgement and/or appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and nature/animals. Animals are valuable sources not only for the generation of indigenous ecological knowledge, but they are also benchmarks of what constitutes decency and indecency, appropriate and inappropriate behaviours among humans. I also argue that the depiction of nature in the oral cultural forms reflects the people's cosmovision consisting of an ecophilosophy which considers the physical, spiritual and natural forces as intertwined, an attitude that can be harnessed to promote environmental restoration and ecological diversity.

My analysis of the representation of animals in Malawian folktales, proverbs, the Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* cultural practices involving folksongs and animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu*, demonstrates people's awareness of the ineluctable interconnectedness with animals and other ecological entities in the environment. When indigenous people understand life within the perspective of a cosmovision in which the social, natural and spiritual worlds are conceptualised in holistic terms, it serves to build human personality that is environmentally friendly. Some of the oral texts selected for analysis in this study were already translated by those who collected and compiled them. For the untranslated oral texts, I translated them. I also modified even those oral texts already translated that did not seem to me to be in tandem with society's shared meanings.

CHAPTER 2

MALAWIAN FOLKTALES, ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

2.1 Introduction

Folktales are part of indigenous lore that is employed in the socio-cultural upbringing of children. People's environmental knowledge and awareness are reflected in folktales that represent human-animal and animal-animal relationships. Folktales involving animal characters not only introduce children to the world of animals but they also function to orient children to their physical environment. The various ways through which humans interact with animals inform their awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and animals and/or nature. This chapter argues that the various ways through which animals are represented and the human-animal relationships reflected in Malawian folktales demonstrate the people's awareness and knowledge of the environment as an intricate web of interconnectedness between humans and animals. In folktales, animals embody human values and they reflect the people's imaginations. The ways animals and nature are represented also reveal the people's relational values that "consider the appropriateness of how they relate with nature" (Chan *et.al*.

(1462). The human and non-human interactions in the folktales constitute awareness of ecological wholeness. Despite the fictional human/animal characters in the folktales, the views of animals held by the people reflect their holistic, moral and spiritual views about nature. Human-animal marriages, albeit, allegorical, open up a significant point of analysis that conceptualises animals not merely as automata.

The primary focus of this chapter is to analyse human-animal/nature relationships and the representation of animals in Malawian folktales as vehicles for moral values. The chapter explores what the folktales reveal about people's awareness of animals and the environment. In the two major sections of this chapter, I explicate the various ways through which humans and animals interact in folktales and the moral values humans generate from these interactions. In the first section of the chapter, I analyse the various ways humans relate with animals and nature through metaphoric wedlock and the cultural and ecological implications of these marriages. I demonstrate that human-animal spousal relationships help humans not to make animals inferior to humans but to consider them as integral partners in coexistence. Animal metaphors help create conditions for human-animal relationships that are both helpful and harmful. As Davis and Bryce (2008) note that the human-animal marriages do not portray "indiscriminative love" but rather they "resonate with thematic significance for understanding popular cultural expressions of identity and otherness" (201). Human identification with animals, while at the same time fearing them as the Other, creates an ambivalent relationship. As such, human-animal marriages also function as a form of warning for both girls and boys in terms of how they choose their spouses. Parents who flout societal norms, mores and beliefs about their children's marriages are also equally warned through animal grooms and brides. In the second section of the chapter, I analyse the various other interactions between humans and animals, between, and among animals.

The role of animals in folktales is to help shape human behaviour. Sherman (2008) observes that "[a]ll societies use stories to pass on group values. Wrapped in the sweet pill of an entertaining story, a moral goes down easily. Stories also can be useful tools that allow individuals to chastise or expose negative behaviours without overtly speaking the truth" (xviii). Furthermore, the different kinds of stories representing different facets of human-animal relationships narrated "throughout all the unknown cultures of the world, give evidence of a powerful human desire to know the animal Other. Equally powerful is the pain of accepting our own perceptual limits as human animals, or the dissonance we feel when we do not trust

our understanding of other animals, or when we cannot fully translate what we perceive of them into human language" (Pollock and Rainwater 1). The different references to animals as other animals, nonhuman animals, irrational animals and animal-others while referring to human beings as human animals and rational animals inform the problem of naming. Derrida (2008) uses the French term *animot* to problematise "the animal." Derrida writes: "The animal is a word, it is an appellation that [human beings] have instituted." Locally, references to *nyama* (animal) also refers to the human being when his/her behaviour is animalistic, *munthu n'chinyama* (a human being is an animal). This illustrates the anthropomorphic representation of animals in folklore.

The folktales selected for analysis are from Singano and Roscoe's *Tales of Old Malawi* (1974) and Shawa and Soko's *Tumbuka Folktales: Moral and Didactic Lessons from Malawi* (2010. It is worth noting that the term "folktale" as Haase (2008) asserts, "is often used interchangeably with 'fairy tale,' 'marchen,' and 'wonder tale,' their histories being interrelated and their meanings and applications somewhat overlapping" (363). Haase further says that the term 'folktale' is "a direct translation and an attempt to Anglicise the German term *Volksmärchen*, in much the same way as 'folklore' itself was an appropriation of the concept of *Volkskunde* into the English language" (363). The Malawian *nthano* is formulaic; it begins with the narrator saying *Padangotero* (Once upon a time) to which the listeners respond, *Tili tonse* (We are together). *Nthano* ends with the narrator saying, *Phulani mbatata* (Remove the potato from the fire) to which the listeners reply, *Yapselera* (It is burnt up). Some folktales have songs while others do not have songs as part of their narratives. Besides the didactic function of folktales, fairy tales, fables and tall tales in terms of providing education or instruction, they also provide entertainment and orient children in their cultural values.

2.2 Human-animal marriages and environmental consciousness in Malawian folktales

Malawian folktales instil environmental wisdom among the listeners besides contextualising human and non-human relationships and the kind of attitudes humans have towards animals. In this section, I focus on folktales that involve marriages between animal grooms and human brides. These marriages reveal how people perceive biological and physiological similarities between humans and animals and their awareness and knowledge of the environment. In this section, I seek to show that these marriages are a means of representing Otherness and the unsuccessful endings also entail that folklore recognises the ontological gulf and separateness between humans and animals. Malawian folktales mostly represent animal grooms such as

hare, hyena, lion, duck, tortoise, baboon and monkey with human brides largely in metaphorical terms. The animal groom and human bride relationships are also loaded with gender implications. The girls are depicted as very beautiful but sexually inaccessible to men and thereby they attract what Zheng (2013) describes as "male erotic gaze" and "sadistic voyeurism and/or fetishistic scopophilia (looking as a source of pleasure)" (7) that results in violence and seduction expressed in the form of animal grooms. This feminist view said, the animal grooms are meant to punish girls for breaking the rules of courtship.

In traditional settings, it is a taboo for a girl of marriageable age to choose not to marry and remain single. Through folktales about animal suitors, girls are taught to choose their husbands carefully in addition to preparing the girls for the anxieties of marriage and the beastly behaviours of some men. Therefore, tradition teaches that when a girl has reached marriageable age defined by societal norms, she should marry because society looks at her as an embodiment of moral values. When a girl attains marriageable age defined by society, she has to marry. If she refuses to get married, she is considered to have disobeyed societal mores. Her marriage to an animal retributes for her disobedience.

In this section, I analyse four folktales "The Hare and the Chief's Daughter", "The Bride Price", "Kanguli" and "Lion and Hyena" that involve animal grooms and human girls. By focussing on girls as requiring a lesson from nature, these folktales call attention to an ecofeminist interpretation that sees "a link between dominations of women and dominations of nature" (Davion 233). However, folktales about animal grooms and brides "may embody women's desire for autonomy and equality in marriage; they may reflect male fantasies of domesticating and subduing female power; and they may reflect male anxiety about desertion by females" (Haase 41). This means that in folklore, animals play important roles in helping humans decide how to choose spouses as well as providing hopes and fears of marriage life.

In "The Hare and the Chief's Daughter" (Singano and Roscoe 42-43) the chief's daughter has refused marriage proposals from many men and animals but she falls prey to hare's cunning. Hare observes that the chief's daughter goes to the river to bathe and thereafter basks herself on the sunny and sandy beach. Hare digs a tunnel from the nearby bush ending up just beneath where the girl lies on the sand. From this position, he is able to craftly have sex with the girl, without her knowledge. Hare impregnates the girl inexplicably by having sexual contacts with her from the tunnel. She gives birth to a baby who resembles hare. Throughout the period of

the girl's pregnancy, the community and the girl herself do not know the "man" responsible for it. When she gives birth, the child's resemblance to hare reveals the culprit. Thus, the people become aware of the abilities of hare and the environment in which the chief's daughter and hare interact leading to her pregnancy. The river, the sand, the warmth from the sun on the beach and the ecstasy it provides, the nearby forest where hare hides and the tunnel he digs create an aesthetic and romantic setting as well as environmental awareness of these acting in concert to produce such an outcome as contained in the folktale – however improbable certain of its aspects appear to be when read literally.

As a trickster, hare is deceptive "and violates the moral codes of the community. […]. The trickster is a mythic figure, both creator and destroyer, associated with traditional culture throughout the world" (Haase 992). For his trickery, the environment opens up avenues through which hare interacts with the girl whom he loves so much. In agreement with the masculine aspects of wild animals, Bertens (2008) explains that "a major discourse found in nature writing will standardly extol the virtues of the wilderness and of the wild animals that inhabit it – often in terms of a robust masculinity" (201). The hare-chief's daughter amorous relationship glorifies the hare and stupefies the girl. By representing hare with qualities of cleverness and ingenuity the people admire these qualities which they identify with themselves. Human sharing of the cleverness and ingenuity with hare entails indigenous people's observation of a point of confluence between themselves and hare. This in turn, reveals indigenous environmental awareness. Furthermore, in this folktale, hare is an animal that is firm in purpose and this symbolises the determination of a young man for whom hare stands. In his determination to marry the chief's beautiful daughter, hare observes her movements closely:

> He found out that every afternoon she and her maids went to the river to swim and to play on the lovely river bank. After swimming, hare noticed, the girl would go and lie on the sandy banks, sunbathing while her maids played around her, covering her body with sand. This interested the hare who had also noticed that the chief's daughter had one special place where she always lay in the sun (Singano and Roscoe 42).

The environment depicted here is rich in natural resources such as the river and the sand for swimming and sunbathing that provide the chief's daughter with a comfortable place to relax. Indigenous representation of the physical environment in oral literature is genuinely earth-centric and the manoeuvres of hare and the chief's daughter are set in an environment rich in

natural resources. The description of hare and his impregnating of the chief's daughter in this folktale carry instrumental value insofar as the folktale has its premise on didacticism. The biting sarcasm in the folktale is meant to make the girl regret her action of refusing men for her hand in marriage.

Mota (2009) expresses this view when he says that "[f]olktales play a role in nation-state building as they refer to the collective value of all social networks" (12). The collective community sarcastically attacks the princess, the chief's daughter in the folktale, for example, by making her be sexually accessible to a trickster, hare, in order to make other girls come to their senses in how they choose marriage partners. As Goldberg (1997) notes, folktales "educate by illustrating or explaining particular cultural ideas and especially by cautioning against undesirable behaviour" (356). Girls who refuse many marriage proposals and end up marrying monkeys and hyenas, serve to illustrate the theme of disobedient girls who marry animals. If girls think that they are sexually inaccessible, there are clever young men symbolic of trickster hare who can have access to them. Leavy (1995) asserts that "supernatural lovers may also be demons or tricksters or deities whose seduction of human women betokens an amorality only the gods can enjoy" (102). This signifies why hare digs "a tunnel from his hiding place to the spot where the chief's daughter always lay, and every afternoon he came to wait for her. The girl also began to spend more time on the sandy bank than she did in the stream" (Singano and Roscoe 42). The stream or the river in which the chief's daughter does not now frequently bathe is symbolic of how patriarchy sees the woman whom according to de Beauvoir (2007) "has often been compared to water because, among other reasons, she is the mirror in which the male, Narcissus-like, contemplates himself: he bends over her in good or bad faith" (315). The girl's frequenting of the sandy bank is symbolic of her fecundity which results in her pregnancy by hare.

The tunnel hare digs becomes an allegory of the invisibility of the hare and the girl's sexual maturity. Being sexually mature, intuition teaches the chief's daughter to begin liking her place more than ever before. The various roles animals play in folktales mirror the attributes bestowed on them by humans. Although Goldberg (1997) is of the view that folktales "make use of stock characters, and different animals assume some of the same roles: the fox, the jackal, the monkey, or the coyote is clever, as are the rabbit and the hare; the bear, the wolf, or even the human is stupid" (357), the composition of these folktales mirrors human communities in which stupidity or folly is ridiculed in favour of wisdom.

The cleverness of hare is demonstrated in "The Hare and the Chief's Daughter" when he observes the girl's habits of finding the stream/river cold and the sandy riverbank satisfying not realising her sexual relations with hare, "[a]nd now, from his underground tunnel, the hare began to satisfy his amorous desire without the girl's knowledge. The chief's daughter did not know about this daily intimacy she enjoyed with the hare, but only thought the sand had grown more pleasant to lie on" (Singano and Roscoe 42). This implies that the girl has attained sexual maturity and Malawian indigenous culture encourages that any girl of marriageable age as defined by tradition, should marry. The chief's daughter is initiated into sex life by means of hare that satisfies, as in this folktale, female erotic fantasies. This also implies that nature is irresistible and in the folktale nature is symbolised by what Leavy (1995) calls "the disembodied phallus" (141)) from the tunnel where hare hides. When, finally, the chief's daughter becomes pregnant and her father summons "all the animals and people to ask who was responsible" and everybody says, "It is not I" (Singano and Roscoe 42), it becomes clear that the girl has only herself to blame. Culture provides unprecedented alternatives from the environment for the girl's pregnancy for failure to love her own human species. Thus, the folktale carries the thematic concern of the susceptibility to deceptions of disobedient girls for whom it is asserted that "young women who take animal mates are often believed to have resisted a proper upbringing" (Leavy 139) and an animal deflowers her.

The representation of animals in folktales reveals what Arluke (2010) observes as "our most essential conceptions of the social order – how we think things should ideally be or not be – while unmasking our expectations, hopes, fears, and hatreds of our fellow humans and modern life" (35). The girl who is sexually inaccessible to men is made to be impregnated by a hare, a symbol of a clever young man who fights his way to access her in a patriarchal dominated society of culture/nature dualism. Kaur (2012) asserts that "[d]isrupting the dualism would posit the women in an ambivalent relationship with nature and their immediate environment […]. Women then are not just simplistically and neatly aligned with nature […].They straddle the grey area between the two binaries" (100). Malawian oral literature is already subaltern literature and the voices of women are marginal because they occupy ambivalent spaces.

Hare depicted in the folktale under discussion is an animal widely known for its ingenuity and Sax (2001) observes that "[a]ll across Africa, the hare is an important trickster figure, and he often matches his cleverness against the size and strength of a hyena or a lion" (138). The last

episode in “The Hare and the Chief’s Daughter” illustrates the generally held views about hare when he dupes lion as elephant looks on:

> [Hare] was finally caught by some of the chief’s men, who dragged him off to the palace. The chief now called everybody together again.
> “What should I do with the hare?” he asked.
> “You must kill him,” said the lion.
> “Give him to me and I will trample on him,” said the elephant.
> “We should free the hare but kill the baby,” the chief’s wife put in.
> “Very well,” said the chief at last. “We will kill the baby and the hare as well.”
> The chief then asked the hare how he would like to die.
> “Well, I’d like to die fast,” the hare replied, “and if someone strong held me and flung me against a bushy shrub, that’s what would happen.”
> The lion, being a strong animal, held the hare tightly. But as he was throwing the hare against a bushy shrub, the hare slipped from his hands, disappeared quickly in the forest, and was not seen again (Singano and Roscoe 43).

This passage reflects not only the harmony between lion and elephant with the chief whose daughter has been defiled by hare in the folktale but it also reflects the harmony between humans and animals necessary for environmental restoration and ecological diversity. This said, however, for all their body sizes and strengths, lion and elephant are no match for the trickery of hare. Why hare is portrayed as a clever animal that dupes lion, elephant and other big animals is that society admires nimbleness that hare symbolises rather than sluggishness. The hare, lion and elephant depicted in the folktale entail that these animals are found in their natural habitats such as forests and bushy shrubs around which people are aware of in their environment.

“The Hare and the Chief’s Daughter” is analogous to the Yawo folktale, “*Abiti Mwenye, Chikanaalume*” (“The Princess Who Refused Men for Her Hand in Marriage”) and she ends up marrying a baboon. The baboon, however, does not want to be naked before his human wife. The wife spies on him in the bathroom and sees that her husband hides a tail in his trousers and when she screams in nervousness, the baboon runs away and that is how the marriage ends. The ugly baboon serves to illustrate the contrast between the animal groom and the very beautiful chief’s daughter who is easily deceived by the baboon’s handsomeness when dressed in a suit. This also illustrate why in “many cultures, the animal groom is depicted as an

exceptionally disgusting or frightening beast" (Haase 41). The animal grooms in Malawian folktales are mixed because the hare and tortoise grooms make comical characters while the hyena and lion grooms are tragically fearful.

While in "The Hare and the Chief's Daughter", it is the girl who turns down marriage proposals from people and animals, in "The Bride Price" (Singano and Roscoe 56), it is the girl's father who sets a difficult condition for his daughter's marriage. Using this folktale, I argue that human-animal relationships are complex and that the people allegorically exploit the seemingly contemptible condition of tortoise as a yardstick for humans to achieve their set goals so long as they are strongly determined. In "The Bride Price" a man has a very beautiful daughter. He sets up difficult conditions for suitors who ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. He hides an object high in a tree. Below the hidden object is a hole in which a very poisonous snake hides. The snake fatally bites every man who attempts to retrieve the object in order to marry the girl. Tortoise succeeds in retrieving the object because the snake hits his shell. Tortoise marries the man's daughter and the whole village laughs.

"The Bride Price" depicts an example of an arranged marriage and, accordingly, the animal grooms and according to Haase (2008), "may well have been perceived as noxious by their young brides, who full of anxieties about marrying, are taught their culture's lessons about the sacrifice of desire and/or the transforming power of love" (41). The setting of this folktale is allegorical. The people's laughter in the folktale comes for three reasons. First, it is because of contempt for the Tortoise. We are told: "The Tortoise came to the village and heard the story. He said that he would try to get the object. Everyone laughed at the idea, but Tortoise insisted that he would take a chance" (Singano and Roscoe 56). This means that the appearance of Tortoise on the scene of the bride price trials by different men and animals makes the whole enterprise paradoxical. The implication of the laughter is the derision people have about Tortoise as a contemptible animal but paradoxically, he is the winner. The second reason for the laughter is directed towards the girl's father, "for making such an unreasonable condition for his daughter's marriage" (Singano and Roscoe 56) and this serves the moral purpose of warning parents who do not allow their daughters to choose their husbands freely.

Thirdly, the laughter is due to the comical situation strikingly out of the ordinary created by the Tortoise's win in the contest. It is this "comic hyperbole" (Abrams 120) and its "extravagant, outlandish or improbable" (Cuddon 710) situation that makes this folktale

disproportionate in how it represents animal-human partnership. The tale says "many a young man had met his death in an attempt to hoodwink the snake one way or another" (Singano and Roscoe 56) in order to retrieve the hidden object from the tree. Yet, Tortoise succeeds. The poisonous snake that hides in the hole has symbolic significance of suffocating the attempts of others to achieve their goals. In the folktale under discussion, we hear that:

> [Tortoise] went to the tree and began to climb. When he reached the hole, he put his head inside his shell. The snake struck out at him, but only hit the shell, and the Tortoise began to sing
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Go, unagogoda chiguni,* | *Go*, you are hitting the shell, |
> | *Go, unagogoda chiguni,* | *Go*, you are hitting the shell, |
> | *Nyama ili mkati!* | The meat is inside! |
>
> (Singano and Roscoe 56)

This satirical song that ridicules both the girl's father and the snake suggests that *chigumi* (tortoise's shell) functions to protect its skin (*khungu/nyama*) from attacks and poisonous substances besides being its own 'house.' Both the tortoise and snake are reptiles and cold-blooded animals. The imagery of the snake/serpent in the folktale foreshadows the tragic deaths of many men who attempt to win the girl. The Serpent is the first animal recorded to have been engaged in speech with the human, Eve, in *Genesis*. In this folktale, the snake could also vie for the beautiful girl. The word *unagogoda* (you are hitting) informs the striking force of the snake. The snake's failure to bite through the tortoise's shell and poison his body (meat) is illustrative of the people's consciousness of animal adaptations and their knowledge about poisonous and non-poisonous animals. The people are also ecologically conscious of zootoxins and phytotoxins through their experiences with "objects" in their environment. The Tortoise in the folktale becomes a symbol of those despised in society as well as a symbol of perseverance.

The "object" to be retrieved from high up in the tree placed close to a hole in which a poisonous snake hides, informs Tortoise to readapt to the environment by hiding his skinny protrusions in his shell when passing near the snake in order to protect his life. The Tortoise's song *Unagogoda chiguni* (you are hitting the shell) satirises the snake and the girl's father for setting up such an awkward plan. The Tortoise's success in marrying the beautiful girl reflects his persistence in order to achieve his goals. The folktale also uses Tortoise to mock the daughter's

father for his thoughtlessness. The suggestion within indigenous lore and which is implied in "The Bride Price" for the Tortoise marrying the girl is better conceptualised by DeMello (2012) who says that "[a]nimals exist as mirrors for human thought; they allow us to think about, talk about, and classify ourselves and others" (14). Indeed, the co-existence of animals and humans is reflected in the many symbolic, metaphoric, religio-cultural, paradoxical and allegorical settings in Malawian folktales.

The use of the Tortoise as the groom who wins the human bride for successfully retrieving the hidden object suggests not only an intricate human-animal relationship but also the symbolisms that, via metaphor and simile, bond humans and animals together. "The Bride Price" is based on competition for a girl and many men sacrifice their lives. This prepares boys and girls for the adult competitive world and survival mechanisms in an environment which is not always friendly. Arguably, according to Leavy (1995), "[a]nimal groom stories frequently reveal a storyeller's full awareness of the paradoxes involved in charging the same being responsible for the fall of man with his redemption. Women are being asked to do what is either impossible or too costly for them to do, and then, because they have difficulties fulfilling their roles they are frequently accused of being the source of human problems" (Leavy 146). This view infers the Serpent-Eve relationship. Thus, primordially, humans have been closely associated with animals.

Tortoise wins the daughter's hand in marriage because of the adaptive potential of culture (Sutton and Anderson 2010) that acts as a moral to the daughter's father. The tortoise's shell is the feature adapted for survival in its environment and the song of the tortoise as he climbs the tree to retrieve the object is appropriate in mocking the payment of "the bride price." The Tortoise with its shell thus, becomes the measure for humans about the bride's accessibility since the snake cannot bite its way through it. It is interesting to note that "[a]nimals do not make humans the measure of things at all" (Rolston III, 15), yet the place of animals among humans is crucial in conceptualising the cosmos.

Through animal folktales, "members of the young generation must prepare themselves for life within the environment into which they were born […] by learning to adjust themselves to the social institutions […] and to master the valid sign system" (Peil 20). Through the tortoise's folktale, children are "expected to be wise, industrious, [and] calculative in all [their] endeavours. […] to come out of difficulties especially those difficulties, that will cost [them

their] life, by hook or by crook just as tortoise [does]" (Ogbalu 21). It is worth noting that "[i]n Africa, the [tortoise] is a sort of trickster figure, yet unlike other tricksters […] he is virtually never impetuous. Other tricksters often become victims of their own cleverness and pride, but the [tortoise] is prudent and almost invariably victorious" (Sax 258). In "The Bride Price," the Tortoise mocks the conditions the father sets for his daughter. The folktale teaches moral values of respect and dignity for nature because seemingly despicable people, for whom the Tortoise is but a symbol, are important as well. Tortoise, despicable though he is, outwits human plots and other animals like snake.

Like the beautiful chief's daughters who refuse men for their hand in marriage and they end up with animal grooms, in "Kanguli" (Singano and Roscoe 53-55), a beautiful girl who does the same marries a hyena, a beast, after being deceived for his handsomeness. A few months later after the marriage ceremony, the girl goes to her husband's home. At night, the husband and his relatives transform themselves into hyenas and sing around her as she sleeps. The wife's brother listens to the ordeal outside through the cracked wall of the chicken hut where he has been put up. Having alerted his sister, he carves *nguli* and energised by a song he and his sister fly back home. The word *ka-* attached to *-nguli* gives a diminutive noun, *kanguli*, a small cone shaped wooden piece which children play as a game, *nguli* (a spinning top). The narrator of the folktale and listeners imagine the *nguli* grows wings as if by providence and flies away in order to rescue humans trapped among hyenas.

In "Kanguli" the treachery of the hyena is observed in how he approaches the human bride. He dresses up handsomely hiding his ugliness and identity as a hyena in order to attract the girl. The point the tale raises by making hyena's marriage proposal full of pomp and material attractions, is to warn girls to see beyond material splendour when identifying a husband. We hear from the tale that:

> One day, a very handsome man came to propose to her. When she saw him, she lost her heart at once and accepted his proposal. Arrangements were made according to custom and soon after, the wedding took place. After the ceremonies had been performed, there was feasting, rejoicing, and dancing (Singano and Roscoe 53).

The hasty acceptance of the marriage proposal and the wedding ceremonies are meant to speed up the girl's realisation of her error. When the husband/hyena asks his wife's parents to take her to his home to see his parents he is allowed to do so without any hesitation. The newly wed

girl's brother wants to accompany them but she refuses him. He insists and follows his sister and brother-in-law from a distance. The narrative mode in the tale reflects ecocriticism's concern with the relationship between literature and the physical environment. In "Kanguli," the imagery of a "dirty and untidy" boy who fails to sleep at night because of "chicken droppings and fleas" (Singano and Roscoe 53) being punished for insisting in following his sister to her husband's home, turns out to be a blessing and saviour to his sister against hyenas. The representation of animals in folktales agrees with the attributes humans give to the animals in real life existence.

The relationship between the boy and fleas is that of host/parasites. Fleas and ticks are a nuisance to humans and they are disease vectors to chickens. With chickens, chicken droppings, fleas, and the olfactory imagery, the environment entails excruciating sleeplessness for the boy – this, too, works for the good of both because by being forced to stay awake he manages to see the strange rituals and transformations. The representation of animals in folktales carries the sense of the marvellous/fantasy.

When the boy in "Kanguli" tells his sister about the danger in which her life is, she dismisses "him as a disobedient, dirty-faced nuisance [and] the girl would not listen" (Singano Roscoe 54). In order to make her prove it for herself, one night the boy "tied a string around his sister's little toe so that he could wake her when the hyenas came. In the middle of the night when the hyenas arrived and started their singing, the boy gave a sharp tug at the string and his sister awoke and saw what was happening" (Singano and Roscoe 54). The "string" that awakens the girl becomes a symbol that disconnects her from the hyenas when she "saw what was happening" as she reconnects with her own people. The girl goes "to her brother and asked him to forgive all she had said and done. She also begged his help in escaping from the animals" (Singano and Roscoe 54). The girl's realisation here and her desire to escape "from the animals" implies a rejection of their non-human identities and recognition of the animal-other. The hyena's failure to maintain his disguise as a handsome human man in order to keep his marriage with the woman means he has failed to invade into the human world and distort its lineage that demonstrates the people's knowledge of the human/animal boundaries. The song the transformed human/hyenas sing demonstrates how the girl turns into *nyama*/meat. Referring to the girl by the hyenas as "meat" is a recognition of otherness that the hyenas can devour, flesh and blood, once fattened:

Tidye nyama, tidye nyama!	Let's eat meat, let's eat meat!
Sinanone, sinanone!	No, she's not fat enough yet!

(Singano and Roscoe 54)

This call and response song by the hyenas makes the beautiful girl, metaphorically, *nyama yomwe sinanone* (meat which is not yet fattened). By fattening the girl in order to consume her flesh (*tidye nyama*), the song posits a difference between animals and humans; that they belong to different species because if they were humans eating the flesh of humans it would have been cannibalism and thus, making humans beasts. Estok (2012) argues that because "ecocriticism is any theory that is committed to affecting change by analysing the function – thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise – of the natural environment […], the relevance of something so ancient as cannibalism to a concept so current as species-ism can hardly be overstated" (2-3). Hyenas are carnivorous mammals and their consumption of the human is justified by their eating habits.

The people are aware of their environmental resources and they use the girl's brother to utilise these resources to their advantage. The boy in "Kanguli" is determined to rescue his sister from the impending throes of death. He goes "into the forest and made himself a [wooden piece called] *nguli*" (Singano and Roscoe 54) which flies with the tempo of a song:

Kanguli kanga ndendende, kanguli kanga!	My little *nguli*, carry me
Ndendende!	Carry me!
Kanguli kanga ndendende, kanguli kanga	My little *nguli*, carry me
Ndendende!	Carry me!
Ndiperekere ndendende, kanguli kanga	My little *nguli*, carry me
Ndendende!	Carry me!
Kuli amayi ndendende, kanguli kanga	Guide me to where my mother is
Ndendende!	Carry me!

(Singano and Roscoe 54 – 55)

The boy's carving of a piece of wood that flies like a bird carrying humans hints at the kinship of humans with nature expressed in indigenous art. *Kanguli kanga ndendende* (My little *nguli* carry me) suggests the close relationship between the boy who has carved it and the *nguli*. The

word *ndendende* or *ndengundengu* implies the force contained in the *nguli* with its potential to fly. Salmon (2000) argues that "[i]ndigenous people view both themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin" (1327). The urge for the boy in the song to *Kanguli kanga ndiperekere kuli amayi* (My little *nguli* carry me to my mother) reflects a matrilineal ancestry. The *nguli* in the folktale functions as a ghost or the supernatural element that rescues the boy and his sister from the beasts - hyenas. The moral the tale advances include, first, the girl in question should not have turned "down good marriage proposals from local youths" and secondly, she needs to respect her brother, "even though he was dirty and scruffy" (Singano and Roscoe 55). This implies that the girl's behaviours is disapproved by society and the animal groom is meant as a corrective measure.

The marriages between humans and animals such as hare, baboon, tortoise and hyena so far analysed constitute society's ways of punishing disobedience among girls and non-conformity to societal values. We perceive the behaviour of hyena through what he does. The hyena carries indigenous wisdom that a girl should not delay to marry the moment she is of marriageable age. The idea of a handsome husband is untenable, the best a girl in search for such a husband can get is a hyena, a symbol of greed.

The significance of the folktales in which the human woman marries a non-human man, as Davis and Bryce (2008) note, is:

> [T]o (re)stage coming-of-age tales, and so celebrate the mutual love between normal human characters and characters with strong manifestations of Otherness. In these narratives, the inner strengths of powerless human characters […] are often the key which impels not only individuals but also the people around them to carry out their respective passage towards self-development and maturation, from solipsism to altruism (208).

By bringing hare, tortoise and hyena, for example, "characters with strong manifestations of Otherness" into intimate relations with human female characters, the folktales reinforce self-corrective measures among humans that include "self-development and maturation, from solipsism to altruism." I take up the cues from Davis and Bryce (2008) to argue that the tales about human-animal marriages help the listeners to transcend the self and grow into unselfish characters. This illustrates why upon arrival at home and after the boy has narrated "his story

to his parents and the rest of the villagers [they] all told the girl that what she had suffered was the result of turning down good marriage proposals from local youths" (Singano and Roscoe 55). This kind of realisation helps the young listeners to come-of-age and fit into the mores of their community in which nature is a tool for cultural self-definition.

Leavy (1995) argues that if the girl "plays her part as nurturer, or so many animal groom stories make clear, she will win at the end a devoted and passionate lover-husband instead of a beast" (147). Thus, human-animal relationships penetrate not only the public sphere of human existence, but also the private life. The people's identification with animals is important for a symbiotic interplay between humans and animals. This is also important because the people's awareness about the roles of animals in instilling cultural values entails their recognition to protect them. Sometimes a hyena as a groom does not need to disguise himself into a handsome young man in order to be accepted by a human female for marriage. "Lion and Hyena" (Shawa and Soko 76-78) portrays how people in agrarian societies are embedded in their environment and how they exploit animals for their instrumental value. In the story, hyena proposes marriage to a young human bride and he asks his friend, lion, to accompany him to the girl's village. Despite the affectionate welcome with feasting by the girl's people, at night, hyena goes into the village kraals and kills goats. The villagers become alert by the bleating noise of the goats and they wake up to their own animosity about the behaviour of hyena. The marriage fails. In shame, Lion and Hyena return to their respective homes.

One important literary feature in the folktales is the personification of animals, the mutual conversations in the various ways Lion and Hyena are portrayed as they interact with humans. We hear from the story that, "[a]s was the custom the parents later brought in the girl and asked her if she was interested to marry Hyena and she accepted. The mood in the house was good-humoured and everyone was dancing" (Shawa and Soko 77). Hyena's greed explains why the marriage fails. His greed is in spite of the girl's innocent acceptance of hyena's marriage proposal and that the "villagers prepared nice food for lion and hyena that they ate and no one would be expected to feel hungry again that night" (Shawa and Soko 77). The people narrating the story of "Lion and Hyena" show that it is hard for an individual to give up old habits as lion warns hyena, "I am happy that we are going to see your prospective wife because what we want is that you should have a wife. But knowing you, if something bad happens you will have yourself to blame" (Shawa and Soko 76). Lion, here, demonstrates understanding of hyena's

behaviour, which in turn, reflects the people's knowledge of animals and the various ways they behave.

Despite chickens and goats that hyena eats on his way to the prospective wife's home and feasting on nice food there, hyena wakes up leaving lion sleeping and goes into people's kraals "and started slaughtering innocent goats and eating the meat" (Shawa and Soko 77). Hyena in this folktale is humanity's symbolic perception of what we lose if our behaviour is disagreeable like that of a hyena, who loses a beautiful girl. Despite being provided for with delicious food by his bride's parents, hyena estranges himself from the people by preying on their domestic animals. With the constant imagery of bushes/forests in the folktale and domestic animals such as chickens and goats, the people are embedded in their environment and they exploit hyena as an enemy to their agrarian activities. The human-animal relationships reveal the people's awareness of different behaviours of animals through which they approve and/or disapprove human behaviours. Animals therefore, mirror what humans like and dislike in humans.

The representation of animal-human marriages in Malawian folktales reflects the issues of gender and sexuality where men as hunters hunt animals just as women are romantically or amorously hunted. Understood through ecofeminism, the gender inequality demonstrated in these folktales about human-animal marriages inform male dominated societies. However, I desist from interpreting these folktales through western feminism and western formulations of gender. Most folktales involving animal-human marriages show that the grooms are animals, hare, hyena, tortoise, while the brides are humans. Male dominated societies highly prize virginity and when clever young men symbolised by animals have sexual access to these virgins, society promotes female dependence on the male. Beauvoir (2007) opines that a "virgin body has the freshness of secret springs, the morning sheen of an unbroken flower, the orient lustre – man, like a child, is fascinated by enclosed and shadowy places not yet animated by any consciousness, which wait to be a soul: what he alone to take and to penetrate seems to be in truth created by him" (311). Animal mates depicted in Malawian folktales sexually interacting with very beautiful maidens serve as defloweres of girls in patriarchal societies.

It is worth noting that in "African societies, women are recognised as preservers and disseminators of oral traditions, in spite of patriarchal tyranny that seeks to construct them as the negative image of men. Storytelling also encourages and provokes solidarity among women and firmly situates women as significant socialising agents in the community" (Sheik 46). Most

of these folktales are narrated by mothers, women and grandmothers to their children and grandchildren, both boys and girls, equally interested in the maternal politics, motherhood and bride prices. People are likely to protect the animals they represent in their stories. In the folktales analysed, animals are represented as vehicles for punishing girls who have deviated from societal norms or fathers who impose difficult conditions of bride prices for their daughters. Some of the folktales test the habits of the animals such as hyena.

Although the voices of the female human brides are silent in these folktales, their silence can be read in terms of gender disparities in indigenous settings. Listeners or readers can only imagine the reactions of a girl mysteriously impregnated by hare, a girl whose father has put her in an akward position forcing her to marry tortoise, a girl who unknowingly marries a hyena or a girl who willingly accepts to marry hyena but due to hyena's greed their marriage cannot be consummated. The silence of the girls in these folktales reflects a culture of submissiveness of women to the dictates of men. Animals are vehicles through which men have sexual access to virgins. However, it is also vital to interpret these folktales in the context of African ecofeminism which does not militate against motherhood.

2.3 Anthropomorphism, animals as measures for human values and environmental consciousness

In this section, I turn to the analysis of folktales that depict both animal and human characters as well as those that depict animal characters only. Animals are represented in Malawian folktales as measures for acceptable and non-acceptable human behaviours and actions while at the same time animals reveal the people's consciousness and knowledge about the environment. In order to represent animals as measures for human values, the people conceptualise them in anthropomorphic terms. By attributing human qualities to animals, people interact with animals as ideas and different kinds of concepts in order to generate moral values. In this section, I analyse six folktales, "Phelezunje", "Four Gils and a Granmother", "A Wicked Family", "The Orphan", "The Hunter and the Lion" and "The Hare and the Well." Although these folktales carry slightly different thematic concerns, the representation of animals reflects the people's anthropomorphic attitudes towards animals.

The first of these folktales, "Phelezunje", depicts how greed destroys hyena and how insects such as bee, butterfly, fly, wasp and grasshopper reciprocate kindness to Phelezunje and by means of mystic communication, save his life. In this folktale, an old childless woman is unable

to lift her water pot onto her head at the river. A hyena arrives and the old woman makes an oath that if hyena helps her carry the water pot onto her head, she will give him her firstborn child if she delivers one in future. When after some months the old woman gives birth to a male child named Phelezunje, hyena comes to remind her about her promise. She tells hyena that she will honour her promise that hyena should devour her child. Insects such as the fly, bee, wasp, grasshopper, and butterfly supernaturally listen to the plots Phelezunje's mother makes with hyena and they inform Phelezunje. All plots to have Phelezunje killed fail because of the good relationship that exists between him and the insects. In order to save Phelezunje's life, the butterfly relays information to dogs when the former is about to be devoured by hyena in the forest where his mother sent him to cut down wood. Finally, "ferocious dogs" (Singano and Roscoe 20) kill hyena.

In "Phelezunje," the interaction between humans and animals/insects is both symbolic and supernatural. When women go the river to draw water, "the oldest lady in the group found that she was left behind by others. Her pot was too heavy to lift this time, though she usually carried it with ease. […] and when she tried to call, only the sounds of the forest answered" (Singano and Roscoe 17). The thickets in the forest that echo the woman's call reflect the presence of forests then as opposed to their absence now. In the forest and standing on the bank of the river, the woman in the folktale, seeking any help she can find, a hyena appears and he asks her:

> "Woman, what is wrong with you?" he asked. "Why do you look so worried?"
> "O hyena," she replied, looking with terror in his rough dirty coat and his leering smile, "my friends have all gone and I don't know what to do. My pot is too heavy to lift today."
> "Well, I will help you to lift it if you promise to give me anything I ask for", the hyena suggested, and without thinking clearly what she was saying, the woman made a very rash promise (Singano and Roscoe 17).

The terrified old woman sheds light on the way hyena relates with humans. Hyena's "rough dirty coat" is symbolic of his identity among humans, and "his leering smile" at the old woman is a symbol of hypocrisy. Like many other folktales, "Phelezunje" presents hyena as an animal that cannot be trusted. The symbolic conversation between the old woman and hyena contextualises the woman's vow. It is strange that only today that she fails to lift her water pot onto her head. The vow the woman makes to hyena is that if he helps her carry her pot she will give him her "first-born child, if God decides that [she] should have one" (Singano and Roscoe

17). The reference to God here provides an essential meeting point between indigenous ecological wisdom and deep ecology that "religions provide rituals […] whose goal is to awaken and reinforce an immediate and personal sense of our connection to the Sacred" (Barnhill and Gottlieb 18). With its various connections with sexual virility and cleansing rituals, the metaphor of the hyena is apt in deciding whether God will give the old woman in the folktale a child.

When the old woman tells hyena, "I promise to give you my firstborn child, if God decides that I should have one" hyena is "already smiling" (Singano and Roscoe 17). As an animal closely associated with sexual potency, hyena is sure the woman will have a child despite her old age. This explains why when Phelezunje is born and hyena reminds the old woman about her promise she is "horrified" and watches hyena's movements towards her child "in tears" (Singano and Roscoe 18) but she cannot help it because the promise she made remains binding. Her meeting with hyena at the river has given her a child but she must lose to him.

In "Phelezunje," insects constitute a significant element in the interaction of nature with humans. They are small living beings and yet, folklore recognises that in ecological interrelatedness, as Barnhill and Gottlieb (2001) observe, "[a]ir, water, and food, the microbes in our gut, the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil – without any of these our illusions of autonomy would crumble mighty fast" (19). This realisation explains why Phelezunje loves insects with intent to stabilise the land. *Gulugufe* (the butterfly) has symbolic meanings:

> The idea of a butterfly or moth as the soul is a remarkable example of the universality of animal symbolism, since it is found in traditional cultures of every continent. The custom of scattering flowers at funerals is very ancient, and the flowers attract butterflies, which appear to have emerged from a corpse (Sax 52).

While the butterfly/moth means new life emerging from flowers, the grasshopper, despite being relish (*ndiwo*) is a symbol of a plague, which devastates the land. In an attempt to hand Phelezunje over to hyena, his mother goes into the bush with hyena, cuts tall grass and ties hyena standing upright inside the bundle of grass. She then tells her child, Phelezunje, to carry the bundle of grass home. The arrangement, however, is to have him killed by hyena. Grasshopper warns Phelezunje about the plan. Phelezunje goes to the bush where the bundle of grass is while aware of the plan. Standing at a distance, Phelezunje calls:

> "Grass, grass!" he called. "If you want me to carry you home, you must first walk towards me a few paces."
> The standing bundle of grass now walked a little and stopped.
> "Aha!" said the boy, feigning surprise. "I've never seen grass walking before. Thank goodness, I don't need to carry you. You've got your own legs to walk on!" And with that, he went away (Singano and Roscoe 19-20).

Hyena's walking towards Phelezunje while tied in a bundle of grass reflects his lack of reasoning due to his greed, which the folktale exploits. The insects that warn Phelezunje about hyena's plans with Phelezunje's mother to have him killed constitute positive human-insect relationships. The final insect in the series of information communication in "Phelezunje" is the butterfly, which, "flitting through the forest nearby and happy at the feel of sunlight breaking through the trees onto its wings, had heard even the quiet muttering of the hyena as it flapped on its way. Without stopping to rest on a single flower, it fluttered off to Phelezunje's village and told the story to the dogs" (Singano and Roscoe 20). The dogs kill hyena in order to save Phelezunje's life. The interdependence between Phelezunje and the non-human creatures (insects and dogs) eliminates hyena who is a threat to Phelezunje's life. Regarding the allegorical conversations between humans and animals in the Malawian context, Morris observes that:

> Although Malawian folktales depict a time when animals and humans lived together, when the animals talked like humans, the humans remain essentially true to type, and the world depicted is not a vegetarian paradise, but one where animals and humans are constantly trapping, hunting, killing and eating each other. This is the case even though many of the animals depicted, like the kudu and hare, are in fact herbivores (*The Power of Animals*, 180-81).

In this ecological interrelatedness the ethical value emphasised is that of eating habits – among carnivores, herbivores, omnivores – are premised within nature. Being ethologically conscious with real animals, the folktale "Phelezunje" encourages humans to coexist with animals and the rest of nature. With his love of insects, Phelezunje realises the human being that he is and he remains in touch with animals without claiming animality.

Animals are sometimes used to punish children who do not listen to their parents' advice. The folktale entitled "Four Girls and a Grandmother" depicts how the four girls of the title, Goli,

Nyuma, Zgangose and Ilinase, despite the stern warnings from the grandmother, come home late at night due to their promiscuous behaviour. The gilrs inconvenience their grandmother to open the door for them late at night when they come from visiting their boyfriends. One night their grandmother is reluctant to open the door for them; a hyena comes and kills Goli. Despite the girls' realisation that the place they live "was inhabited with dangerous animals" (Shawa and Soko 80), they never listen to their grandmother's warnings to desist from coming home late at night.

The behaviour of the girls in "Four Girls and their Grandmother" spending "time with their boyfriends at night and used to cheat their grandmother that they were going to school to study" (Shawa and Soko 80), reflects irresponsibility, and the metaphor of the hyena devouring one of them is thus befitting. In folktales, "animals play various symbolic roles. Sometimes they represent the beast within – a reminder of humanity's kinship with animals and our animal nature" (Creany 26). The representation of the hyena in "Four Girls and a Grandmother" shows that animals are made to carry didactic lessons in shaping human moral conduct. A hyena in the folktale observes the movements of the four girls and what they do when they arrive at home late at night. We hear from the story that:

> Since the place was inhabited with dangerous wild animals, every time they came back from their endeavours they sang [a] song while mentioning their names for the grandmother to recognise them. […]. One day, a hyena that was listening to the song came and sang for the grandmother to open. However, the grandmother recognised the strangeness of the voice and so did not open (Shawa and Soko 80, 82).

The many dangerous wild animals reported in the area and the hyena's imitation of the human voice in singing the song the girls sing for their grandmother to open the door for them, reflect the people's environmental consciousness. In the darkness of the night the hyena is known to stand on two hind legs while the two front legs are held frontward to cheat humans into believing that they are passing by a fellow human. The grandmother's recognition of the "strangeness of the voice" when hyena sings infers experience and environmental embeddedness.

When the girls one day come home very late at night and their grandmother does not open the door for them the "hyena that was hiding nearby slowly stalked and captured Goli, the elder

daughter" (Shawa and Soko 83). Thinking and acting like a human being, when the singing plan fails, the hyena decides to wait nearby and he succeeds in capturing one of the four girls. Folktales depict animals as capable of thinking just as humans do and thus, zoocriticism comes in to "scrutinise how the disntinctiveness of human lives, identities and histories are inseparably tied to other sentient, intelligent, communicative and cultural beings. It means turning the animal gaze back unto the humans" (Omonzejie 72). The hyena that observes the girls' movements at night and sings their song in the folktale under discussion is an intelligent cultural being. Therefore, using animals, society warns young attractive girls about the dangers of seemingly gentle young men who turn out to be hyenas and wolves. The folktale emphasises on the importance of listening to the advice of the elders. If children do not listen to what the elders say, animals are used as corrective measures for their misbehaviour. The many wild animals that inhabit the area entail that forests are available. The tale of the singing and talking hyena that imitates the human voice presented in "Four Girls and a Grandmother" is similar to the "Little Red Riding Hood."[2]

Different species of birds are also available and the people are able to invent stories about them. Birds are symbols of omnipresence. Some folktales focus on birds which play a significant role of publicising human secrets in folklore. This role agrees with the people's religious beliefs about birds as symbolic of spiritual agents. Mota (2009) notes that "[b]irds are friends of humans, especially in time of trouble. They act as guardian spirits and often carry messages to help save human characters from precarious situations" (34). Birds soar high above humans and they are symbolic of omnipresence, awe and peace. Among the ancient Greeks "Athena […] was pictured with an owl, Zeus with an eagle; Odin was accompanied by ravens […and in Christianity] Mary, mother of Christ, was often shown with a dove" (Sax 2001: xiv). In Malawian folklore, the owl portends evil. Folklore generally uses birds to expose human errors as in Chimombo's folktale *The Bird Boy's Song* (2002). A human being who kills a fellow human faces the wrath of a bird born out of the blood of the murdered person.

[2] Brothers Grimm. http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LittRed.shtml. Accessed 21:13, 05/02/2022. This is a story in which Little Red Riding Hood meets a wolf on her way to her grandmother's house. When wolf learns from the girl the location of her grandmother's house, he takes the shortest path, counterfeits his voice and upon entering the house wolf eats the grandmother up and waits for Little Red Riding Hood. When she comes, wolf eats her up as well. Wolves and hyenas are canines that are used as villains in human-animal character tales that serve as warnings to girls.

Human blood that turns into a bird and reveals ill intent is the central role of bird representation in the folktale titled "A Wicked Family." The folktale depicts the wickedness of the wife and husband who kill their child and prepare its body as a gift of meat for their neighbour. As they kill their child, blood that falls on leaves turns into a bird that sings and discloses their evil plot. In the folktale, "A Wicked Family," there are two families, one of which is wicked while the other is good. When a baby boy is born into the wicked family, the wife and husband of the good family bring their neighbour gifts of flour and meat as custom demands. However, when after a few years a baby girl is born into the good family, the wicked family feigns poverty that they cannot afford goat meat, kills their son, and prepares its meat as a gift to their friends. The blood of their killed son turns into a bird and discloses their evil intent.

When the wicked family of the title receives news of "a baby girl, and a beautiful creature" with "eyes [that] were white as flour and her skin smooth as silk" (Singano and Roscoe), born into the good family, they are troubled about gifts to reciprocate their friends' good gesture:

> "Yes, we must go there," the wife agreed, "and I've got some flour to take. But I'm afraid we'll feel very ashamed when we arrive."
> "Why?" asked the husband, full of curiosity.
> "Because, unlike them, we have no meat to offer."
> "Ah of course, I'd forgotten," the husband said sadly. "We have no goats or chickens to kill. We're so wretchedly poor" (Singano and Roscoe 23-4).

This passage reveals that goats, cattle, sheep, chickens, ducks and all other domestic animals including crop production constitute the wealth of indigenous people. Economic factors lead some people into psychotic depressions that culminate in suicide or infantide. This explains why in the folktale being probed, the wife asks her husband:

> "My husband, do you reaaly love me?" she asked. "If you do, let us kill our son and cut him to pieces. Then we'll take the meat and flour and give it to our friends."
> "That's very strange," the husband replied, "for I was about to ask you the same question…" (*ibid*. 24).

Thus, the baby son from the wicked family becomes the sacrificial victim to the baby girl in the good family. The parents' agreement to kill their son and pack into pieces as a gift of meat

for their friends entails that they are going to eat the remaing meat, being wretchedly poor and cannibalistic. Estok (2012) asserts that "[i]n many ways, the discourse of cannibalism parsticipates in carnivorism by positing a difference between human and nonhuman, forbidding consumption of the former while permitting consumption of the latter" (3). The wife and husband involved in perverted love in "A Wicked Family" are therefore, beasts. Beasthood in indigenous oral cultural forms is not confined only to animals behaving in monstrously.

The blood of the murdered son that lands on leaves turns into a bird that haunts them on their way to their friend's family to deliver the "meat":

> He picked up a stone and flung it at the bird, this time killing it. The poor creature dropped to the ground and the husband crushed it between two stones. But, strangely, a drop of blood fell onto a blade of grass and yet another bird arose from it and flew away along the forest path" (Singano and Roscoe 26).

Nature is all pervasive and bears testimony to human deeds – trees, grass, leaves, land, stones, rivers, seas, insects, animals and the open sky – entail there is nowhere to hide a secret. In Malawian folklore, infanticide as in this folktale and fratricide in Gwengwe's *Sikusinja ndi Gwenembe* (1965), where Gwenembe kills his own brother, Sikusinja, are punishable through the blood of the murdered person turning into a bird. The bird becomes the symbol of the imperishable soul that haunts murderers. Chimombo (1988) explains that "guilt is personified by the blood of the dead [person] turning into a bird and publicising the crime" (258). In most situations, "publicising the crime" is through a song as the bird in "A Wicked Family" sings:

Ndiimba, ndiimba, olire!	I'll sing out, sing out, for goodness sake!
Ndiimba,	I'll sing out,
Bambo ndi mayi,	Father and mother,
Ndiimba, ndiimba, olire!	I'll sing out, sing out, for goodness sake!
Aphera mwana m'nyumba	Have killed their child inside their house,
Ndiimba, ndiimba, olire!	I'll sing out, sing out, for goodness sake!
Ndiimba,	I'll sing out,
Kuti adziti mtulo	To pretend that it's a gift.

(Singano and Roscoe 26-27)

Humans closely associate themselves with birds which are "identified as signs, messengers, augurs, teachers, and beings that can affect one's life and livelihood (Wyndham and Park 2018:533). The singing of the bird in the folksong to publicise a secret has affected the lives of the wife and husband who have killed their child. Since the bird acts as the eye of humans seeing secrets that humans do not see and reporting them publicly, the bird-human relationship represented in this folktale is positive. *Ndiimba* (I'll sing) means the bird will make the infanticide public. The word *kuyimba* (to sing) connotes to publicise as used in the song. The word *olire* is derived from *lira* (to cry) with the intimation that once publicised, someone will not find peace of mind.

This illustrates why, no sooner does the bird complete singing the song than the wicked father and mother run "away never [to be] seen again" (Singano and Roscoe 27). The representation of birds as omnipresent and omniscient forces instil in listeners a sense of caution against engaging in criminal offences because nature is conceptualised as all seeing. The bird in "A Wicked Family" discloses homicide in which parents kill their child (*Aphera mwana m'nyumba*) where *m'nyumba*, in the house, implies a secret place where the idea originates. The bird's song in the folktale ridicules the hypocrisy of the parents, *Kuti adziti mtulo* (to pretend it is a gift). The murdered male children's blood turns into birds which function as metaphors of the omnipresence of nature. Mthatiwa (2009) avers that bird metaphors are used to "underscore the harmlessness, victimhood, and suffering" of those to whom "injustice" is done (13). In Malawian oral literature, animals are represented to ridicule human folly and uphold acts of wisdom.

The child murdered by his parents in "A Wicked Family" is a symbol of innocence. The leaves, the grass, the land on which the blood falls, the stone used in crushing the bird and the natural environment show interconnectedness within the ecosystem depicted in "A Wicked Family" and they metaphorically bear testimony to the crimes human beings commit. The birds that disclose infanticide and fratricide in folklore is in keeping with the ecological philosophy about human life observed by Dudzik (2017) that "the more accomplished the form of life is and the more accomplished evolutionary creation it represents, the more protection it merits" (339). In this sense, we see the protection of the lives and the disclosure of murders by birds. This echoes the formulation by Capra (1995) that "[a]ll natural systems are wholes whose specific structures

arise from the interactions and interdependence of their parts" (23). The leaves or grass on which human blood falls and then turns into a bird reflect how the people conceptualise ecological wholeness.

The human/animal relationships in the narratives of the folktales replicate Malawi's "*topocosm,*" a term that according to LaChappelle (1995), is derived from "Greek – *topo* for place and *cosmos* for world order. *Topocosm* thus means 'the world order of a particular place.' The *topocosm* is the entire complex of any given locality conceived as a living organism – not just the human community but the total community – the plants, animals, and soils of the place" (59). Secrets divulged by birds in Malawian folklore are symbolic of the earth as a living entity with 'eyes' and 'ears' where plants bear testimony and animals as mediators in nature.

The disclosure of evil by the bird is through a song, its language, so to speak. This is, however, a contentious issue. Folktales represent animals as capable of "speech" from which humans can derive meaning. In folktales where animals are represented in metaphorical human language, animal language *per se*, or lack of it, is not the issue, but what matters is that humans generate environmental knowledge through their experiential interactions with animals. There are many signs in nature from which humans derive meanings. Neurologically, a bird with a needle in its head jerks when touched, and in this way indigenous knowledge reflects how animals communicate vital information with humans.

A bird's song connects a wife and husband in the folktale titled "The Orphan." This folktale is about Diminga and how she is illtreated by her stepmother. The stepmother denies Diminga food, but Chincheya, the cow, produces different food products that sustain Diminga's life. When she grows up, Diminga marries a European, but jealousy forces the stepmother to drive a needle into her stepdaughter's head and the latter turns into a bird. The stepmother sends her own one-eyed daughter to the European to replace Diminga.

The one-eyed daughter wears Diminga's clothes and she veils her face pretending to be sick in order to hide her identity. Coincidentally, the European's servant catches the bird and brings it home. While playing with it, the European/husband finds that the bird jerks when he touches its head and on checking he identifies a needle, which he pulls out. The bird turns into Diminga, his wife. Realising he was deceived, the European kills the veiled woman, cuts her body into parts, dries them and puts the parts in bags of rice with the head intact. He then sends them to

Diminga's stepmother as gifts. The folktale carries the theme of wicked stepmothers and Sherman (2008) observes that:

> Stepmothers in folklore are almost always wicked. This is probably due to two issues: the psychology of the child, who sees the stepmother as an intruder who has done away with the birth mother, and inheritance laws. A second wife rarely felt that the first wife's child, rather than her own offspring, should inherit everything, and a first child would not wish to share an inheritance with interlopers, such as stepsisters (504).

The theme of the wickedness of stepmothers is reflected in Malawian folktales in "The Orphan." The "one-eyed daughter" Diminga's stepmother sends to replace her as the European's wife is an interloper, *persona non grata*. In the folktale under discussion, Diminga's inheritance is providential and she survives her stepmother's wickedness. The narrative in some of the folktales takes the form of fantasy, for example, that Chincheya, the cow, supplies Diminga with "rice, beef, chicken, tea" (Singano and Roscoe 69) and that Chincheya's "stomach [planted] on an island" grows into "a golden tree" (Singano and Roscoe 70-71). The folktales also reflect mystic communication between humans and animals. When Diminga's stepmother maliciously drives a needle into her head and she "jerked, and was transformed into a bird which flew away" (Singano and Roscoe 71), the victimiser thinks all is well with her. Guao, servant to Diminga's husband sees "a small, bright beautiful bird perched on a tree" singing when he goes "to the river to wash clothes":

Guao, Guao, Guao	Guao, Guao, Guao
Manuele ali mwenemo?	Is Manuel at home?
Nankazi chene Chidiso?	With one-eyed wife?
Chidiso, Chidiso, uyeni!	This terrible one-eyed wife!
	(Singano and Roscoe 72)

The bird's song reveals the deception of Diminga's step-sister. She wears a veil to hide her disability and impersonates as Manuel's wife. *Nankazi chene chidiso; chidiso, chidiso uyemi* (With one-eyed wife, this terrible one-eyed wife) aims to tell Guao and Manuel to take a look at the woman in the house and see that she is not Diminga. The cruel step-mother who sends her one-eyed daughter to Diminga's European husband thinks nature can be ironized or contracted. The transformation of the bird into Diminga after removing the needle driven into her head entails the marvellous workings of nature. In folktales, animals are agents that help

understand and interpret the world. Huggan and Tiffin (2010) explain that "[s]tories about animals have generally been written for children or, in cases such as Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the animals have been read as stand-ins for human beings" (149). In *Animal Farm*, Old Major stands for the values of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, Snowball represents Leon Trotsky, Napoleoon represents Stalin, the Church is represented by the raven, Moses, while Squealer is Stalin's (Napoleon's) propangandist (Eddy 14-16). In folktales and fairy tales, animals are "stand-ins for human beings" (Huggan and Tiffin 149) as well and thus, animals are represented in literature to mirror a specific socio-cultural, economic and political epoch.

The marriage between Diminga and the European man is symbolic of "the human wife of a supernatural being" (Leavy 101) because she marries *mzungu*, a word derived from *mzukwa* or *chilengwalengwa* (spirit, ghost or spook) to reflect the people's admiration and awe of whiteness. The European is interested in harvesting Diminga's money from her "golden tree" (Singano and Roscoe 71). When everybody else has failed to collect the money from the tree and the people bring Diminga to try and we read from the folktale that:

> The tree swayed as Diminga approached. As she touched it, the tree began to shake, and when she held it, coins and notes showered to the ground in great piles, enough to fill several bags. Instant marriage was arranged between Diminga and the European, and they went to live at his house. When she had bathed, dressed in new clothes and perfumed herself, Diminga was unrecognisably beautiful. And she was happy with her new life (Singano and Roscoe 71).

The people are aware of the natural resources their environment offers. This African "golden tree" becomes a symbol of Western attraction to penetrate the continent to exploit its resources. Capitalism is one of the key causes of the contemporary environmental crises, the desire for Africa's "golden tree" as a symbol for all her natural resources, is the basis for Africa's contact with Europe. Naess (1995) contextualises the "modern ecological predicament" in "thoughtlessness rather than thought" (205) rooted in the dominance of humans over nonhumans culminating in overexploitation of resources. Relatedly, Ikuenobe (2014) notes that "[t]he colonial structures in Africa have led to the North/South economic relation where the South is economically dependent on the North. Such economic dependency relation has led to the growth of capitalism in Africa with the excessive economic activities of multinational companies, which have exploited natural resources and destroyed the environment" (17). What this entails is that Africa's environmental challenges are rooted in colonialism and its legacy.

The tale of Diminga who mysteriously turns into a bird exposes the suffering of children at the hands of those who are supposed to take care of them. Her "golden tree" becomes her turning point in meeting with the European man. The people's environmental consciousness in the tale is reflected in the various relationships through which the text engages with the environment/nature and the bird as the symbol of hidden treasure of traditional knowledge. Adeoti (2019) observes that the "bird stands for the timeless and limitless value of tradition in interpreting contemporary events and coming to terms with present day reality" (83). Birds, just like all other animals, including stones, plants, rivers, mountains, ancestors, spirits and gods reflect the people's ontological and cosmological perspectives through which events are interpreted. In "A Wicked Family" and "The Orphan" birds are represented as sympathisers of the victimisation of children. People's knowledge about the ominiscience of birds and other forces in their environment would compel them to treat the environment responsibly. Comcu (2016) asserts that the "capacity to fly, together with their ability to sing, put birds in a special place in literary works, in which they serve as inspiration and as resources for the writing" (5). In oral cultures, birds serve as resources for environmental imagination.

"The Orphan" also reveals that the European groom is a beast. He shoots the one-eyed Diminga's stepsister and orders "his servants to cut the body into pieces which were dried then mixed with rice and put into bags. The bags of food were sent to Diminga's stepmother" (Singano and Roscoe 72). Despite the people's admiration of whiteness that adds value to Diminga's marriage, the European's use of the gun to dominate is viewed by the people with dread. The folktale portrays that Diminga's stepmother eats, without knowing, her own one-eyed daughter. Diminga's stepmother is also a beast, forced into cannibalism by the European groom. In this connection, Estok (2012) posits that "[c]entral to the imagining of the brave new worlds which were explored by old world powers is a semiotics of cannibalism. Indeed, the cannibal is an integral part of the travel narrative, at once an excitingly exotic new world figure, yet a horrifying old world locus of terrifying difference and dislocation, a simultaneous blurring and affirmation of boundaries which call into question our ethical positions about the natural environment" (2). This illustrates why after eating the meat from the other bags, in the last bag, Diminga's stepmother sees "a human head, with its one eye fixed upon her in a terrible gaze" (Singano and Roscoe 72). Using the discourses of colonialism and racism encapsulated by Diminga's European groom, Diminga's stepmother realises that she has "been truly punished"

(*ibid*. 72). By making Diminga's stepmother eat the flesh of her own daughter without her knowledge, the European groom is more monstrous than his stepmother-in-law.

In representing the intellectual capacity of animals, folktales focus on smaller animals as outwitting bigger ones. The folktale titled "The Hare and the Well" represents this view. Drought has hit the country and elephant, king of all animals, calls for a meeting at which all the animals agree to dig a well. Hare pretends to be sick and so he does not participate but all the other animals work cooperatively until they find water. They agree to guard the well to prevent hare from drinking the water. Hare dupes the guards with a gourd of honey locally called *Tanga n'todya ayimange* (sweet honey that can only be eaten when one is tied to a tree). After hare dupes monkey, leopard and gazelle, tortoise devises a plan through which he catches hare. We read from the story that when all the animals assigned to guard the well are duped by hare:

> Then finally, the tortoise volunteered. "What will you do little friend?" the elephant asked, and though the tortoise was too shy to reply, he was left on guard while the others went into the bush as usual (Singano and Roscoe 29).

The Yawo variant of this folktale does not stop at elephant's question to tortoise, *M'mwe ntende chichi akamwanache*? (What will you do little friend?), when he volunteers to guard the well. But in anger, elephant picks tortoise up and swallows him. Tortoise comes out from the elephant's belly through his anus saying: *Sikomo, palukundu pa achakulungwa pangapoposya* (Let me come out, one does not pay respect to the anus of the elders). Then tortoise lands onto the hard ground. Elephant swallows tortoise several times but each time he comes out repeating the same words. Only then does elephant allow tortoise to guard the well.

Having been allowed to guard the well, "tortoise prepared a sticky mixture, carefully smeared it on his back, then went and sat near the well" and when hare came he "sat down on the tortoise, thinking he was a stone" (Singano and Roscoe 29). In Malawian folktales, hare dupes not only lion but elephant as well. In "The Hare and the Well," hare dupes elephant after being caught stealing water from the well:

> "Aha!" cried the elephant in triumph. "You thought you were clever. But you're not so clever today, eh?"

> "But what will you do to me?" the hare cried in alarm. "If you want to kill me, grab my tail and hit me hard on a pile of sand. I'm tired of life anyway and I don't mind dying today."
> "Let's not waste time, friends," the elephant announced. We'll kill him right away." And at once he seized the hare by the tail. But before the hare struck the sand, he slipped out of the elephant's clumsy hands and ran as fast as his feet would carry him into the forest (Singano and Roscoe 30).

Despite the hugeness of the elephant's body, Malawian folktales depict him as a stupid animal with "clumsy hands" through which hare slips. The comparison between hare and elephant seen through indigenous ecological wisdom entails how smallness of means symbolised by hare can achieve greatness. Folktales emphasise on the wisdom and ingenuity attributed to small animals as opposed to the sluggishness of big animals. Deep ecology's term "ecosophy" which is derived from "*sophy*" (Greek, *Sophia*) meaning "wisdom, which relates to ethics, norms, rules, and practice" (Devall and Sessions 74) closely links with indigenous lore that constrains humans from behaving unethically. Ecosophy, which is ecophilosophy or ecological philosophy, according to Naess is "a philosophy of harmony or equilibrium" (quoted by Drengson and Devall 55). Ecosophy aims at creating environmental harmony by drawing from ecological wisdom rooted in action. The behaviours and actions of animals in their various habitats and their means of survival involve action. This illustrates why when elephant cannot hold hare and the latter slips through the hands of the former in the folktale under discussion humans become humbled toward nature and learn to use it responsibly.

When McLaughlin (1995) observes that "[p]erhaps the search for some sort of value *in* non-human nature be it inherent, intrinsic, or some other sort of non-anthropocentric value seems necessary because we cannot now fully imagine an adequate environmental ethic, an ethic that is supposed to constrain people from doing what they otherwise do" (86), he approximates endorsing indigenous ecological wisdom as "an adequate environmental ethic" that constrains "people from doing what they otherwise do" (86). Hare's refusal to participate in digging the well but his stealing of the water his friends have laboriously found is unethical. When Hare escapes death at the hands of lion and elephant, it is clear that the moral behind the tale is to conserve life.

Nevertheless, the exercise of mercy to some colleagues seemingly in trouble should be done with caution. This is what the folktale, "The Hunter and the Lion," demonstrates. The tale depicts how the hunter captures a lion in his trap. The lion pleads for mercy and the hunter frees the lion from his trap. No sooner does the hunter set the lion free than the latter turns against the former accusing him of foolishness for setting him free. The lion does not kill the hunter on condition that for every animal the hunter traps, the lion should have the best meat. The hunter has two wives. However, the problem is that the best meat that lion claims used to belong to one of his wives. When she does not get them, she becomes suspicious and follows her husband into the forest to find out what happens. Unfortunately, she falls into her husband's trap and the lion, as agreed with the hunter, devours her, sourcing out the best meat.

The lion's request to the man, "I know very well this trap that caught me is yours. Now please let me go. If I stay here for another minute I'll die" (Singano and Roscoe 33), reflects the people's consciousness of life instincts in animals. Realising the instrumental value of animals and the pain lion says is in, the man sets him free. The lion's brute strength, however, makes him mind his hunger rather than reciprocating kindness, "You were a fool to release me […] I'm hungry and now I'm going to eat you" (33). The folktales involving hunting and the encounters of hunters with animals testify to the observation that "the cultures of most primal (hunting/gathering) societies throughout the world were permeated with Nature-oriented religions that expressed the ecocentric perspective" (Sessions 158). The representation of animals in folktales reflects the people's view that the animal's true nature wins over any attempts at civility.

The conversation between the hunter and the lion in "The Hunter and the Lion" shows the lion's personal experiences in feeling pain and hunger and implores with the man to set him free. The lion's demand from the hunter, "I want the best meat from the animals that you catch in your traps from this day on" (Singano and Roscoe 33), shows that under certain circumstances human mercy to animals and by extension to other humans should be exercised with caution. Animals such as "lion, leopard and hyena" are categorised as those that cause "depredations" (*Animals and Ancestors* 33), and therefore, sometimes lack civility.

DeMello (2012) observes that "the practice of giving non-human animals human characteristics is thousands of years old and can be found in the myths, folktales, symbolism, and artwork of peoples around the world" (32). The anthropomorphic representation of animals in folklore facilitates human-animal interactions. The lion in "The Hunter and the Lion" is represented as

lacking civility toward his helper. By devouring the hunter's wife, the lion portrays brutal strength. On the other hand, setting traps for killing animals in their habitats can be interpreted as abuse and infringing on their rights for free movements. It is worth noting that "animal tales are easily distinguished from ordinary zoological lore and from superstitious beliefs about animals. Their purpose is to entertain and, although the animals may at times play roles related to their images or to their observable traits, the general drift of these stories is unrealistic and often comical" (Haase 42). The folktales are, therefore, based on the indigenous people's imaginations about human interconnectedness with nature as perceived through the prism of culture. Salmon (2000) observes that "[t]o all cultures, beliefs form and explain the human-nature relationship. Beliefs help a person recognise his/her link to the natural world and his/her responsibility to ensure its survival" (1331). The speeches of animals as they interact among themselves and with humans give life to the folktales. The representation of animals in Malawian folktales reveal the people's awareness of different aspects of their actions and behaviours and how these impact on human conduct as they shape their moral values.

2.4 Conclusion

While indigenous lore uses animals instrumentally to instil moral values among members of the society, by recognising their personhood, animals are not mere objects pushed around by humans depending on their whims. "The Hare and the Chief's Daughter" in which hare mysteriously impregnates human female character demonstrates the people's values for a healthy society that functions through marital bonds. Girls should not imagine that due to their beauty, they are sexually inaccessible. There are young men symbolised by hare, who can abuse girls if they insist on self-love. While hare is a metaphor of a young man who can have access to a difficult girl, tortoise symbolises a despised man who marries a beautiful girl if people set difficult conditions involving bride price. The bride price that parents demand should be within reasonable limits because girls end up marrying men they do not love so long as they have paid the bride price. The bride price therefore restrains the rights of the girl.

A hyena who marries a human bride, dupes her by dressing beautifully in a suit and looking like a handsome young man. Indigenous lore therefore teaches us to look beyond appearances. In the oral narratives about human/animal marriages, the significant point is that marriages are central for societal health. The handsomeness of the animal bridegroom, and the beautiful suit he wears, serve as warnings against materialism to which most young girls of marriageable age are attracted. Folklore does not criticise material attractions but that emphasis should also be placed on the inner character of a partner. The animals such as hare, baboon, lion and tortoise

that find their way into human societies through marriage do so through their shrewdness. Human/animal relationship is thus political emphasising on the politics of survival and existence. This also illustrates why some animal bridegrooms exist in the human-animal liminality through transformations by which indigenous lore blurs the human/animal divide.

The human-animal relationships represented in folktales indicate animals appreciate when humans show love to them. In "Phelezunje," Phelezunje mystically communicates with different kinds of insects to show the people's awareness of the roles animals play in human society. As closest neighbours to humans, insects, for all their non-sentientism, affect human lives in important ways such as agriculture, disease vectors and food. The representation of animals in folktales reflect the people's knowledge and awareness of the environment in which they are embedded. Being grounded in experiential knowledge, the depiction of animals involves promoting society values while discouraging behavioural malcontents. Birds play critical roles of making public the information that otherwise would have been hidden. The implication of using birds in this way is that they are portrayed as spiritual agents symbolic of omniscience and omnipresence as in "A Wicked Family" and "The Orphan." The depiction of birds in connection with the victimisation of children implies that the victimised children are innocent and that nature takes sides in retribution. By sometimes emphasising on the evil intent of human beings as opposed to animals, folktales represent humans as untrustworthy and that our friendships with fellow humans should not be taken for granted.

CHAPTER 3

ANIMALS IN MALAWIAN PROVERBS, MORALITY, JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed how animals are represented in Malawian folktales and analysed human-animal spousal relationships and various other relationships between humans and animals and among animals in the previous chapter, this chapter assesses the representation of animals in proverbs. This chapter is a logical development from the previous chapter on folktales because the *mwambi* (singular) or *miyambi* (plural) to refer to "proverb" and "proverbs" respectively, carry stories that contextualise how the proverb(s) originated. Similarly, Finnegan (2012) affirms that the "Nyanja *mwambi* […] refers to story, riddle, or proverb" (380). Chakanza (2000) explains that the "*mwambi* are words of wisdom for counselling, admonishing, warning and giving direction by teaching moral lessons" (10). *Mwambo* or *miyambo* (wisdom) generated from *mwambi* or *miyambi* with animal metaphors reflect how people analogously compare animal attributes to humans. Finnegan (2012) observes that "proverbs about animals are […] used to suggest some related ideas about people" (386). Using metaphors and imagery, various similitudes and dissimilitudes are drawn between humans and animals. Thus, as "products of intellectual reflection" (Okpewho 227), proverbs are generated from the natural environment. Ogunjimi and Na'Allah (2005) observe that "proverbs adopt materials from people's cosmological and social environment" (85). People's adoption of the environment as the chief source of proverbial lore implies their close links not only with animals but also with nature as a whole.

In this chapter, I assess how animals are represented in Malawian proverbs in relation to issues of justice in settling disputes and personality building so that society brings up responsible citizens. I argue that the representation of animals in proverbs reflects not only the fact that animals are gems of wisdom among indigenous people, but also shows that animals are a vehicle through which people explore their environment. I confine myself to proverbs that engage with animals in order to explore the various ways through which the proverbs provide insights into the people's environmental consciousness and the ecological values the proverbs represent. Krikmann (2001) categorises proverbs involving animals into four: (a) proverbs concerning animal identity, (b) proverbs concerning the relationship between people and animals (usually in metaphorical meaning), (c) proverbs concerning the relationships between (metaphorical as a rule) animals, and (d) proverbs concerning the relation of animals (either metaphorical or non-metaphorical) towards non-zoological nature and dimensions) (13-14). In each of these four classifications, this chapter examines how animals are represented in proverbs and what the representation entails about human-animal relationships.

Studies conducted in proverbs have not largely focused on human-animal interactions. Banda and Banda (2016) focus on the use of proverbs drawing on indigenous knowledge for academic writing. Rodgers has compiled and translated proverbs in what he titles *Miyambi ya Patsokwe* (2016). Mphande (2001) is concerned with proverbs used for preaching and teaching. Proverbs are used in conflict management but they are also used in teaching economics (Girardi 2012), in the practical experiences of everyday life (Akinmande 2009), in narrative thought (Lauhakangas 2007) and in expressing people's philosophical values (Ahmed 2005). The study by Kamwendo and Kaya (2016) on African proverbs focuses on gender and the discrimination of women in male dominated societies. Matiki's (1996) study on proverbs dwelt on the semiotic interpretation of proverbs. None of these studies have paid attention to the interpretation of proverbs through ecocriticism, zoocriticism or deep ecology approaches.

Gebregeorgis (2015) observes that though "proverbs talk about human beings, like other folklores, they are metaphorical narratives based on animals, plants, people etc. Rich vocabulary, graphic statement, allusions, association and comparison are the main language features of proverbs. […]. As a repository of traditional African knowledge, philosophy, customs, ethical standards, morals, and wisdom, proverbs have a vital educational function" (227-28). The rich proverbial lore involving animals reflects that the people's ethical values are environmentally oriented and their informal education system generates its morality and justice from animals and that humans' appeal to animal behaviour is largely for confirmation as it reflects what humans have already discovered about themselves in various situations. The authenticity of proverbs is achieved by playing around with language that metaphorically carries an "incontrovertible" element of truth. Finnegan (2012) notes that:

> In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs. The figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking; one of their most noticeable characteristics is their allusive wording, usually in metaphorical form (380).

Thus, as Finnegan observes in this passage, words carry various symbolic meanings in the African context. The people's discursive thought as reflected in proverbs, goes hand in hand with feelings not only for words but also for the environment. Many proverbs use fauna, flora, water, and land; celestial bodies such as the moon, the sun, the stars, and atmospheric

conditions such as weather in delineating language and power. In this chapter, therefore, I focus only on a selection of proverbs that depict the various facets of animals in relation to human conditions.

There are four major sections in this chapter. In the first section, I analyse animal proverbs in Kumakanga's *Nzeru Zakale* ([1949] 1996). In this section, I narrow down the analysis to animal proverbs used in legal or judicial language within the traditional setting. I analyse how proverbs involving animals are used in conflict management and resolution. Then, in section two of this chapter, I analyse animal proverbs used for personality building selected from *Miyambi ndi Nthano M'Chichewa* (*Chichewa Proverbs and Folktales*) (2017) compiled by Mafuta, Harawa and Kondowe. I discuss the ways in which proverbs involving animals can help young people to attach themselves to their African cultural values. Thirdly, I analyse selected animal proverbs from *Lunda lwa Ŵandu ŵa Ciyawo* (*Wisdom of the Yawo People*) (2006) by Dicks for the various moral values they depict. The closeness of humans to animals from time immemorial explains why there are numerous proverbs about animals expressed in metaphoric and symbolic language. The Yawo refer to proverbs as *itagu*. *Itagu* are proverbial expressions that reflect the people's love for few words but rich in different layers of meanings. *Itagu* with animal imagery intend to play with words involving animals while recognising their significant roles among humans.

Finally, I select proverbs with insect metaphors and imagery from Chakanza's *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs* (2000) and discuss the morality they depict. According to Terashima (2001), "[s]ome animals such as small insects which have no meaning to man are considered as if they were 'lifeless things' usually having no vernacular names [among the Ituri people of the African tropical rain forest]" (49). In Malawi, the view about insects, as the people demonstrate, is strikingly different. Due to their smallness of body, insects tend to be neglected in the various discussions involving animals. Adugna (2014) observes that "[t]he proverbial poetic expressions laden with environmental values and ecocritical/zoocritical literary analysis recognise the importance of consciousness raising through extending imaginative horizons out of the human sphere to embrace the totality of the ecosystem" (25). The role of insects in the ecosystem and in influencing human life cannot be overemphasised and it is imperative that we conceptualise them through indigenous ecological wisdom in the context of contemporary ecocriticism/zoocriticism.

3.2 Animal metaphors in judicial proverbs, animals as stand-ins for humans

In this section, I set out to analyse, through ecocritical lenses, animal metaphors in proverbs used at the chief's court in settling disputes. As the proverbs draw on animals to substantiate the legality of cases, I analyse how the proverbs inform a network of human-animal/nature relations. The human/nature relationships in the Malawian proverbs link with the beliefs that recognise human interrelatedness with the natural world for survival. The people recognise their oral discourses as literary texts through which they teach the listeners ethical values and justice. In explaining the importance of ecocriticism, Love (2003), observes that:

> As the circumstances of the natural world intrude ever more pressingly into our teaching and writing, the need to consider the interconnections, the implicit dialogue between the text and the environmental surroundings, becomes more and more insistent. Ecocriticism is developing as an explicit critical response to this unheard dialogue, an attempt to raise it to a higher level of human consciousness. Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly short sighted, incongruous (16).

Due to their environmental embeddedness, indigenous people's oral discourses are loaded with environmental imagination. These oral discourses foreground environmental responsibility since they do not only increase the people's awareness of the environment, but they also strengthen the bond of affiliation between the people and their land through the various ways animals are represented. Makamani argues that "proverbs are a vital component of the indigenous knowledge systems which can be used to resolve conflict particularly at the micro-level of the conflict cycle for macro-level conflict is an offshoot of the cumulative effect of micro-level conflict" (3). A traditional community is a microcosm of the nation and proverbs are important in conflict management.

In a traditional court setting, a person found guilty in a case presided over by a relative of the guilty person is metaphorically referred to as a rat or a bird that sits precariously on a clay pot and a bow, respectively. The difficulty of passing judgement in a case in which a close relative is involved is compared to throwing a stone at a rat that sits on a clay pot because the chances of breaking the clay pot are high. Likewise, it is not easy to stretch an arrow to shoot a bird that sits on the bow. In either case, passing judgement which is likened to killing/shooting taints blood ties between the guilty person and the judge. This position is represented in two proverbs,

Khoswe akakhala pa mkhate sapheka (When a rat sits on a clay pot it cannot be killed) and *Mbalame ikakhala pa uta siilasika* (When a bird sits on a bow it cannot be shot (Kumakanga 3). These two proverbs have the same context and interpretation.

The first proverb refers to a situation where a person intends to kill a rat in his/her house, but the rat quickly maneuvers and sits on a delicate object like a clay pot. Using a stick to kill the rat that sits on a clay pot entails breaking the pot as well. Similarly, in the second proverb the situation is that a hunter goes hunting for birds carrying with him a bow and an arrow. A bird flies and sits on the hunter's arrow and thereby making him unable to shoot at the bird. Both proverbs refer to the difficulty of passing judgement to a kin when found guilty in a dispute or when the judge is the defendant. The words *sapheka* (cannot be killed) and *siilasika* (cannot be shot) imply that judgement cannot be passed against the accused because he/she is a close relative to the judge or the judge is the defendant.

The difficulty in killing the rat (*khoswe sapheka*) if it sits on a clay pot (*akakhala pamkhate*) in the first proverb, suggests a negative human-rat relationship where the human insists on killing it. The rat is vulnerable before its human killer but, because of the precarious location where the pot also risks being broken in the process of killing it, it might nevertheless escape its deserved fate. The proverb shows that humans habitually kill rats because they are a nuisance in human habitations. The killing of an animal because it is merely a nuisance is constitutive of human maltreatment of animals. The proverb hinges on human-rat conflict for which rat is to be killed but reversing the decision because the rat sits on a breakable clay pot shifts our attention to the question of in/justice that the rat's life is saved because of a clay pot the existence of which is preferable to the rat. By analogy, the life of an animal matters less than the keeping of a clay pot. Because humans have a persistent urge to kill rats, rats have by instinct learned to hide in difficult places in order to save their lives.

On another level of analysis, *Khoswe akakhala pa mkhate sapheka*, applies in settling disputes, where the proverb substitutes the animal victim, rat (*khoswe*), for the human victim (the accused person in the dispute) and relates their victimhood. Killing the rat as it sits on the clay pot (*mkhate*) obviously breaks it and this symbolises the severing of blood ties. Lest the clay pot breaks, the determined killer reluctantly saves the rat's life and in doing so justice is compromised. Rat in this proverb is a metaphor of a kinsman or kinswoman who is in the wrong but difficult to be inflicted with harm. He/she is likened to have sat on a delicate pot. Makamani (n.d.) explains that "[s]ince many proverbs use metaphors to persuade through

ethos, pathos, and logos owing to their graphic vividness, it is critical to address the metaphor as a persuasive import of African proverbs" (6-7). Thus, the visual representation of the human-animal relationship in the proverb under discussion reflects kinship.

In the second proverb, *Mbalame ikakhala pa uta siilasika* (When a bird sits on a bow it cannot be shot) the metaphor of the bird alludes to how despite its flight it has now landed near, on the bow, making it impossible to shoot it with an arrow. The context of this proverb is the hunting culture where people kill birds for food. The bird that sits on the bow, like the rat on a clay pot, makes it difficult for it to be shot. While the bird has instrumental value as food, the killing of the rat is because people want to save their property from destruction. Since both the rat and bird are metaphors of guilty humans in a dispute, the decision not to kill them because of where they are sitting.

The unease with which to kill the rat (*khoswe sapheka*) and to shoot the bird (*mbalame siilasika*) as metaphors of the difficulties of passing judgement due to close relations denies justice to the other party to whom the offence was committed in the conflict. Proverbial lore uses rat and bird as animal metaphors for a person in the wrong. Rouhi and Mahand (2011) observe that "what counts as an animal metaphor is the use of an animal as the source rather than the target […] the animal's name in an animal metaphor may be used either referentially (that is, it may be used simply as a label for an object) or predicatively (that is, it may be used as a description that an object may satisfy to varying degrees or perhaps not satisfy at all)" (252). Animal metaphors in proverbs function to refer to human behaviours, actions and situations. The two proverbs call for tenderness to rat and bird. They also reflect people's unwillingness to kill the rat and the bird due to their closeness with them and thereby depicting a positive human-animal relationship. The proverbs appeal for human consideration for the animals. The use of rat and bird in the two proverbs inform how animals and humans face the same situations that place their lives in paradoxical situations.

However, the appeal for consideration in the two proverbs above is revoked using the proverb *Kupha nyani n'kusamuyang'ana nkhope* (To kill a baboon you need not look into its face). The situation in this proverb is that of the hunting community. When a hunter goes to the forest to hunt animals and he puts a baboon in a situation where he can easily kill it, he should be determined to kill it without looking into its face. This is because to look into the baboon's face would make it to appeal for mercy. The baboon's face and the human face draw resemblances

and the hunter would feel his closeness with the baboon and reconsider his killing of it. In their serach for food, in agrarian communities baboons are constantly in conflict with humans. Sometimes baboons can cause serious injuries to dogs and this explains why once cornered, no mercy for them. This proverb is also said in the context of a dispute in which a relative is found guilty but the proverb's emphasis is placed on the fact that judgement should not be influenced by considerations of kinship or friendship. As a primate, the ape, monkey or baboon is closely related to the human being. When one wants to kill it, *osamuyang'ana nkhope* (don't look into its face). When appealing for mercy, the faces of the human being and the baboon/monkey may equally affect the emotions of those from whom mercy is sought. To avoid looking in the baboon's face when passing judgement ensures that justice is done without ill intentions. The proverb creates a situation that when a human being kills a baboon the emotional appeal of the baboon registered on its face would move the human being to pity and therefore not kill it.

To kill a baboon comes in two counts in Malawian folklore. First, baboons destroy people's crops in the fields and when one is caught its fate is death. Secondly, some people, though not widespread in Malawi, eat baboon's meat and they go hunting for baboons. In either case, the proverb gives advice not to look into the baboon's face (*kusamuyang'ana nkhope*) because its face resembles that of a human being. The choice of *nyani* (baboon/monkey) in this proverb reflects not only human-baboon/monkey physiological similarities but also the likenesses of the human-baboon physiognomy. What the proverb *Kupha nyani n'kusamuyang'ana nkhope* (To kill a baboon you need not look into its face), entails is that when one presides over a case involving a relative who has committed a crime, justice must still be done. The metaphor of killing a baboon without looking into its face implies the desire to put a stop to a malpractice through painful means but justifiable ends.

The proverb evokes close ties between the baboon/monkey and the human being insofar as all is well but justice should prevail when the baboon is in the wrong. Thus, the baboon/monkey in the proverb functions as a metaphor of a person who has committed a crime and that his/her position in society should not prevent justice from being exercised. The use of animal metaphors in proverbs reflects the people's awareness of the similarities between humans and animals. According to Aristotle "a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilarities" (*Poetics* 1459a 5-9). Thus, the use of comparisons that function as conceits adds ingeniousness to proverbs. It is through the metaphoric constructs of animals in proverbs, as Adugna (2014) observes that "[p]aying attention to the lore of the people aids in

raising consciousness through indigenous ways in shaping minds through the values entrenched in them" (24). The entrenchment of values in the people's lore such as "proverbs as cultural resources" entails that they "provide a theoretical base for the way an individual interprets his/her social environment" (Aboluwodi 2014:38) and in turn affects the way an individual interacts with the natural environment. Baboons, monkeys, wild pigs and elephants are constantly in conflict with humans in communities where people's activities are based on agriculture. Proverbs about these wild animals involve killing or trapping them.

The metaphor of a human being killing an animal calls for the need to put to a decisive end to a problem, especially killing a snake. The proverb *Kupha njoka ndi kuidula mutu* (To kill a snake is to cut off its head) (Chakanza 142), suggests that a snake remains dangerous until its head is cut off. Metaphorically, this means finding solutions to problems by dealing with the root causes. Snakes are dangerous animals living in close proximity with humans. The biblical conversation between Eve and snake (serpent) leads Eve and Adam into eating the fruit from the forbidden tree. God curses serpent, "Cursed are you above all livestock and above all the wild animals" and the human being "will crush your head" (*Genesis* 3:14-15). Despite the biblical curse in which snakes symbolise evil, in Malawian lore, snakes are also associated with divinity.

Morris observes that the "python in Chewa thought is closely identified mythologically (as well as empirically) with water, with rivers and deep pools and thus with rainfall; it is therefore a key symbolic mediation between the supreme being and humans, for *Chiuta* is also closely identified with rainfall" (*Animals and Ancestors* 199). The ambivalent depiction of snakes as both evil and divine inform the complex relationship between humans and snakes. Roscoe and Msiska (1992) assert that the snake referred to as Napolo in Malawian myth is "the mythical subterranean serpent residing under mountains and associated with landslides, earthquakes, and floods in Malawi" (12). This myth informs the mixed feelings people have about Napolo and the Malawian poet, Chimombo, is preoccupied by it in his poetry. Nazombe (1983) observes that the "Napolo story has two sides to it: the purely mythical and the historical; the poet [Chimombo] has recourse to both" (84). In *Napolo ku Zomba* (2001) Chimombo contextualises these two sides of Napolo:

> *"Napolo ndi chinjoka chachikulu ndipo chachitali", bambo aja anayankha. "Chimakhala pansi padziko makamaka pansi paphiri monga la Zomba kwathu kuja. Nditi phiri la Zomba ndi limene linayamba kuphulika ndi Napolo 1946*."

> ("Napolo is a huge and long snake", the father answered. "It resides underneath the earth especially in mountains such as Zomba Mountain which is near our village. Zomba Mountain was the first mountain from which Napolo gushed out in 1946" (1).

This passage illustrates the mythical and the historical sides of Napolo. Because Napolo is invisible, it is likened a huge spirit (*chimzimu*). Despite the divine role of snakes and that "many snakes are ritually important, and the python, puff adder and file snakes all have associations with the spirits" (Morris, *The Power of Animals* 145), humans kill some of them.
The proverb under discussion implies that people should not take for granted that they have killed a snake by merely striking it with sticks. The situation in the proverb is that a person cannot claim to have killed a snake if he/she has only managed to cause injuries or bruises to its body. This is based on indigenous knowledge that the iota that sustains the snake's life is between its head and the rest of its body. Having identified the source (*mutu*) of the problem, separating the head from the tail (*kudula mutu*) smothers life out of it. The snake is known for its cunning and the metaphor of cutting off its head means that human society is interested in solving problems by stumping out their root causes.

Malawian folklore about snakes also reveal that a person's quietness is compared to a puff adder as in *Njoka yofatsa imaluma* (A quiet snake bites). This means that snakes are associated with evil and when such behaviour is attributed to humans, other people should be cautious in dealing with them. Similarly, the proverb *Njoka yopusa idalumira kumchira* (The stupid snake bit using the tail) (Chakanza 249), reflects the deceptive nature of snakes; an attribute which, if found in humans, makes them dangerous. The metaphor of the biting tail of a snake implies deception and cunning. This turns the symbol of docility (tail) into that of trickery; intended to take advantage of others in some way.

People's familiarity with different kinds of animals and their relationships with animals enable them to generate environmental wisdom of great standing. In settling disputes, both positive and negative human-animal relationships play crucial roles in deciding the course of action to be taken. Animals used in proverbs play important roles in decision-making in human societies. Adugna (2014) notes that "[p]roverbs, which compress thoughts into short philosophical statements, essentially, carry folk ideas of the people about any subject including the issue of nature and human's relation to it" (26). In compressing "thoughts into short philosophical

statements" animals play significant roles in proverbs and thereby reflecting the ways humans relate with their environment.

Tigers, leopards and lions are dangerous animals that kill humans, cattle, goats and sheep in communities that live close to forested areas. The proverb *Kupha mkango ndi kuweteka* (To kill a lion you have to be gentle and cunning) (Chakanza 141) suggests that when a person finds an opportune time to kill a lion, he/she must be cautious. The qualities attributed to the animals reflect the people's environmental embeddedness, experiential and perceptual knowledge of the environment. Any achievement like a human being killing a lion, not with a modern gun, but using local resources like arrows, swords and clubs, require cunning and ingenuity. In settling disputes, there are people who talk cleverly in order to defend themselves, references to the conditions of animals enable the judges to make right judgements while those found guilty are quietened. This is because, as Mphande (2001) argues, "[p]roverbs have the power to change people's conduct, because the truths portrayed in them are so plain and unchallengeable that those who understand the morals and advice they contain, feel compelled to conduct their lives in the manner prescribed in the proverbs by the wise elders of old" (9). In other words, proverbs compel people to have a sense of resignation to their situation because there is nothing they can do to avert it. The word *kuweteka* translated as "gentle and cunning" in the proverb under discussion also suggests, when settling disputes, to logically follow what the defendant says and identify loopholes in their line of arguments. In interacting with animals through proverbial discourse, people would be in the forefront to protect real animals from disappearing.

In hunting communities, people set traps of different types depending on the kind of animals they want to kill. One of the traps is to dig very deep pits (*mbuna*) in paths (*mikwaso*) where animals frequently pass. Once an animal falls into a pit, it fails to come out and it is killed. In Malawian folklore, hyenas are stock characters that represent dupes, stupidity and greed. In hunting communities, hyenas may fall into deep pits (*mbuna*). Although people do not eat its meat, the various parts of a hyena are used for medicines. Morris asserts that the hyena's skin, brain, genitals, tail and excrement are used for different kinds of medicinal reasons (*The Power of Animals* 180, 232). Because of the various roles hyena plays in Malawian folklore, the animal features highly in rituals, folktales and proverbs.

The proverb *Fisi akagwa m'mbuna sayankhula* (When a hyena falls into a trap he does not speak) suggests that society's norms are inescapable. The hyena who speaks (*amayankhula*)

but now does not speak (*sayankhula*) because he is found guilty (*wagwera m'mbuna*) in the proverb, is conceptualised in anthropomorphic terms identified with a guilty human being. The proverb is said against a person who, despite her/his successes in deceiving others, is finally caught with the prima facie evidence of a hyena falling into a pit trap (*m'mbuna*) purposefully dug. By intuition the hyena that has fallen into a trap realises that the case is against him and in order to avoid further provocations, he remains silent at the bottom of the pit trap.

Thus, the animal metaphors embedded in proverbial expressions raise environmental consciousness and the various ways through which humans and animals coexist. Because people live close to nature, they are able to observe animal behaviours and their accumulated experiences are expressed in their folklore. Morris (2004), explains that people's "relationship to nature, especially towards animals, is therefore interpreted as one of trust and caring; it involves participation and reciprocal exchange, and implies a relational, and not an objective, epistemology" (9). Sometimes mistrust and uncaring characterise this relationship because uncertainty hovers over the interactions between humans and animals. In the proverb, *kugwera m'mbuna* (to fall into a pit) is indicative of being dumbfounded, speechless after being cornered. The proverb also suggests that despite the hyena's skills in scavenging and feeding on birds, snakes and lizards and people's goats and sheep, people have devised a plan for it to be caught. Although "the African continent has long been regarded as lacking environmental traditions – a prejudice that colours the reception of many African texts" (Smith 2014:189), the various ways through which animals, their habitats and livelihoods are represented demonstrate the people's environmental knowledge.

Animals are used as medicines and their goodness is expressed in proverbs to reflect the people's appreciation. A civet cat is a carnivorous animal that secretes musk or a nice-smelling scent in addition to being used in medicines. The proverb *Okoma atani onga fungwe* (How to be nice like a civet) (Chakanza 266) suggests the animal's generosity in freely secreting perform for the benefit of humans. The meaning of the proverb is that some people do not express friendly feelings of gratitude even if someone has acted nicely to them. The phrase *okoma atani* imples a question: what should a good or nice person do? This further suggests that the civet cat has reached the apex of goodness. *Onga fungwe* (like a civet cat) entails that the animal's nicety is unsurpassed: is there an animal as nice as a civet cat? People's transference of the qualities of animals to humans is relative to their experiences of animals and human behaviour.

Morris observes that "[i]n Malawi the skin (*chikopa*) and excrement (*manyera/matuzi*) – which is deposited in piles on conspicuous logs, stones or termite mounds – of the civet is widely used as medicine, and for a variety of purposes. […]. Its excrement is planted alongside seeds not only to increase yields [*mfumba*] but also to give them protection against harmful influence of medicines [*kusirika*]" (*The Power of Animals* 233). Thus, based on the proverb being discussed and the various benefits of the civet cats, people are advised to appreciate the services of others like judges who help in settling disputes.

Among hunter-gatherers, dogs are important animals and they aid humans in killing animals. Dogs experienced in hunting are able to trace the smell of animals and locate where they hide. There is always a strong bond of relationship between hunting dogs and their owners. The proverb *Galu wa mkota sakandira pachabe* (An old experienced dog does not scratch for nothing) (Kumakanga 3), suggests that when a person hunts with an experienced dog and the dog insists to remain on a particular locale, there could be an animal within. The expression *sakandira pachabe* (does not scratch for nothing) refers to such a hiding place where the old experienced dog sits outside the cave, scratching and growling. This gives a cue to the hunters that there are animals hiding inside. This proverb is exhortatory about the goodness of experience so that any experienced person in their profession is *galu wamkota* who does not insist for nothing and thus, humans identify themselves with animals.

Our resemblances with animals make us see similarities in the attributes between ourselves and animals and this also makes the transference of human attributes to animals through metaphors feasible. *Galu wa mkota* (an old experienced dog) is a metaphor of experience and wisdom in human beings. The scratching outside a cave in which a dog hopes there is an animal parallels an experienced person's insistence in probing what he/she thinks are the clues that lead to the gist of the dispute. Using the metaphor of the dog's experiences in hunting to refer to an elderly person experienced in settling disputes entails, first, that people appreciate the services of dogs/the elderly in their communities. Secondly, age is a symbol of wisdom and it is respected. When an elderly person speaks, people listen attentively because he/she has important points to pass on to the young generation.

According to Adugna (2014), the "way the people define their selves in relation to the nonhuman part of their world can be understood from the folk ideas in their proverbial lore. The beliefs held in them, the feelings they evoke, and the image they engrave in the human

mind can influence self-definition" (25). Society praises a person who has attained the position of *Galu wa mkota* without any qualms on the part of the person her/himself for being so named in animal metaphor. By accepting being *Galu wa mkota* a person also accepts the dog's habits. The word *kukanda* (to scratch) in search of hidden animals entails probing questions a judge asks. Oral literature is thus, the "reservoir of cultural wisdoms which regulate human behaviour towards the environment" (Adugna 25). Since the major source of proverbs is the environment, they play an important role in shaping human attitudes towards nature as the respect accorded to animals and their habits as in *Galu wa mkota sakandira pachabe* are also attributed to humans. For Malunga and James (2004), the "African cultural heritage" of which proverbs are part, "has been a basis of their self-identity, self-respect and self-confidence. It has enabled them to live in harmony with their physical, social and spiritual environments" (2). Animal-oriented proverbs identify humans and animals as experiencing similar situations and illustrates why humans identify themselves with animals.

Using the behaviours of animals, people are advised to guard strongly against their tongues in terms of how they speak. The tongue is a very small organ but it has landed some people into trouble. The proverb, *Kunena kwa ndithe-ndithe Nanthambwe anadzitengera* (Speaking highly of one's abilities in self-praise and arrogance *Nanthambwe* the bird got into trouble) (Kumakanga 5), uses allegory. The proverb suggests that one should be cautious about what one says. The context of this proverb is that *Nanthambwe* (tailorbird), *Timba* (a songbird, Titi) and other birds used to hunt animals. Each time *Timba* threw his arrow at an animal he never missed it and killed the animal silently uttering the words "*Atate*" (Father), thereupon *Nanthambwe* claimed the kill screaming, "*Nanthambwe! Nanthambwe! Nanthambwe!*" One day, tired of *Nanthambwe*'s claims, *Timba* deliberately aimed his arrow at one of his own kind, killed him, and laid the blame on *Nanthambwe* (Kumakanga 5-6). Thus, some proverbs originate from fables and allegories from which animals metaphorise humans.

This proverb is, therefore, an allegory of birds as stand-ins for humans. People's embeddedness in the environment entails many years of experiences of interacting with nature from which they produce and re-affirm their moral values. The relationship between the tailorbird and the songbird is bitter because the latter is a good hunter while the former does not have hunting skills. The tailorbird is therefore consumed by jealousy and this illustrates why he is bent on frustrating the songbird's efforts by appropriating his skills. When the songbird cunningly kills one of his own, the tailorbird is dumbfounded; he can no longer claim the kill because this is distasteful.

Based on the tailorbird-songbird relationship the proverb shifts its focus to human-human relationship. The tailorbird is a metaphor of a person with self-interested praise but he/she is inept in what he/she undertakes to do while underrating the skills of others, the songbirds. The birds in the proverb allegorise humans who venture into hunting. There are those who join others into hunting but they have no expertise though they may speak as if they know the trade. In a dispute, the complainant may sometimes speak many things of ill-will levelled against the defendant. The defendant only waits for an appropriate time to use the compalainant's own words to peg him/her down. In its signification, *Kunena kwa ndithe-ndithe Nanthambwe anadzitengera* (Speaking highly of one's abilities in self-praise and arrogance *Nanthambwe* the bird got into trouble), uses personification of the birds, tailorbird and songbird to reflect that the situation in which the birds find themselves is also applicable to humans. By using the instrumental value of animals in proverbial lore in order to regulate the way individuals talk, the people's awareness of the environment increases or is reinforced.

While proverbs represent animals as experienced in specific skills and with speeches, animals are also represented as listening and hearing. Animals are represented as being able to interpret what they listen to or hear. The proverb *Ntchenzi imamva mawu oyamba* (The cane rat hears the first words) (Kumakanga 10) suggests that it is the habit of the cane rat to pay attention to the first statement in an utterance. The cane rat in the proverb is a yardstick for good listening and attentiveness in humans. *Ntchenzi* (cane rat) that allegorises good listening or hearing skills metaphorizes a person experienced in traditional court proceedings. The person logically follows the speeches of the both the complainant and defendant paying close attention to discrepancies. Through the cane rat, people learn the importance of not altering their sworn affidavits. The cane rat hears the first words (*Ntchenzi imamva mawu oyamba*) entails contemplative listening that isolates chaff from the grain, so to speak. And this skill of listening, is attributed to the cane rat among all the animals based on the people's experiences. Specifically, the behaviour that typifies the cane rat's attentive listening is that it stands on its hind legs, head and ears raised in order to make sense of any sound in the environment. Humans hunt and eat cane rats and their alertness constitutes survival mechanism. The representation of animals in proverbs falls within the ecocritical perception embedded in culture as reflected in people's close connection to their land. The wording in the proverb *Ntchenzi imamva mawu oyamba* (The cane rat hears the first words) gives the impression that: (a) *Ntchenzi imamva* (The cane rat hears); (b) *Ntchenzi siimamva mawu aliwonse koma oyamba* (A cane rat does not

hear any other words except the first). What this means is the need to stick to the logic as developed from an individual's utterance. If indigenous lore attributes logic to animals, albeit, imaginatively, animals cannot be excluded from the realm of rationality. The cane rat is identified with an experienced person in settling disputes with abilities to discern contradictions.

The different colours of the plumages of birds are a beauty to watch in nature. There are different birds with shades of black colour, but one bird stands out as the blackest and proverbial lore attributes this to hurried decisions. When an individual is in a hurry to get something, she/he may not have the desired effects. Using the fork-tailed bird (*mnthengu*) and a medicine person (*sing'anga*) we learn about the implications of not waiting until all is set. The proverb *Lero lomwe linadetsa mnthengu* (Only today turned the fork-tailed bird black) (Kumakanga 11) supports this view. Like most of the proverbs, besides allegory, a fable contextualises human-animal relations in this proverb.

The bird, *mnthengu* once admired the blackness of a young man and upon enquiring from the young man *mnthengu* learned that he got his blackness from a *sing'anga* (traditional medicine person). When *mnthengu* immediately visited the *sing'anga,* he was told that the medicine was not available that day but advised him to come the following day. *Mnthengu*, however, insisted that he wanted to get the blackness that very day and not the next day, thereupon the tired *sing'anga* took his gourd, concocted a mixture of charcoal and rubbed it against *mnthengu's* body. Although *mnthengu* became black as he wanted, it was not the kind of beautiful blackness that he had admired in the young man, for he became too black. *Lero lomwe linadetsa mnthengu* (Only today blackened the fork-tailed bird) places a lot of weight on *linadetsa* (blackened) to show how from the bird's black colour, humans can do injustice to themselves because they are in a hurry to receive justice.

The word *linadetsa* (blackened) derived from *kuda* (black), *kudetsa* (to blacken) carries connotations that the bird's blackness is ugly. The proverb admits that the fork-tailed bird's blackness is extreme: *Mnthengu ndi mbalame yakuda moyipa* (The fork-tailed bird is ugly in its extreme blackness). The proverb also gives a reason, why this is the case because despite the herbalist's advice that proper concoctions are not available this day, the fork-tailed bird insists. Because the fork-tailed bird cannot wait until the next day, he carries an ugly blackeness as opposed to what the Yawo call *upiliwu wa lijongolo* (the blackness of a millipede), which is

light black (*wonyezimira*). From the conditions of animals, humans generate indigenous knowledge about the goodness of excercising patience. *Mnthengu*, the fork-tailed black bird, is therefore a symbol of impatience. The simile *Kuda ngati mnthengu* (as black as the fork-tailed bird) illustrates the bird's explicit comparison with a person very black in complexion.

The proverb also alludes to the significant roles of traditional medicines and religious beliefs. Klassen (2016) asserts that "[m]edical knowledge and techniques have often emerged directly from religious traditions, making the line between these two admittedly unstable categories – religion and medicine – particularly hard to draw with any certainty" (401). The hurry of the fork-tailed bird in getting medicine to make him black thwarted the traditional medicine person's (*sing'anga*) work ethics and the concoctions did not produce the desired effects. Based on the people's imaginations, the *sing'anga*/creator supposedly designed the fork-tailed bird's feathers when he was not in the right frame of mind because of the hurry in which the bird wanted to be painted.

The representation of human-animal relationships in Malawian proverbs used in settling disputes reflects the environmental consciousness of the people that implicates humans in animal situations. The human-animal interactions represented in Malawian proverbs are not chaotic but they reflect the "*quality* of the experience being evoked" (Akoma 3-4) by the people. The evocation of the experiences in proverbial lore has its roots in the people's environment. Okpewho (1992) explains that proverbs "have three sources of origin: folktales, actual historical experiences, and a well-considered observation of various aspects of the natural environment" (227-29). What this implies is that the composition of proverbs is rooted in the people's environmental interaction and imagination. Of the three significant sources of proverbs, the environment overrides the first two. By exploring proverbs for the people's environmental consciousness and embeddedness, we are dealing with the representative oral genre that is firmly grounded in the environment. Human-animal/nature relationships are loaded with philosophical and political implications. Different species of animals play recognisably important roles in settling disputes among humans by drawing on their positive and negative traits appropriate to each case. The ubiquity of animals in Malawian proverbs illustrates the various kinds of interactions of human-animal and the ineffaceable effects that they have on human conduct.

3.3 Animals as vehicles for human personality building

Besides animal proverbs that are used in settling disputes and thereby reflecting the people's knowledge of the environment as discussed in the previous section, other animal-oriented proverbs help in building human personality. The term "personality" refers to "the part of a person that makes them behave in a particular way in social situations: a friendly or unfriendly way, or in a confident or shy way" (Rundell *et.al*. 1056). Used for pedagogic purposes, proverbs help in providing people with a sense of "self-respect and self-confidence" and enable "them to live in harmony with their physical, social and spiritual environments" (Aboluwodi 2014:34). The bulk of these proverbs are what Kumakanga (1996) categorises as *Miyambi ya Kuphunzitsa Chikhalidwe cha Mtima* (proverbs that teach kind-heartedness). The use of animals in proverbs in order to build human personality reflects the people's closeness to the animals and experiential knowledge based on many years of interactions with animals. Culture informs an individual's personality and where culture uses animals in building that personality, the concern is with the positive and negative aspects of behaviour deciphered from animals and correlated with humans. The use of animal proverbs as a corrective measure of human behaviour authenticates criticism of people's conduct and actions without hurting their feelings.

Ismail *et.al*. (2016) observe that "[p]roverbs related to animals reflect the value that exists in society. Through the comparison with animalistic traits, humans are prone to assess others with constructive criticisms without hurting or humiliating other people" (153). There are many "animalistic traits" that humans accept and have made them their own qualities of identification. The proverb, *Ntchentche inati m'mbuyo mwabwino, mtsogolonso mwabwino* (The housefly said the past is good, the future is also good), connects the rubbing of the housefly's legs backward and forward with a human situation where an individual has been wronged but forgives the wrong doing and looks forward to the future. The proverb provides advice to people not to avenge when they have been wronged. Despite the housefly being a vector that transmits infectious diseases, the housefly proverb instils in people not to be vengeful and bitter about the past nor lose hope about the future. However, the housefly is also known for being attracted to smells and thereby landing itself into trouble. The proverb *Ntchentche ya dyera idanka ndi maliro kumanda* (The greedy housefly went with the corpse into the grave) (Chakanza 259) warns about smells because some of them could be noisome. Similarly, people should be careful not to be drifted by whatever people say in the community. Because the housefly in the proverb does not distinguish different types of smells, it is buried

with the corpse into the grave. The proverb does not extol the behaviour of the housefly and thus it serves as a warning to humans.

Although proverbs teach people to be ambitious, there are limits to which an individual can do certain things. Proverbs are realistic "gems" of society that create an "unmasked and unadulterated image of [that] society" (Ahmed 5) and they are not uttered out of context. The proverb *Ndijowe nawo adagwetsa fulu mchitsime* (Let me cross over the well like the others tortoise fell into water) (Mafuta and Kondowe 8-9) suggests that people should know their power or competence to perform certain tasks. The proverb reprimands the over-ambitious behaviour of tortoise and as punishment he falls into water. *Chitsime* (well) as a dug body of water, is located in wetlands in most traditional settings; usually circular in shape. Sometimes there are natural wells and animals come to these places to drink water. The situation in the proverb is that where other big animals can astride the well in one step like a Colossus, the tortoise cannot. When the tortoise dares, he falls into the well. The proverb suggests that there are certain things like crossing a crevasse that some animals can do but tortoise cannot do. The tortoise in the proverb, despite being known for its trickery and determination, sets limits to what humans can manage to do and what they cannot manage.

In the African context generally, Ogbalu (2018) observes that "[v]arious authorities have attested [affirmed to be true] the deceptive character of tortoise […]. They show how tortoise uses deception in defeating characters in folktales" (14). As we have seen in chapter two, tortoise deceives not only other animals, but he also deceives humans. Ogbalu further says that as a trickster, tortoise, "breaks the laws, tramples on customary usages and subverts established social conventions" (14). When tortoise falls into a well in the proverb under discussion, he becomes the victim of his own jocularity for acting as if he is ignorant of his limits. It is significant to note, however, that tortoise does not look down upon himself and he is always attempting to do what other animals do.

The grammatical construction in the proverb being discussed suggests the overly ambitious attempting attitude of tortoise, (a) *Ndijowe nawo* (Let me jump along with them), (b) *adagwetsa fulu mchitsime* (caused tortoise to fall into the well). This brings shame not only to tortoise but also to onlookers. From the behaviour of the tortoise for which humans express sympathy, human-tortoise relationship is both of admiration and fellow-feeling. The feeling for the tortoise that falls into the well is that this is, perhaps, a terrestrial tortoise since there are other

tortoises that are aquatic. People's knowledge of different animals aptly expressed in proverbs contain pearls of wisdom.

The tortoise is also used to set limits as to how much wealth humans can accumulate in a specified period in the context of the people's prevailing economic conditions. Tortoise is known for slow movements and his/her inability to climb trees. If suddenly one sees a tortoise in a tree this is reason enough for alarm. Similarly, if one sees that a person has amassed wealth all of a sudden, there is something fishy. The proverb *Ukawona fulu ali m'mwamba mwa mtengo mudabweni* (When you see a tortoise in a tree, be distrustful about it) (Mafuta and Kondowe 5) supports the view that people follow their colleagues' progress. How an individual has economically moved, for example, to prosperity is important because it provides a basis for others to emulate. Dubious means to economic success, on the other hand, cannot be emulated. Symbolically, the tortoise's movement to the top of a tree is progress but the people's surprise comes in because they have not seen how he has done it.

The proverb suggests that people seemingly incapable of great achievements may have the capacity to achieve but behind their achievements, honesty and integrity are what society admires. As a cultural symbol, the tortoise does not climb a tree and if one sees a tortoise in a tree, it is an occasion for expressing doubt as to the circumstances that steered it there. The proverb likens the sudden seeing of a tortoise in a tree by an individual to seeing a human being amass wealth unexpectedly. In the proverb, *kukhala pamwamba pa mtengo* (to be at the top of a tree) is to be affluent and if it is a tortoise (unexpected person) who has done this, it is cause for amazement, *mudabweni*.

Although the tortoise in the previous two proverbs sets limits to what humans can attempt to do, indigenous knowledge teaches people to be ambitious in order to realise their goals. The proverb *Kanthu n'khama, phwiti adakwatira njiwa* (Through sheer resolve, a blue wax-bird married a dove) encourages ambition. A blue wax-bird (*phwiti*) in this proverb is a metaphor of a young man with great achievements to his credit, convincing a dove (*njiwa*), symbol of chastity in a woman, to marry him. *Phwiti* (blue-wax bird) is very small in its body size while *njiwa* (dove/pigeon) is by far big. *Phwiti* is, therefore, a symbol of determination. Human-animal/nature relationships represented in proverbs instil in people moral values that build their personality from the repertoire of their environment. *Phwiti* is a fruit-eating small songbird in comparison with *Njiwa (*pigeon), male and female birds respectively, as used in the proverb.

Like *Mphongo ya chiwala sichepa* (The male grasshopper is not too small for the female [*thadzi*] (Chakanza 208), both proverbs lean towards encouraging people to respect what others have achieved despite the smallness of their physique. Thus, animal proverbs exploit the animal world in order to recognise their roles in building human personality; humans should not undermine the achievements or potential of others.

As I have already alluded to, the hyena has different symbolic meanings in Malawian folklore. In helping build good personality, children learn the importance of sharing and the ills of personal aggrandisement. Animals are also symbols of either development or retrogression. The proverb *Pali fisi ziboda sizikhalapo* (Where a hyena is, there are no bones) (Mafuta and Kondowe 14-15), suggests that greed retards development. This proverb, like most of the proverbs discussed, are constructed in philosophical syllogism; deductive reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn from two premises: (a) *Pa malo pomwe pali fisi ziboda sizikhalapo* (At a place where a hyena is, bones cannot be found); (b) *Pamalopa pali fisi* (There is a hyena at the place); (c) *Kotero ziboda sizikhalapo* (Therefore, there will be no bones). In real-life situation, hyena refers to a person full of self-aggrandisement and monopolistic tendencies. The community sees such a person as *wophangira ziboda* (one who appropriates to himself all the bones). *Ziboda* (bones) symbolises good things that can durably aid in societal development and nourish its people as in the minerals from the bone marrow. The hyena metaphorically represents a greedy person who, when in political power, only brings development so long as it benefits him/her personally. With the negative attributes of a hyena, proverbial lore makes him a symbol of stagnated development and poor political governance. In this proverb, the hyena symbolises a corrupt leader who appropriates everything to her/himself. A leader who behaves like a hyena is unpopular with her/his subjects. The following fable is an example of hyena's greed and it contextualises the proverb under discussion:

> The hyena once had the luck to come upon a dead ass. There was enough meat for three whole days. He fell to with a will and was busy enjoying his meal when suddenly he saw his children coming. He knew their healthy young teeth and growing appetites, and as he did not want to share the magnificent carcass with them, he said:
>
> "You see that village over there? If you are quick you will find plenty of asses there just like this one. Only run."
>
> The hyena's children rushed toward the village, shouting the good news at the top of their voices. As the tale travelled to all corners of the bush, starving

> animals crept out – jackals, civet-cats, tiger-cats, all the smaller wild animals – and ran toward the village where a feast of assess' meat was to be found.
> The whole morning the hyena watched them go by, singly or in flocks, until in the end he began to be worried.
> Well, he said to himself, it looks as if it must be true. That village must be full of dead asses. Leaving the carcass he had all to himself, he started off to join a band of other animals who were running toward the village (Guillot 1966:88-89).[3]

In this passage the hyena begins to believe in the lie that he has told his children and, because of greed, "it looks as if it must be true." It is because this animal is known not only for greed but also for corruption. The hyena corrupts his own children sending them away in search of an ass when he knows it is not true but he soon comes to believe in hisown lie. In this proverb "bones" symbolise resources that greedy people embezzle. In building human personality, the moral in the proverb is that greed taints a person's reputation. Usually, hyena-related proverbs have negative connotations about how the animal relates with humans and the character traits projected onto humans reveal humans' bad characters.

In proverbial lore, death can be real but is sometimes expressed as a metaphor. The proverb, *Tsiku lokufa nyani mtengo umatelera* (On the day the monkey is to die the tree becomes slippery) (Mafuta and Kondowe 19), suggests that certain problems are inevitably unavoidable. The proverb is based on people's hunting experiences using dogs. Once the monkey falls onto the ground, it is prey to the dog. Vervet monkeys and baboons display skills in climbing trees and jumping from one branch to another and they raid people's crops. Monkeys and baboons are supported by small branches of trees that would otherwise break, but they skilfully manage to cling to them. However, a day comes when their skills become of no use and this is *tsiku lokufa nyani* (the day the monkey/baboon dies). On this particular day, *mtengo umatelera* (the tree becomes slippery). In this proverb, death, monkey/baboon and the slippery tree are expressed as metaphoric constructs. The monkey/baboon refers to a human being, death stands for troubles/problems and the slippery tree refers to the skills that used to work but now no longer work.

[3] Cited by Nancy Berner. *Folklore in Africa*, "The Hyena and the Dead Ass" available at https://soar.wichita.edu/bitstream/handle/10057/1615/LAJ_v2_1_p6-30.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y 30/07/2020.

The proverb also alludes to the people's knowledge concerning their experiences about death; that when time comes for someone to die, there is no remedy and even the powerful traditional medicines become ineffective. *Mtengo umatera* (the tree becomes slippery) because herbal medicines can no longer sustain life. Bruchhauasen (2018) asserts that "[h]ealing services referring to African traditions are in great demand in sub-Saharan Africa, and national as well as international bodies are trying to regulate and promote the field" (24). Despite this demand, the proverb being probed emphasises that when the day comes for someone to die, there is no remedy.

As agrarian communities, some of the Malawian proverbs involving animals depict goats, cattle, sheep, chickens, turkeys and ducks, among others. The proverb, *Yomwetera siinenepa* (A goat/cow that has no freedom to find its own food does not gain weight) (Mafuta and Kondowe 20-21), suggests that a person who is told what to say in order to defend her/himself in a court case can fail to respond to questions. In just two words, this proverb poetically compresses meanings. Instead of *mbuzi/ng'ombe yomwe mwayimwetera udzu n'kukayipatsira mkhola siinenepa* (a stall fed goat/cow does not gain weight), two words are enough to carry meaning that reflects the human-goat/cow relationship. The word *yomwetera* derives from the verb, – *mweta* (cut, *kumweta udzu*, to cut grass) and *mwetera* (to cut grass for). While on the surface, the proverb means that if one stall-feeds a goat it will not gain weight, on a secondary level of analysis, the proverb refers to more than just a goat and the pasture on which it feeds. The goat refers to a human being and the grass/pasture connotes information/knowledge.

The implication is that if a person relies heavily on knowledge from others, he/she will remain unknowledgeable. Although in terms of agriculture, stall-feeding makes an animal gain weight, inasmuch as knowledge is concerned, a person needs to be well informed with first-hand knowledge for which she/he has struggled to gain. The goodness with this knowledge is that the person owns it and she/he is able to explain. The proverb employs great economy of words, instead of *mbuzi/ng'ombe yomweteredwa udzu n'kumakayidyetsera mkhola simanenepa*, only two words are used: *yomwetera siinenepa*. The proverb illustrates why indigenous people make their goats, sheep and cattle wander in search of their own food. The health of the domesticated animal is therefore, important. In this way, the "proverb intervenes in discourse to air a thought, to sum up public opinion, to clarify a point, to spur a debate or to bring humour to serious matters" (*African Proverbs* 2019:5). The bulk of proverbs performing these functions are environmentally oriented and animals play significant roles.

Sometimes in proverbs, people invent an animal (*chilombo*) that acts as an enemy and the people's sources of problems are projected onto that enemy. In other situations, beasts (*zilombo*) really exist in societies and their purpose is to thwart other people's progress. The proverb *Mlerakhungwa ndiye koma adyedwa ndi chilombo cha m'mudzi* (The village philanthropist was killed by the beast of his own village) (Mafuta and Kondowe 28-29) supports this view. Society can abuse human goodness and it creates a beast to suffocate goodness. This proverb creates the imagery of abundance surrounding a hospitable/charitable person, a person who has the means of livelihood and is able to share with others (*Mlerakhungwa*). The first part of the proverb depicts the person as a philanthropist (*Mlerakhungwa ndiye*). The second part, *koma wadyedwa ndi chilombo cha m'mudzi* (but he has been devoured by a beast of his own village), suggests how people capitalise on someone's goodness to harm them. The word *koma* (but) is the turning point in the proverb, that despite his hospitality, a neighbour (*chilombo cha m'mudzi*) has devoured him. This gives the impression that *anansi/achibale ndi nkhondo* (literally, neighbours or kinsmen are war) meaning it is more likely to be harmed by relatives than strangers. *Chilombo* (beast) in the proverb refers to a human being who does not appreciate the good services their colleagues in society offer and they suffocate their efforts. Animals/beasts are used in proverbs to reflect social discord and rivalries among the people in society.

Through different kinds of animals, Malawians to listen to the different voices from the environment and conceptualise values generated from animals. Ecocriticism seen from an indigenous perspective brings people close to their own voices and the different ways they think about the environment. This is important because, as Estok (2013) observes, "mainstream ecocriticism has not been able to give a lot of attention to voices beyond the ken of Anglo-European intonations. It is far better for a community to speak for itself (even if in a different language than its own) than to let others subsume this voice either by speaking on behalf or in partial or complete ignorance of that community" (4). The representation of animals in Malawian proverbs reflects the various voices through which people articulate in language that draws attention to itself. The proverb, *Kaliwonera adayikitsa msoti chivulu* (I have seen it for myself the young hen laid a gizzard) (Mafuta and Kondowe 29-30) warns against *prima facie* evidence that has no proof because it is based on appearances. This proverb entails that normally, hens lay eggs (*kuikira mazira*) and not gizzards (*zivulu). Msoti* is a small hen which has not yet started laying eggs and because she sees for herself (*kaliwonera*) big hens laying

eggs, she becomes attracted to the ordeal. Since the processes of fertilisation and egg formation have not taken place in the young hen's body, it forces its gizzard (*chivulu*) out.

The proverb teaches that maturity is a process that develops in stages and instils among the people to wait patiently until the appropriate time. The proverb makes the word *kaliwonera* (because I have seen it for myself) enough reason for the young hen to emulate laying eggs but she ends up laying a gizzard. *Adayikitsa msoti chivulu* (caused the young hen to lay a gizzard) implies that it is not the natural process of egg laying. The hen forces its muscular pouch out and thus, causing her own death. Adugna (2014) notes that the "dynamic interaction of humans with nature is embedded in these oral wisdoms [proverbs], and as a result, we say that interaction is one of the subjects of the indigenous artistic expression" (25). The interconnectedness of humans and non-humans represented in oral literatures constitute indigenous people's body of knowledge accumulated over many years.

Proverbs involving animals demonstrate how the people are environmentally sensitive and very close to their land with its minute details. Grim (2001) observes that "indigenous traditions do not simply have a place at the table of deep ecological thought as a 'minority,' rather, these specific traditions have important roles in all their particularity, problems, and potential for understanding human-earth interactions" (38). The proverb *Kuona maso a nkhono n'kudekha* (In order for an individual to see the eyes of a snail, she/he needs to be patient), uses the snail's complex physiological make up, where its eyes are not easily visible, as a source of patience in seeking knowledge. The proverb emphasises on *kudekha* (patience) if one wants to see the snail's eyes but it also entails that curiosity motivates an individual to learn.

The proverb has two clauses: *Udekhe* (be patient), main clause; *kuti uwone maso a nkhono* (so that you see the eyes of a snail), noun clause, subject of verb, *udekhe*. That the eyes of a snail are not easily visible is knowledge based on experience and observation of environmental phenomena. Patience is emphasised in various aspects of human conduct and action. It is worth noing that, as Adugna (2014) observes, "oral literature, in its diverse forms, provides a portrait of the meaning of life as experienced by the people in their contexts. It is based on such features that oral literature is thought to encapsulate the indigenous beliefs, knowledge and values about nature (physical environment) and the people's place in it" (25). The ecocritical literary analysis of oral literature brings to the fore the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds.

3.4 Human-animal relationships in Ciyawo proverbs and the correlation of human and animal attributes

In this section, I set out to analyse Yawo animal-related proverbs. In Ciyawo, the proverb is referred to as *chitagu* and this agrees with the Chichewa *chisimo*. Animals are symbols of what humans like to construct topics on and then make comments. Bronner (2007) gives an important dimension of a proverb as "a traditional propositional statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, a descriptive element consisting of a topic and a comment" (127). In *Mundu mbwa* (a human being is a dog); *mbwa* (dog) is a comment on the topic *mundu* (human being) to refer to what kind of person she/he is. This means that the transference of animal qualities to the human is dependent on what humans do or how they behave. The human-animal "relationship can be understood and described in three parts: first, the activities and identity of self on its own; second, the activities and identity of self-vis-à-vis another; and third, the joint activities and identity of self-and-other" (Lejano 4). The view of animals in the cultural context is that they serve the well-being of humans and this overrides the interests of animals. However, animals occupy an important place in Yawo traditional ontological thought as reflected in their proverbs. The need for an ecocritical analysis of the Yawo proverbs is underpinned by "a desire to understand past and present connections between [oral] literature and human attitudes regarding [animals]" (Douglass 138). Using the animal-related proverbs, I argue that animals are used in Yawo proverbs as vehicles for promoting human achievements and rebuking human behaviours that society abhors.

Society promotes human achievements through the wonders in nature. A small bird, for example, lays relatively big eggs in comparison to its body size while the eggs of a crocodile are disproportionally small. Society has no reason to praise crocodile but rather admires the bird. The proverb, *Akasam'wona ndindi unandi, mandanda gakwe aga* (Do not see the warbler bird's smallness, these are its eggs) (Dicks 33) is illustrative of my argument. The interest in this bird is that it is small but it lays big eggs. For the the people the bird's smallness is extolled by the big eggs it lays. The moral in this proverb is that we should not underrate others based on the way they look/appear. *Akasam'wona ndindi unandi* (Do not see the warbler bird's smallness), is a call for humans to see beyond the bird's smallness and consider the bird's successes. Having observed the apparent anomaly of the warbler bird, the people then call for respect to this bird since it is an achiever. The warbler bird's big eggs are a metaphor for achievement beyond expectation.

Similarly, just as humans demean animals for their appearances, they also demean fellow humans based on their appearances. The warbler bird (*ndindi*) then shifts to refer to a person whom society seemingly considers contemptible but has hidden talents symbolised by the conspicuousness of the eggs (*mandanda*). The smallness of the warbler bird is deceptive but the bird's abilities are astounding. There are small birds that lay relatively big eggs like *ndindi*, and there are big reptiles like crocodiles that lay relatively small eggs, and this is how nature functions. *Akasam'wona ndindi unandi, mandanda gakwe aga* didactically emphasises that we should not belittle any person because of their smallness of stature epitomised by the warbler bird. The equivalent of the Ciyawo proverb in Chichewa is *Timba sachepa ndi mazira ake* (The *timba* bird is not too small for its eggs) (Chakanza 295) that emphasises respecting people and their possessions despite the smallness of their body builds.

Using the small bird, the proverb confers respect not only to humans but also to animals emphasising the idea that we should not undermine their abilities. Sometimes, however, people's views of the same animal are ambiguous. What I mean by this is that people make preferences about which parts of the animal they like and which parts they detest. The proverb *Kuwusosa nsinji mang'omba* (You only want the open billed stork's feathers) illustrates this ambiguity. The open billed stork (*nsinji*) is a bird that is "brownish black all over, except for browner upper wing; feathers on mantle, neck and chest glossed greenish; ventral feathers each end in long (up to 40 mm)" (Pullanikkatil and Chilambo 70). The Yawo use the brownish black feathers of this bird in making *mawunga*, headgears woven from the feathers of open billed stork. The *angaliba* (circumcisers) during *jando* initiation ceremonies wear headgears made of open billed stork's feathers.

Paradoxically, the Yawo do not eat the meat of *nsinji* (open billed stork). The killing of many open billed storks only for their feathers demonstrates lack of empathy. The bird *nsinji* (open billed stork) in the proverb is a metaphor for a rich person or someone with special skills symbolised by feathers. *Kuwusosa nsinji mang'omba* (You only want the open billed stork's feathers) implies that many people who befriend themselves to this person (bird) do so not out of love, but they are only interested in their wealth or skills/talents (feathers). The open billed stork bird also refers to an unpopular leader in society, but other people just want to pluck out his feathers (wealth) through flattery. The moral in this proverb is that we should be aware of superficial love as in the human-open billed stork relationship. The proverb *Kuwusosa nsinji mang'omba* calls for the respect of both the bird and what the bird has (its feathers); respect to its "person" as a living entity and its beautiful brownish black plumage as a whole.

In a similar vein, humans respect a fellow human for what she/he has, "feathers," as a metaphor of wealth and not the human being her/himself. Sound human-human relationship therefore leads to an equally sound human-animal relationship. *Kuwusosa nsinji mang'omba* contrasts with the Chewa *Chiipanthenga* (Its feathers/fur are bad) but the animal's meat is good. These proverbs negate the selective liking of birds/animals for either their feathers or their meat that shift our attention to fellow humans. Superficiality makes us love people for what they have and not for who they are. Using the avian subject proverbs here, each proverb is a set of reasoning that reflects the people's environmental embeddedness and experiences rooted in a worldview that advocates unity and wholeness appropriate for an ecocritical analysis.

These proverbs help not only in reflecting the environmental consciousness of the people, but also in raising the consciousness of readers/listeners about the rich array of ecological wisdom within easy reach, in their immediate environment. For this reason, "[a]n ecologically focused criticism is a worthy enterprise primarily because it directs our attention to matters about which we need to be thinking. Consciousness raising is its most important task" (Glotfelty xxiv). Unlike the prescriptive deep ecology which restricts itself to the search for "ecological consciousness" rather than "environmental ethics" (Sessions 225), indigenous ecological wisdom is normative and it transcends consciousness raising into formulating ethical values for the coexistence of living entities.

People make use of the light produced by the firefly in darkness to construct parallels with human existence. Fireflies are luminous winged-insects. As they fly in the darkness of the night, they glow with light to illuminate their 'path'. A person who fends for himself and does not need help from others is referred to as *kanyetanyeta* or *chinyetanyeta* (firefly). The proverb *Kanyetanyeta kakuliwunichila kasyene* (The firefly gives itself light) (Dicks 60), uses the metaphor of light from a firefly to provide a niche within which a human being functions as a springboard for personal development. *Kanyetanyeta* (a small firefly) is a self-contained and balanced organism that produces energy that drives it and provides light in its way. The diminutive words *ka–* in the proverb *Kanyetanyeta* (a small firefly) *kakuliwunichila* (gives its own light, reflexive *liwunichila*) to *kasyene* (itself), shows that society is pleased with the firefly's initiatives to improve its life. Society is contented with young people's success. To give oneself light means struggling from meagre resources to achieve success and proverbial

lore gives respect to the firefly as a metaphor of a person who has attained success through her/his own personal achievements.

As the firefly gives light to itself at night so that it can provide light in its way through the dark, likewise, human beings should fend for themselves. The proverb uses the firefly to encourage the spirit of hard work and discourages acts of begging and dependency. The idea of someone wanting to be the "firefly" (*kanyetanyeta*) of another like the metaphor of Europe as the light of Africa ("dark continent"), for example, has only ended up in the wretchedness of Africa. Folklore therefore is an important stepping-stone for development. In Rodney (1973) argues that "[t]he true explanation [of underdevelopment in Africa] lies in seeking out the relationship between Africa and certain developed countries and in recognising that it is a relationship of exploitation (45). In desiring to be "light" for Africa, Europe blew off the lantern that illuminated Africa and plunged it in darkness. *Kanyetanyeta kakuliwunichila kasyene* (The firefly gives itself light) "light" implies knowledge as well as the physical and spiritual light. It is important that we should recognise the "light" in us that gives the energy that propels our lives. Cannella (2013) argues that to "truly look upon the landscape and environment of Africa through a critical lens, one must first consider the colonial and postcolonial forces that have shaped the continent" (1). The suffering of the African environment from the exploitative relationship with the West is inseparably connected to the social, political and economic aspects of environmental problems facing Africa today.

Overall, this sublime proverb, *Kanyetanyeta kakuliwunichila kasyene* (The firefly gives itself light), encourages us to use our own "light" for personal growth and development because unguardedly allowing others to use it leads to exploitation. The moment we are fireflies (*inyetanyeta*), other things become visible. In different cultures, fireflies have different symbolic interpretations and meanings. Morris (2004) explains that, "[f]ireflies are in fact beetles, and they are very common during the rainy season, flying at night, especially after dusk. They are small, winged, and brown, with large eyes, with 'light' at end of the abdomen. All local names (*mawaliwali, ng'ambang'ambi, nyetanyeta*), allude to their ability to produce light" (250). This self-produced and regulated light from the firefly is a source of wisdom for the necessity of humans to fend for themselves *Kanyetanyeta kakuliwunichila kasyene* (The firefly gives itself light) may also be understood to mean "[w]e humans carry the lamp that lights up value, although we require the fuel that nature provides" (Rolston III 15). There are different shades of the firefly's light from which the human derives meaningful existence.

Sentience is not the only reason animals have value because even the non-sentient fireflies (invertebrates) that illuminate their way have value in themselves in addition to their instrumental value. Because humans hold the firefly in admiration for its light, they relate positively with it. From the various animal related proverbs in which humans are animals and comparable to animals, it becomes clear, as Garrard (2004) notes that "[h]umans can both be, and be compared to, animals. There is, therefore, an extensive 'rhetoric of animality,' as Steve Baker calls it, that is functional in descriptions of human social and political relations as it is in describing actual animals" (140). In paraphrasing Baker (1993), Mthatiwa (2012) describes the "rhetoric of animality" referred to by Garrard in the passage cited here as "the tendency of giving people, institutions, or societies that one does not like or despises derogatory animal names such as beast or brute, or referring to them using names of particular animals as a crude tactic of name-calling" (98). Conversely, the "rhetoric of humanity" projects onto animals the qualities that people desire in themselves, like the firefly.

Among the Yawo the animal related proverbs in which people are given animal names, such names have no fixed identity but are dependent on what attribute the situation in the problem refers to. *Mundu lisimba* (A human being is a lion), for example, means he/she is a dangerous person. This said, Mthatiwa notes that "[e]very society or culture has its own folk understanding (cultural classification or attitude) of various animals. In a particular culture, some animals may have a reputation for being traitorous, brave, cowardly or stupid. Some animals may have positive and negative (or both) reputations, and in metaphorical usage, these traits may be superimposed on the humans the animals represent" (97). The proverb being probed here is illustrative of how the comparability of humans to animals consists of the attributes of the animals like fireflies. It is worth noting, however, that although indigenous people generate knowledge from the environment, "[k]nowledge is relative to cultural contexts so that to claim to know the world 'as it is' is simply a chimera" (Eagleton 201). Proverbial wisdom which is largely used for practical living, and is based on human experience, is neither illusory nor delusory and every knowledge is relative to the people's conceptions.

The praying mantis (*chikasachiwiga or chiswambiya*), and dragonfly (*tombolombo*) are fascinating insects for their slender bodies and they do not sting. They are popular insects among children in indigenous communities. The proverb, *Kupasyowêlela Che Tombolombo wapile mchila* (To be familiar to a place, Mr Dragonfly burned his tail) (Dicks 69), suggests that when someone is in the habit of doing something it becomes so familiar that it puts in

danger one's own life. The dragonfly is an insect that does not sting but it displays flying abilities in different kinds of manoeuvres while preying on other insects. The personification *Che Tombolombo* (Mr Dragonfly) implies this dragonfly is male and the word *Kupasyowêlela* (to be familiar or habituated to), signifies place especially where Mr Dragonfly lives at his wife's village in matrilineal *chikamwini* society. The metaphor for burning of Mr Dragonfly's tail suggests that he flies around an open fireplace. The proverb warns against being too familiar with something because one loses to pay attention to details and thereby leading into jeopardising one's life. Despite its expertise and experiences in flying, the dragonfly can land on fire and the proverb thus emphasises cautiousness in anything one undertakes to do.

This is a significant view held by indigenous people. Howarth (1996) observes that "[t]he dogma that culture will always master nature has long directed Western progress, inspiring the wars, invasions, and other forms of conquest that have crowded the earth and strained its carrying capacity" (77). *Che Tombolombo* (Mr Dragonfly) becomes used to a place with plenty of insects thinking he will consume them all. The *chikamwini* ideology applied to the dragonfly entails there is a limit to which he can consume insects and remain betrothed to the environment before being autolytic (*ŵapile mchila*) because his habits cannot sustain him *ad infinitum*.

Kupasyowêlela Che Tombolombo ŵapile mchila (To be familiar to a place, Mr Dragonfly burned his tail) and other proverbs support the argument that Iovino (2017) advances that "[t]he very idea of reintegrating the cultures of antiquity into the contemporary environmental humanities debate appears, indeed, perfectly in line with a cultural-ecological effort to reveal elements and voices that have long been 'hidden' or 'marginalised' in ecocritical analysis" (311). Proverbs provide a wide range of ecological insights. Indigenous people's environmental embeddedness implies their awareness of enviro

Clark (2015) asks, "Can anyone describe the Earth as a whole and not use terms, concepts and images derived from the specific categories of life on its surface? […]. The Earth is not 'one' in the sense of an entity we can see, understand or read as a whole. […]. The Earth is both an object *in* the picture, but also the frame and the ground of picturability" (33-34). What this means then is that our conceptualisation of the Earth is relative to our knowledge, the extent to which we are able to capture its envisioned image. Folklore (folktales, proverbs, songs, riddles, myths), encapsulated in animals, embodies the people's visualisation of the Earth and their responsibilities to it.

Chang (2017) posits that "oral traditions have a long epistemology that shows that the Earth is a multiverse, shared by fauna and flora and other living and non-living forms at multiple scales" (176). Relatedly, therefore, the animal metaphors in the proverbs are epistemological vehicles through which we reconnect to the physical environment emphasising on "holistic ecological thought in our biotic relations" (Oppermann 231). This illustrates why the proverb, *Kupasyoŵelela, Che Tombolombo ŵapile mchila* (To be familiar to a place, Mr Dragonfly burned his tail) focuses on responsibility that in whatever a person does, she/he should not show any form of laxity because other elements in the environment such as fire, water and air, for example, threaten our existence. The human-dragonfly relationship in the proverb focuses on responsible behaviour and actions that can sustain our survival in the environment, otherwise we have our tails burned. Indigenous ecological wisdom calls for responsible environmental citizenship.

The different kinds of human-animal relationships represented in proverbs are relative to the behaviour of the animal. The proverb, *Kuŵecheta mwakuona Che Litunu ŵangali ajawo* (Truly speaking, Mr Hyena has no friend) (Dicks 73), suggests that our relations with others depend on our behaviour. *Che Litunu* (Mr Hyena) is an allusion not to the animal *per se*, but to the human being with the attributes of a hyena. Greed, stupidity, lack of foresight, scavenging and love of darkness are among the attributes for which hyena is not a likeable animal in Malawian folklore. A human being with these hyena-oriented traits will have no friends. The human-hyena relationship in this proverb is undesirable: *ŵangali ajawo* (has no friend). The proverb emphasises *Kuŵecheta mwakuona* (Truly speaking) to show the negative human-hyena relationship and the human to whom the metaphor for the hyena refers.

The deplorable behaviour of the hyena is transferable to humans through metaphoric constructs. The central image closely associated with hyena is greed but further tainted with acts of "darkness" for which he is the victim of dupery and alienation from society (Chimombo 1988, 2006; Morris 2000b; Mthatiwa 2011). Because hyena is also associated with sexual virility and its body parts used as virility drug and other medicinal mixtures (Morris 2000a, 2000b), human relations with hyena are ambivalent.

Kuŵecheta mwakuona Che Litunu ŵangali ajawo (Truly speaking, Mr Hyena has no friend) is an ambivalent proverb because among the Yao, *litunu* (hyena), is a man in an arranged sexual cleansing ritual with a woman whose husband is dead (Morris 2000a). A similar arrangement

for *litunu* is also made if a husband fails to impregnate his wife. The phrase *ŵangali ajawo* (has no friend) also implies that hyena occupies a deplorable place and its attributes are not found among other animals. The numerous negative attributes of hyena explain why every ethnic tribe in Malawi has different kinds of rituals associated with *fisi* (Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2005). The hyena has no friend also infers that he has no equal in many aspects of his physiology.

The various connotations hyena has in folklore and the ambivalent relationships between humans and hyena derive from human observation of hyena's body parts.Hyenas having the characteristic attributes of cats (felines) and those of the family Canidae (canines) raises apprehension among humans. The hyena's gender indeterminacy helps illustrate why the animal is variously a symbol of sexual taboos and cleansing. Human relations with the hyena are dependent on the disguise "the hyena wears" (Chimombo 2005) on specific occasions. In all these, the hyena has always filled people with anxiety because its character invites both fear and lure. As gender indeterminate animals with "the females [having] a bulge of skin that resembles a male sex organ" and their changing of their "sex every year" (Kalof 46), it is not surprising that folklore associates hyenas with different aspects of sexuality that inform human cultures.

The primary context against which whether *Che Litunu* (Mr Hyena) or *Abiti Litunu* (Miss Hyena) *ŵangali ajawo* (has no friend) is not only in the peculiarities in their bodies and their metaphoric link with bestiality, but in also the hyenas' associations with moral decadence. Kalof (2007) presents the image of the hyena in the Western cultures in terms similar to those expressed in the proverb *Kuŵecheta mwakuona Che Litunu ŵangali ajawo* (Truly speaking, Mr Hyena has no friend). Kalof (2007) asserts that "the female and male [hyenas] are not sexually dimorphic [distinguishable]" (46), and, anatomically, therefore, Hyena has no friend. Through observation and experience, Malawian indigenous animal thought reflects what Coetzee in *The Lives of Animals* (1997) says that "concern for animals is, historically speaking, an offshoot of broader philanthropic concerns" (157). Human relations with animals in proverbs depend on teaching good heartedness based on animal behaviour.

DeMello (2012) posits that "[h]istory is replete with stories of animals performing heroic acts, either for other animals or for humans. These stories have been repeated throughout the years in order to either humanise animals, or sometimes to teach children moral lessons" (349). In

this case, proverbial lore identifies the significance of animal behaviour and correlates it with human behaviour in order to raise an environmentally disciplined community. The human-hyena relationship is tinged with complexities and since animals embody human values, some of these values entail depicting animals in ways that are negative. Human-animal relationships therefore, involve an intricate web of interconnections.

3.5 Non-sentient beings matter: the value of insects and the people's cosmovision in Chinyanja proverbs

In this section, I focus on proverbs about insects, invertebrate animals that are easily neglected in environmental discourses. The various proverbs that represent insects reflect indigenous people's connection with the natural world. Morris (2004) observes that "[i]nsects belong to that group of invertebrate animals known as *Anthropoda* (those with jointed legs), and as a class are characterised – as adults – by having a body with three distinct segments – head, thorax and abdomen, a pair of antennae (feelers) and six legs" (3). It is also important to note that in *History of Animals* (350 BC), Aristotle classifies insects as dipterous (two-winged); tetrapterous (four-winged) and coleopterous (those with an anterior pair of hard wings and a posterior pair of soft wings) (Book I, Chapter 5). This classification reflects Aristotle's knowledge of and interest in insects. Sherman (2008) observes that "[t]here are estimated to be ten quintillion insects alive in the world" (242). The various classifications and their abundance inform the roles insects play play in the environment. Insects play vital roles in environmental restoration against the destructive potentials of humankind. Van Huis *et.al*. (2013) explain that insects "play an important role as pollinators in plant reproduction, in improving soil fertility through waste bioconversion, and in natural bio-control for harmful pest species, and they provide a variety of valuable products for humans such as honey and silk and medical applications such as maggot therapy" (xiii). What this implies is that insects are not only significant for the health of humans, but they are also important for regulating the environment.

Despite these numerous benefits of insects for both humans and the environment and despite accounting for "the greatest amount of biodiversity in forests, they are the least studied of all fauna by far" (Durst and Shono (1). Most ethical and philosophical concerns on animal/human relationships have focused on vertebrates and mammals (Singer 1975; Regan 1983), for their presumed sentientism and consciousness while insects seem to have been scrapped off as ethical nonentities. Although the insects referred to in the proverbs are metaphoric constructs, involving the comparisons of primary objects with secondary objects, the perception of the

indigenous people reflects their attitudes about insects in real life situations. The insect related proverbs show how insects are used as food (*ndiwo*), in derogatory terms referring to despised people in society, and as symbols of unity and team work among others. The proverbs show the people's awareness of the eating habits of insects and the various ways through which they are connected to other ecological entities like humans who also eat insects while some insects suck human blood. According to Huis *et.al.* (2013), "[t]he practice of eating insects is known as entomophagy. Many animals, such as spiders, lizards and birds, are entomophagous, as are many insects" (1). The analysis of proverbs involving insects is rich in indigenous environmental thought not only because some of them are edible by humans but also because "[i]nsects have symbolised many qualities, including change, industry, royalty, social harmony, might, pestilence, disease, death etc. Insects make good symbols because they often induce emotional reactions in humans" (Klein 2-3). These "qualities" are captured in Malawian insects-oriented proverbs.

In this section, I select and analyse proverbs involving insects. The purpose of this analysis is to explore human-insects relationships emphasising on indigenous ecological values about the unitary view of nature conceptualised within their cosmological vision. Central to these values is the interrelatedness considering, as Sefa (2014) notes that "African proverbs are about relations between individuals and their communities, an understanding of the complex nexus of society, culture and nature, as well as the interconnectedness of body, mind, soul and spirit" (48). It is against this backcloth that in this section, I demonstrate that in Malawian insect-oriented proverbs the relationship between humans and insects is, in some cases, symbiotic. Morris (2004) explains that "a growing interest has developed in insect-human interactions. Thus, scholars have been studying not only the practical uses of insects as food or medicine, but the role that insects have played in the cultural life of human societies – with regard to literature, mythology, music, art, religion, folklore and recreation" (1). Malawian proverbs about insects reflect how the people's environmental embeddedness encompasses a wide range of environmental phenomena.

The first category of insects to which I now turn are edible insects and I analyse the conflict between humans and inedible insects for the edible insects. Durst and Shono (2010) argue that "[h]istorically, most insects consumed for food have been harvested from natural forests. But, even though insects account for the greatest amount of biodiversity in forests, they are the least studied of all fauna by far" (1). This section, therefore, contributes significantly to the study

of insects through ecocritical/zoocritical perspectives. The proverbs *Achoke malizabungu tiyanike inswa ziume* (Let the anteater go away so that we sun-dry the flying ants) and *Zachoka ndundu tiyanike inswa* (The big [black] soldier ants have gone, let us sun-dry the flying ants) (Chakanza 15). The word *malizabungu* translated as "anteater" in the first proverb is "a tropical animal with a very long nose and tongue that eats ants and other small insects" (Rundell *et.al.* 2006:49). In the second proverb, the word *ndundu* (big black soldier ants) are also locally known as *midzodzo* (Chichewa) and *nyang'unyang'u* (Ciyawo), and *sisinya* (Chitumbuka).

According to Morris (2004), "[a]nts are ubiquitous in Malawi, and nine generics are clearly recognised" and these are *midzodzo, linthumbu, nyerere, mapipi, nkhungukuma, mzukira, mphembedzu, chimalasuga* and *gugudira* (39). Like *midzodzo*, *mapipi* are also black ants but they are not seen busy carrying termites into their holes. *Midzodzo*, however, are black ants that move in their large numbers carrying insects such as termites from one place to another. In each of the two proverbs, the interpretation is the same. Both *malizabungu* (anteaters) and *ndundu* (big black soldier ants) symbolise people other members in society "fear or disagree with and wish [they are] gone and leave them free to do what they want" (Chakanza 16). In this sense then, *tiyanike inswa* (so that we sun-dry the flying ants) means "so that we do what we want freely." Why the people are not comfortable in the presence of *malizabungu* (anteaters) and *ndundu* (big black soldier ants) is that these animals also feed on insects such as *inswa/ngumbi* (flying insects) just as humans do. First, the kind of relationships between anteaters and big black soldier ants is that of competition. *Inswa/ngumbi* are among delicious food insects among many Malawians. Morris also observes that "insects [have] long been recognised as a valuable source of food in Malawi, and [are] a very good and cheap source of protein" (56) and this includes *inswa/ngumbi*, "winged termites" (Morris 59). Second, *midzodzo/ndundu* (big black soldier ants) attack and carry termites to their holes which form part of their lifecycle through which young ones are produced. In an agrarian society *midzodzo* help reduce termites that destroy different kinds of arable crops and as such "there are no 'isolated phenomena,' that all things are interdependent and interconnected, and that humans are an integral part of nature" (Morris 184). Although *midzodzo* sting humans they are useful in attacking termites and thereby creating a symbiotic relationship.

The imagery of ants, anteaters, black soldier ants and flying ants (*inswa/ngumbi*) closely associated with termites, in these proverbs reflects the nature of ecological values proverbial lore draws even from small invertebrates, insects. The anteaters and black soldier ants

symbolise people who inspire fear in others and in their presence, those that fear them are not open-minded enough to discuss anything until they have left (*atachoka*). In the two proverbs, ants are symbols of oppression. The imagery of ants in the two proverbs is therefore domineering. Proverbial lore attributes ants with industriousness and the various lexical items pertaining to different species of ants demonstrate not only the people's knowledge about the environment but they also reveal their knowledge of the activities of these ants.

The various kinds of ants such as *midzodzo* (black army ants), *linthumbu* (red driver ants), *nyerere* (brown house ants), *mapipi* (shiny black ants), *nkhungukuma* (Euphorbia ants), *mzukira* (tailor ants), *mphembedzu* (grey ants), *chimalasuga* (sugar ants) and *gugudira* (*makwawa* ants) (Morris 2004) as they are known in Malawi, all display the warrior characteristics that inspire awe in humans. Insects in this class are not edible but they can be vexing to humans despite their usefulness in contributing to soil aeration and decomposition of dead organisms. As symbols of strength, unity, persistence and teamwork the relationship between ants and humans is that of admiration and fear.

This ambivalent relationship extends to humans metaphorised as *malizabungu* (anteaters) and *ndundu* (black soldier ants) for using their strength to instil panic in others in the two proverbs. For as long as the *malizabungu* and *ndundu* are present, people cannot sun-dry their flying ants (*inswa/ngumbi*). In this sense, indigenous ecological lore attaches "nature" to "material practices." Another interpretation of the two proverbs and this is what Chakanza renders, is, *kusafuna kuti anmzawo akhalepo pomwe pali zabwino* (not desirous that others should be present where there are good things) (16). The good things in *Achoke malizabungu tiyanike inswa ziume* (Let the anteater go away so that we sun-dry the flying ants) and *Zachoka ndundu tiyanike inswa* (The big [black] soldier ants have gone, let us sun-dry the flying ants), are *inswa/ngumbi* (flying ants). These winged termites (*inswa*) that come from termite holes in anthills during the first rains are collected in the darkness of the night when they are attracted to light. They are smoked and sun-dried. They form an important diet for the people and in the morning after they have emerged domestic birds such as chickens feed on them and thereby forming a significant network of interconnections in the ecosystem.

Ants are generally uneatable by humans and they constitute important insects that indigenous people consider as metaphors of crucial matters that need urgent attention. *Pachedwa msulu pali nyerere* (Where the banded mongoose tarries there must be ants) (Chakanza 268) suggests

that people take time dealing with important things that they like where *msulu* (banded mongoose) is a metaphor of a human being and *nyerere* (ants) metaphorises crucial issues close to one's heart. *Msulu* (mongoose) preys on other animals such as snakes and rodents represented by ants (*nyerere*) in the proverb as the metaphor of important things. The mongoose-ants relationship in the proverb is that of predator/prey but metaphorically, ants are important issues for which mongoose delays in sorting out.

Mongooses "are able to kill snakes because they are so agile. They can leap at a snake and sink their teeth into its neck before it can strike. Mongooses also eat eggs, which they smash against rocks. They also like to eat insects, reptiles, mice, and other small animals" (Sealey 163). *Pachedwa msulu pali nyerere* (When the banded mongoose is late, you know there are ants) could also be interpreted to mean mongoose was troubled on its way by ants, *linthumbu* (red ants), for example. The insects-oriented proverbs invoke interest among children because they "often play with insects, capturing ant lions, grasshoppers, beetles and dragonflies, and utilising them in various games" (Morris 188), though most of these proverbs are uttered among old people. The inclusion of insects in proverbs is important because they form the basis of human-animal interactions from which adults in using these proverbs amongst themselves share the world full of the possibilities of coexistence.

Termites are a category of insects classified as edible (Durst *et.al.* 2010) but most Malawians do not eat them. Termites are both helpful and destructive to the environment. Indigenous people have significant knowledge of the feeding habits of insects including termites (*chiswe*). The proverb, *Chiswe chikabowola chikwa, chayambira patali* (When termites bore into a palm-basket that stores grain, they must have started a long time back) (Chakanza 63), suggests that for an individual to accomplish set goals, it requires determination and enough time. The noun *chiswe* (termite(s)) is derived from the verb *kuswa* (to break or crack). *Kuboola chikwa* (to make a hole into a palm-basket), which is presumably hard for the termites to do requires great efforts and one factor contributing to their success is *Kuyambira patali* (to begin/start from afar).

The termites in the proverb metaphorically represent determination and hard work in order to realise goals. The grain stored in the basket belongs to humans and when termites find their way to it, humans lose it to them. Human-termites interactions in this proverb is symbiotic; termites benefit from the grain humans produce while humans learn from the termites' resolute

efforts. Although termites "devour wood" and grains, it is worth noting as van Huis *et.al*. (2013), explain that "[t]ermites cannot digest cellulose and lignin, so their digestive systems contain symbiotic protozoa that digest the cellulose in wood. Termites live on the by-products of this digestion and on the bodies of the symbionts themselves" (23). Because cellulose is a polysaccharide and lignin consists of large molecules in wood cells, this illustrates why they are indigestible by termites and the coming into play of the protozoa in symbiotic digestion of cellulose reflects the interdependency of ecological entities.

Since most insects cannot digest some of the foods they consume and "their digestive systems contain symbiotic" organisms as this passage infers, symbiosis plays a significant role in the lives of insects. The capacity for *chiswe kubowola chikwa* (termites boring into a palm-basket) does not only depend on *kuyambira patali* (starting a long time back), but it also depends on the network of their interconnections because, "[t]ermites are known to have large and elaborate nests; some species have nests as tall as 8 m, and a single nest may house as many as 1 million individuals consisting of workers, soldiers, a queen and a king" (van Huis *et.al*. 23). This networking of termites in order to achieve goals is what indigenous proverbial lore is desirous of bequeathing to the younger generation. Because of their determination to find the grain stored in a hard palm-basket, termites find their way through.

In an agrarian society, termites play important roles in their interactions with humans as pests. The proverb *Chiswe chikabowola chikwa, chayambira patali* (When termites bore into a palm-basket that stores grain, they must have started a long time back), illustrates the termites capacity to destroy people's crops. Termites reflect the fighting spirit for survival and this is the moral basis of this proverb. The termite imagery creates unity of purpose and militancy in the environment that is always adversarial and in which ants are vulnerable. However, the persistence of termites would also entail that in the current state of environmental degradation, "lasting solutions must be rooted in clear-sighted understandings of multi-faceted human/more-than-human relationships that exist in complex amalgamations of a 'space-time continuum'" (Monani and Adamson 14). Part of the solution also involves sourcing out unity and collective resolve that insects offer.

This brings us to another proverb involving termites, *Chiswe chimodzi sichiwumba chulu* (One termite does not mould an anthill) (Chakanza 63). Single handedness when one embarks on projects has proved mind numbing but shared responsibilities demonstrated by termites ensures successful completion. From the works of ants (termites), indigenous lore warns us against the

hubris of using taxpayers' money and then one individual claims of having erected "an anthill," a metaphor of infrastructure development in folklore. Besides the "biological perspective" through which "humans *are* animals" (DeMello 32-33) the different interactions between humans and animals in folklore culminates into thinking that "animals *are* people too" (Batty 2016). Although it is by serendipity that we "call ourselves human, and use the separate term 'animal' to refer to all other animals on the planet" (DeMello 32-33) the human-animal (*munthu-nyama*) divide in Malawian proverbial lore lacks perpetuity. The politics that we draw from an invertebrate like a termite in the proverb *Chiswe chimodzi sichiwumba chulu* (One termite does not mould an anthill), demonstrates that sentience is not the only condition for the moral considerability of animals in folklore.

As metaphors of unity and disciplined joined efforts to accomplish a goal, humans respect *kugwira ntchito ngati chiswe* (to work like termites). Relatedly, *Chiswe chimalowa m'mphasa yongoimika* (Termites enter into a mat that just stands) (Chakanza 63) emphasises the significance of being active because idleness symbolised by *m'mphasa yongoimika* (a mat that just stands), brings trouble. Human-termites interactions involve symbiosis, they destroy people's crops and other items that stand at the same place unmoved for a long period but humans learn from termites' activities. Morris (2004) explains that "[m]any surveys have shown that termites are among the most important pests of maize, and on average, during the early part of the rainy season, between 18 and 26 per cent of plants may be infested with termites" (117). Despite their destructive effects, the human-termites interactions are also beneficial to humans. Termites help to break down crop residues into the ground and turn them into compost for the healthy growth of crops. Though damaging, humans benefit from the activities of termites just as termites benefit from human activities and thus creating a symbiotic relationship.

Bees sting people, they are inedible, but they are important insects both for human and environmental health. Human-animal relations depend on how every culture perceives specific animals and the roles of the animals in different cultures. In Malawian proverbial lore, for instance, bees are referred to in the legal context of *Chulukechuluke ngwa njuchi, umanena yomwe yakuluma* (Bees are plenteous insects, you mention the one that has stung you) (Chakanza 70). The expression *umanena yomwe yakuluma* (you mention the [bee] that has stung you) means go straight to the important aspect of the case at hand in terms of what ails an individual. The repetition of the word *chuluke-chuluke* (many-many) derived from the word

chuluka (many) creates the imagery of a swarm of bees (*Chulukechuluke ngwa njuchi*) where *ngwa* is short form for *ndi wa* (is of) and the shortened form renders the proverbial expression poetically beautiful.

Despite the aggressiveness of such insects as wasps and bees, proverbial lore draws moral values which can help bind human communities together in encouraging unity and isolating important issues in settling disputes. What is significant in the representation of insects in Malawian proverbs is that the composers imagine the close links between themselves and the insects' activities and innate behaviours. This creates ecological wholeness that even the smallest creatures are considered for moral precepts. From a swarm of bees, not every bee would sting a single person all at once. The proverb encourages humans to logically isolate critical issues that affect their lives, *umanena yakuluma*. The proverb also encourages people to be focused and prevents them from digression.

Bedbugs, fleas, jigger fleas and ticks are parasitic to humans. They suck people's blood and thus, they are disease vectors. However, people generate ecological wisdom from them. Although proverbs encourage *chimvano* (mutual agreement) and *chikondano* (mutual love), there is a limit to which these should be exercised. *Chinkonda cha nsikidzi chidanka ndi maliro ku manda* (The love of bedbugs for blood sucking took them to the graveyard with the corpse) (58), describes a person who clings to evil deeds that lead her/him to destruction. The implication in this proverb is that bedbugs so love sucking human blood that even when the person (host) from whom they suck blood (as parasites) is dead they still stick to the dead body up to the grave. The relationship between the human and bedbugs in the proverb is that of host/parasites but since the bedbugs do not leave their host, they end up occupying the same grave. The proverb expresses ironic love in the phrase *Chinkonda cha nsikidzi* (the love of bedbugs) with reference to host/parasite relationship between human and bedbugs.

To follow the corpse to the graveyard entails the marriage between the dead person and bedbugs that they are buried together in what is locally described as *n'tengano*[4] (when husband and wife die coincidentally at the same period). In the proverb under discussion, when the person (host) dies her/his blood clots and rigor mortis sets in so that bedbugs or lice clinging to the dead body feel a sense of loss but *chinkonda* (their love) prevents them from letting the

[4] Although the word *n'tengano* (noun) derived from the verb *tenga* which also gives another noun *kutengana* are all derivatives from Chichewa, among the Yawo, this belief exists.

body go. The symbiotic and parasitic relationships between humans and insects represented in proverbs demonstrate the various ways through which ecological entities are interconnected. Although the host/parasite relationships are represented in proverbs using such insects as bedbugs, ticks, fleas and lice, there are also different moral values that the proverbs emphasise.

Two other proverbs about bedbugs *Nkhufi (nsikidzi) zinachilira kwa alendo* (The bedbugs got fed from the visitors' blood) and *Nkhunguni (nsikidzi/nkhufi) zikalumaluma zilowa m'tsekera* (After sucking human blood, the bedbugs find refuge in the grass mat [*tchika*]) (Chakanza 252, 253), create a horrible imagery of human inescapability from bedbugs. Morris observes that, "*Nkhufi* is the common term for the tick (*Ornithodorus moubata*) that is parasitic on humans as a vector of relapsing fever" (289). Although bedbugs are a rare nuisance today, perhaps due to improved sanitation, the indigenous people might have experienced them in their multitudes.

In Nthala's *Nthondo* (1933) a conversation between Nthondo's father and his friend about the nuisance of bedbugs goes like this: "*Bwanji kuluma m'menemo*?" (What about biting or blood sucking insects therein?). "*Leka mnzanga, muli nsikidzi muja*." (There are many bedbugs in that hut) (Nthala 7). The human-bedbug relationship is that of host and parasite. Morris (2004) explains that there are different kinds of "bugs" and "the majority of which have a functional status, either as edible insects (green shield bug and cicada) or as crop pests. Aphids that are a serious pest on plants, such as the cotton aphid (*Aphis gossyphi*) are described as 'plant lice' (*nsabwe za zomera*)" (31). *Nsikidzi* or *nkhunguni* and other insects such as fleas (*utitili*) and *mphutsi* (maggots) are parasitic to humans and can be disease vectors. Insects influence the lives of humans; humans influence the lives of insects as well.

The values embodied in animals are, therefore, not predetermined but rather dependent on the animals' specific behaviours and actions. As projections of the people's environmental consciousness, animals serve as treasured sources through which humans generate ecological knowledge. The various human-insect interactions entail human trusteeship of the environment. Because of their strong affiliations to their land, the people's environmental stewardship is a responsibility that constitutes their cosmovision and afro-ecophilosophy.

3.6 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion of the representation of animals in Malawian proverbs has shown that animals play key roles in traditional settings in negotiating peace, building human personality, praising or demeaning human achievements and in various symbiotic/parasitic

human-animal relationships purposefully constructed to promote cultural values hinged on nature. In settling disputes at the chief's in traditional settings, animals are handy in linking with human conditions. Malawian proverbs reflect the people's insistence that the distinctions between humans and animals are undoubtedly there for humans to learn from the acceptable and inacceptable human conduct in which animals function as propellants of human communities. Through animal metaphors, those presiding over disputes at the chief's court can issue warnings, provide advice, identify the one in the wrong and be able to pass on sound judgement. The experiences drawn from animals become living examples of the voice of the community attested by the elders who utter the proverbs in court cases. Using proverbs involving animals, the people are able to negotiate peace and coexistence.

Personality building is an important function that animal proverbs play. The purpose of animal proverbs that shape human personality is that a healthy community should grow as a whole and not only a few individuals. Communities with many malcontents experience skewed growth because their citizens become disinclined to comply with societal values. Animal metaphors and symbols in their symbiotic imagery between humans and animals instil in the listeners attachment to the environment akin to a sense of belonging that includes the nonhuman worlds. The respect and dignity accorded to animals from which people derive ecological wisdom cement the bonds of affiliation between humans and animals. The foregoing discussion has also shown that by drawing parallels from animals in order to shape human personality, the human/animal relationships depend on the attitude humans have about specific animals. We draw from animals, human moral conduct that not only informs the animality in the human but also the "human" in the animal.

As the philosophies of what constitutes "the human" and "the animal" heighten, abstraction around the human-animal divide increases. Humans are not necessarily animals in the strict moral sense of proverbial lore but animals mirror both positive and negative attributes among humans. Animal metaphors are vehicles for the conceptualisation of ideas and moral values for guiding human conduct and actions. Animal metaphors used in this sense therefore carry pedagogical values. Their purpose is to draw from the physical environment and derive from there lessons that help listeners develop their cognitive abilities because proverbs do not provide straightforward grasp on issues raised.

What the community hopes for and fears are compressed in animal metaphors with economy of words, and among the Yawo, *itagu* involving animals carry key connotations that regulate community values. The numerous metaphors involving insects engage our minds with the role of non-sentient animals in conceptualising unity, militancy, a hardworking spirit, love and pride among other concepts. Human relationship with insects is enormous not only in drawing a viable interpretation of the world through metaphoric constructs in proverbs, but also in ways insects influence human existence. Through insects, humans conceptualise both parasitic and symbiotic relationships between humans and animals. The smallness of the body size of insects notwithstanding, their impact on human life and environmental refurbishment are without measure and the oral discourses about animals prove the people's environmental consciousness tinged with complex animal-human relationships.

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN YAWO *JANDO* AND *NSONDO* FOLKSONGS

4.1 Introduction

The animal-oriented proverbs discussed and analysed in chapter three have demonstrated that proverbs contain the pearls of indigenous people's environmental knowledge. The folksong is also an oral genre that utilises animals to reflect the people's ecological consciousness and knowledge of the environment. The term "folksong" is defined as "a kind of song [that] belongs to oral tradition and is thus passed on from mouth to mouth" (Cuddon 282). Folkongs adults sing to pass on moral values to children during initiation ceremonies among the Yawo mark significant rites of passage into adulthood. The use of animals in these folksongs informs the close links between humans and animals. Finnegan (2012) asserts that "observation of the natural world, especially the animal world, is often significant" in African oral songs and that "[s]ongs associated with birds are very common" (241-42*).* In initiation songs animals become carriers of moral values and people's norms. This chapter, therefore, explores the roles of animals in introducing initiates to their local environment through *jando* and *nsondo* initiation songs among the Yawo and how animals are represented as projections of the people's observational knowledge about environmental phenomena. I argue that animals are represented in *jando* and *nsondo* songs as sources of eco-pedagogy. The various ways through which animal traits are projected onto humans demonstrate not only the people's experiential knowledge about animals but they also reflect their environmental embeddedness.

Jando and *nsondo* are initiation ceremonies for boys and girls, respectively. During their exclusion period the boys and girls are taught various moral values through eco-didactic or environmentally oriented songs called *misyungu*. The purpose of analysing *jando* and *nsondo misyungu* animal songs in this chapter is to conceptualise the role of

animals in introducing children to the values of their cultural heritage and their environment through complex human-animal relationships. The significance of these *misyungu* songs is that the initiates are actively involved in singing and they internalise their *misyungu* and most of these songs are generated from the environment. *Jando* and *nsondo* misyungu songs depict different aspects of the physical environment such as animals, trees, rivers, land, bushes and forests among others. When the initiated boys and girls go back home after the initiation, society looks up to them as models for the uninitiated in terms of how they conduct themselves as *nankopoka chititi chegombo* (the newly initiated as the pith of a banana tree).

If the newly initiated youths behave contrary to *misyungu*, society observes them as *ŵali ŵangamanya* (the initiated who are impolite) and they are a shame to *anakanga* (the person in-charge of the initiates' affairs during the entire period of exclusion). Any newly initiated youths who misbehave, can be recalled by *anakanga* to be severely scolded. Society has high expectations that after *jando* and *nsondo* initiation ceremonies, the youths have been introduced into the adult world and they are expected to be well-mannered members of the community. Because the *misyungu* songs in *jando* and *nsondo* constitute the traditional education system, the representation of animals has a direct impact on the children. Kamlongera *et.al*. (1989 [1992]), describe initiation ceremonies as "traditional theatres" that "are a mark of transition in the social status of those involved" (16). *Jando* and *nsondo* are important rites of passage among the Yawo that introduce children into the complexities of adult life after the inferior status of *usongolo* (childishness).

I confine myself to *jando* and *nsondo* songs that involve different kinds of animals with the purpose of contextualising the people's perception of animals as sources of moral values and environmental knowledge as well as environmental education. I examine the complex human-animal relationships in three major sections of this chapter. In the first section, I seek to analyse the metaphors of birds in *jando* songs. The use of birds in teaching the initiates moral values and environmental education is apt considering how children are closely associated with stories/songs containing birds as allies to emotional therapy (Hunt 1999; DeMello 2012). Birds play significant roles in the lives of the Yawo people not only because they form part of the voices hear and/or listen to from dawn to sunset but also because they have influenced ecophilosophical thought. I

argue that the Yawo people generate ecological knowledge through perceptual experiences and keen observations of their environment in which animal metaphors are crucially notable. As I demonstrate in this chapter, birds' voices, behaviours and actions are cultural symbols and images loaded with meanings informed by environmental consciousness.

In the second section of the chapter, I analyse how *jando misyungu* songs involving reptiles and mammals inform cultural values environmentally instituted. It is worth noting, as Morris (2000b), observes that from time immemorial, "humans and animals have long shared the same life-world, and the relationship between humans and animals has always been one that is complex, intimate, reciprocal, personal and crucially ambivalent" (19-20). The meanings Yawo people construct about animals are indeterminate because the same animal carries a wide range of meanings and the meanings may also vary from one culture to another. The interpretation of *msyungu* also depends on the person who sings and later after every initiate has a got a song sits down to pass on the moral/lesson to the initiates (*kuwunda misyungu*).

Finally, I analyse the representation of assorted animals in *jando* and *nsondo* songs. Songs about animals are not only entertaining to the initiated children but they are also memorable. DeMello (2012) asserts that "children seem to naturally love animals. Children of all cultures are drawn to animals from a very young age, forming attachments to them and making them central in their lives. Children also anthropomorphise animals" (330). The Yawo use animals that children love to instil moral values in them and these songs constitute environmental education. Garrard (2012) observes that "[e]cocriticism has been preoccupied with pedagogy since its inception" (1). Similarly, *jando* and *nsondo* songs among the Yawo introduce children to the environment by means of didactic lessons from cultural perspectives in which animals are key in revealing the people's environmental consciousness and knowledge about their environment.

The analysis of *jando* and *nsondo* songs using ecocriticism and zoocriticism is significant because it provides an alternative view to these rites of passage that focus on animals as vehicles for reflecting the people's environmental consciousness. Most studies conducted on these rites of passage have mainly focused on sex education. Critics argue that *jando* and *nsondo* initiation ceremonies introduce children to sex

education at a very tender age and when they put what they have learned into practice, they fall prey to sexually transmitted diseases and drop out of school (Malawi Human Rights Commission 2005; Banda and Kunkeyani 2015; Munthali *et.al.* 2018). Furthermore, Banda and Kunkeyani (2015) find the "use [of] a small sharp knife for the circumcision of all the boys under one *tsimba* [*ndagala*] 'initiation shelter'" as a source of spreading viral infections (2). Mthatiwa (2020) argues that "promoting sexual licentiousness and promiscuity was and is not the motive behind *jando* [and/or *nsondo*]" (80). In fact, *jando* and *nsondo misyungu* focus on encouraging hardwork, respect for the elders and moral uprightness. The Yawo *misyungu* are almost the same as the Chewa *miyambo*.

My analysis of the Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* songs provides a different direction from the sex education and disease concerns to focus on ecocritical concerns in *misyungu* songs and the mode of environmental consciousness among the Yawo people. Holmes (2017) admires "an antiquity before nature [that] looks increasingly like a desideratum in the light of recent attacks levelled against the concept of nature as a pernicious fiction standing in the way of a healthier relationship to the nonhuman world" (x). This "desideratum" today and which has become an unavoidable participant in the environmental debate is knowledge of "antiquity" and as Holmes further notes "[t]he comparative analysis of cultures that organise their ontologies and their systems of human and non-human relations without the entrenched, deeply over-determined category of nature is undeniably one of the most important undertakings in the environmental humanities" (x). In the present state of the extinction of different species of animals, the Yawo songs involving animals constitute a significant cultural memory and "a desideratum" for posterity.

The aphorism *Mundu jutajisosele duniya yambone ukoto wakwe ngauona jika* (whosoever wishes the earth well; she/he will not see its goodness alone), reflects the Yawo people's environmental embeddedness. This aphorism implies humans living together in sound rapport but also it means collective responsibility towards environmental conservation and restoration in what Naess expresses as "*mixed community* to mean those communities where we consciously and deliberately live closely together with certain animals" (Sessions 1995:226). Among the Yawo, *duniya* (earth) is associated with *ukweti* (forest) as dwelling places for humans and animals:

duniya ukweti, chilambo wandu (forests make the earth, humans make the world). This reflects a culture that values the physical environment. Therefore, the contemplation of the animal presence in oral literature is key in rediscovering the people's knowledge about the environment.

The Yawo wherever they are and regardless of religious affiliations, have cultural practices that constitute their identity. Folksongs are traditional songs that emanate from the many voices of the mores of the folk. The Yawo's intangible cultural heritage of folksongs is rich. The ecocritical approach to the Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs makes them relevant to the contemporary environmental concerns. Folksongs are important tools for linking nature and culture through which they reflect environmental consciousness. Oral literature among the Yawo includes *adisi-adisi* (folktales), *itagu* (proverbs), *misyungu* (advices on *dos* and *don'ts* carried in didactic songs), *lunda* (wisdom), *ndawî* (riddles), and *nyimbo* (songs). Among the Yawo songs are occasional performances and they are sung for different purposes during *jando*, *nsondo*, and *litiwo* (the rite of passage for a woman who has the first pregnancy or first child). Other occasions for singing include *likwata* (women's songs to the accompaniment of clapping of hands without drums), *chindimba* (dance songs performed during the installation of a chief in which drums are used) and *inyago* (masks similar to the Chewa *Nyau*). The Yawo folksongs, contextualised to specific occasions, have become part of their identity.

The primary source of data for this chapter was fieldwork conducted at Mwinjilani Village in Traditional Authority Nyambi, Machinga District. The choice of the village was purposive. The Yawo still engage their children in rites of passage in which they sing various kinds of songs involving animals that reveal the people's environmental consciousness. The animal songs constitute indigenous ecological and ecocentric philosophy. For *jando* songs, the informants were one *ngaliba* (circumciser) and three elderly men who have been previously *nakanga* (elderly counsellor of initiates) and *alombwe* (initiates' caretakers). I collected *nsondo* songs from four elderly women known as *amichila* who initiate girls into this rite of passage.

Specifically, my informants for the *jando* songs were four middle-aged men. The oldest among them was both *ngaliba* (circumciser) and *m'michila* (one who owns *michila*,

that is, the authority to conduct *jando* initiation ceremonies). The other three were experienced either as *nakanga*, chief advisor or in-charge of affairs at *ndagala* during the entire period of exclusion, *chitonombe* (second in command to *nakanga*), or *alombwe***,** the caretakers of the initiates. Data collection was conducted from June 26, 2019 to July 10, 2019. For the songs about *nsondo* and other related information, I had four elderly women and data collection was conducted contemporaneously as I collected information about *jando*. Data collection involved interviews and tape recording of the songs and some key information.

Jando as the initiation ceremony for boys among the Yawo involves cutting the foreskin in what is termed *kuwumbala* as opposed to any male who carries his foreskin as *ŵangawumbala* (the uncircumcised). *Jando* which involves the removal of the whole foreskin was a development from *chidototo*. Previously, *chidototo* involved a partial removal of the foreskin or prepuce. The Malawi Human Rights Commission (2005) erroneously places *chidototo* together with *nsondo* as initiations for girls (41). The word *nsondo*, on the other hand, is derived from a drought resistant shrub called *nsondoka* in Ciyawo. The fruits of this shrub are used for making fish buoyant (*kwesula*) when pounded and thrown into a marked body of water in a river. The fruits contain *ntutu* (poison). During the isolation period the young girls were made to drink of water mixed with the roots, leaves and fruits of *nsondoka*. When they seriously vomited, the girls were also made to fast for one whole day. The practice caused serious problems to those girls not given to vomiting and it was stopped. Now, the girls are merely isolated for counselling. Previously, girls were initiated into *nsondo* after *chiputu*, an initiation which provided basic introduction into womanhood with overnight songs locally known as *makunami*. On the day that *chiputu* initiated girls came out of exclusion shelters (*masakasa*) they wore *magajawisa* prepared from barks of tress. They wore them from below their navels to the knees with many beads from across their necks coming to rest on each side of the armpit, their breasts uncovered. At a time when the girls were initiated in their teens, the ceremony attracted many men. *Chiputu* is no longer being practised and only *nsondo* remains.

Jando (circumcision) is a significant rite of passage among the Yawo and any uncircumcised male, regardless of his age, is a child (*nsongolo*). In order to ease the tension and anxiety surrounding the circumcision of boys, the Yawo introduced their

cultural practices and rituals in which songs dominate. These songs are constitutive of "culture" through which "one can give meaning to other cultural milieu within the society" and by means of songs "myths, spirits, animals, plants and the elements of living and non-living things plus the various forces are brought to the same level of action and interaction through the performance of folk[songs]" (Nnamani 2014:306). These interactions create a significant interplay in the physical and spiritual environments. Human responsibility to the environment/nature carries with it trusteeship. Betrayal of this trust entails irresponsibility that leads to the destruction of the environment on which humans depend for livelihood. In recognising the interconnectedness of plants, animals, inanimate objects and the ancestors the Yawo worldview, without subduing nature, also recognise their environmental trusteeship. Although the Yawo are not recognisably in harmony with their environment, *jando* and *nsondo* songs show how they realise the significance of coexistence with the physical and spiritual environments. On the eve of *jando* and *nsondo*, the *amichila* (those who initiate boys and girls) pray to the ancestors that all dangerous animals should be hidden and prevented from causing any harm to the children.

During the exclusion period at *ndagala,* the initiates get animal names (Chimombo 1988; Mthatiwa 2011; Morris 2000b). The animal names are used to identify the initiates during the entire period of exclusion. The animal names also prepare the initiates to get new names at the end of their stay at *ndagala* to symbolise their newness or rebirth. The first three initiates are named with Swahili influence due to the Yawo contact with the Swahili traders. From the first to the third, the names of the initiates are: Achando or Amwenyemkulu, Amwenyekumbi and Amwenyendisi. These are the only ones that do not carry animal names. From the fourth rank up to the last, even if they count up to fifty, the initiates bear animal names in relation to the authority the animals have and the degree of their roguery and folly. The animal names the initiates receive are Andembo (elephant), Andomondo (hippopotamus), Alisimba (lion), Angwena (crocodile), Akalunga (hare/rabbit), Alitunu (hyena), Ambaŵala (bushbuck), Aliguluŵe (pig). Among the Yawo, the relationship between humans and animals constitutes part of their history and identity whose continuity *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs sustain. *Jando* and *nsondo* songs reconstruct environmental consciousness and the ways through which the people perceive animals in relation to themselves.

Jando songs are mostly short and consist of repetitions of one line or two lines. The songs are *misyungu* (didactic teachings) sung to the accompaniment of *ngwasala* (a long bamboo the initiates beat in unison to the tune of the song; each initiate holds two sticks for this purpose). Chanunkha (2005) describes *ngwasala* as "percussion beam" or "percussion instrument made from bamboo" (2-34). After a round of singing, which depends on the number of initiates, because every initiate gets a song, the performer sits down to pass on the moral in each of the songs sung. This is described as *kuwunda* (to translate the meanings of *misyungu* to the initiates). Besides, *ngwasala*, sometimes the songs are also sung to the beat of drums. If an initiate forgets the song sung (*msyungu*) at his turn, he receives punishment by standing up and dancing alone to the song *Ŵamkwangu ali koswe* (my wife/husband is a rat), repeated several times to the beat of drums and *ngwasala* and therefore, the songs enhance memory among children. The key stylistic feature of *jando* and *nsondo* songs is call and response with several repetitions and a chorus. In most cases, when *misyungu* take overnight the songs are prolonged so that the singing continues up to sunrise. *Jando* and *nsondo* songs are pithy, concise and use ellipsis. The singers avoid being wordy so that the songs become handy and memorisable to the initiates. The people who sing *jando* and *nsondo* songs engage with eco-cultural representations of the environment and their perception of nature reflects the people's views about eco-diversity. The "human mind" that goes into formulating the songs engage with critical environmental concerns beyond mere singing. As Finnegan (2012) explains, the "verbal content of [oral] songs tends to be short (though the actual performance may be lengthy)" (235). Finnegan's articulation here provides textual evidence to what I have explained at the beginning of this paragraph about the characteristics of *jando* and *nsondo* songs. These characteristics are generally observed in African oral songs.

4.2 The representation of birds and mammals in *jando* and *nsondo* songs

In this section, I focus on the analysis of how birds and mammals are represented in *jando* and *nsondo* songs. The songs introduce boys and girls to the values of coexistence between humans and animals. From childhood, children learn to engage in metaphorical dialogues with birds. When a Yawo child loses a tooth, he/she calls upon the pied crow to give him/her another tooth saying: *A likungulu mumbe lino line lyakala lila likuliche* (the pied crow give me another tooth, the old one has come off). When a child sees the wagtail, he/she says: *Nantikutiku tikulani nampe ntesa* (Wagtail jerk your tail up and

down and I will give you groundnuts). The persistence of bird metaphors in *jando* songs among the Yawo is due to this early association with birds that the singers consolidate and thus, the bird/animal songs reveal an ecocentric environmental consciousness.

Birds are known for their songs and calls and according to Fegurland (2014) bird songs involve the "spontaneous vocalisations" while bird calls are "associated with some meaning" (21). As Podos and Moseley (2009) note that "[t]he vocalisation of some bird groups, including songbirds, hummingbirds, and parrots, develop through imitative learning, in a manner that parallels speech acquisition in humans" (389). Human sharing of attributes with birds in "imitative learning" serves to illustrate that human interest in sounds produced by birds is primordial. Sax observes that "[b]efore the modern era, the sounds of nature were everywhere, day and night. […]. Sounds of birds, most especially, were used to mark both the hours of the day and the seasons" (78). In the rural areas, birds' sounds still constitute the natural cadence that energises human activities. Schliephake (2017) observes that "humankind's reflection on the environment began as soon as the first meaning-making sign systems evolved tens of thousands of years ago" (2). Among the Yawo, sounds and activities of birds play a central role in imparting knowledge to initiates during *jando* ceremonies because they are loaded with "meaning-making" signs.

Mthatiwa observes that "in the Yawo initiation ceremonies […] the initiates are given or assume animals' names" (60), but these "animals' names" exclude those of birds. The exclusion of birds' names for the initiates is on account of their familiarity with birds. Similarly, the initiates are not given names of domestic animals but rather wild animals to create what Siewers describes as "Strange Beauty"[5] (2009). Fegurland (2014) explains that "[b]irds are a good indicator of the state of our surrounding environment; since they are widely distributed they react quickly to changes in the environmental conditions such as climate change" (13). As "a good indicator of the state of our surrounding environment," a point which Carson (1962) also earlier on had noticed, the different sounds and activities of different species of birds influence human existence. Wyndham and Park (2018) observe that "[p]eople everywhere and

[5] In his book, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, Alfred K. Siewers, expounds on how the representations of the environments by the cultures of antiquity have spread throughout the world and thereby impacting and influencing other cultures and thereby creating a "confluence of cultures" (p. 33), strangely beautiful.

throughout history seek meaning in their environments, think about the future, and look for clues as to what is coming in their lives. […]. These clues are taken most frequently from the natural world; rarely are they taken from cultural artefacts or human behaviour. […]. Among these natural signs, birds figure prominently" (533). The prominent figuring of birds as signs that people interpret in seeking "meaning in their environments" illustrate the roles they play in influencing human lives and how they conceptualise ecological issues relative to their cultural perceptions of life-centred environmental consciousness.

The Yawo observe the actions of birds and come up with songs that carry *misyungu* about what the initiated boys and girls are to avoid or expected behaviour to emulate. From a woodpecker, for example, "a bird that makes holes in trees using its long narrow beak" (Rundell *et.al.* 1654), the Yawo invent a song about the dangers of embarking on new projects before the old ones have been completed. This observation about the woodpecker's activities is based on the fact that the bird keeps on making holes in trees searching for ants, termites and larvae. The argument is that the woodpecker would have fire-dried (*kuŵamba*) the insects and larvae already found to preserve them for future use before making holes in other trees. The people's meaning of the woodpecker's behaviour is that it is a lazy bird that spends most of its time in trees. The folksong to which I now turn involves a woodpecker and its activities of excavating "cavities in living and dead trees" (Mikusinski 86) in search of insects and worms:

Ndotota, ndotota kutototа sine,	Woodpecker, woodpecker, keep boring trees
Sine syangaŵamba!	Before the others are fire-dried!

Using a bird, woodpecker, which bores trees in search of insects, the song teaches moral responsibility to the initiates about avoiding the life of idleness and that they should avoid starting new projects before they have finished what they already started. The onomatopoeic sound in the song *Ndototа* (woodpecker), *– tota* and *– totota* creates the imagery of someone monotonously pecking into wood. *Sine syangaŵamba* (before the others have been fire-dried) referring to insects woodpeckers find from the wood, reflects lack of organisation on the part of the woodpecker. In the people's relational metaphysics, the woodpecker's monotony is a sign of inactivity for humans who display

similar behaviour. The human-woodpecker relationship in this song is therefore, negative. The moral for the initiates is *ngatendaga mpela ndototа* (don't behave like the woodpecker) that reveals the people's experiential and observational knowledge about the behaviour of the woodpecker that they correlate with the behaviour of humans and literary representations of animals.

Mikusinski (2006) observes that "[m]ost woodpeckers are sedentary birds and are generally considered poor dispersers" (87). The Yawo people find the woodpecker's "sedentary" existence of little activity excepting making holes in trees unproductive in their agrarian community. If the woodpecker pecks in trees looking for insects, the bird should have been economically wise that some of the insects could have been fire-dried for future use rather than spending days on end on the same activity. Furthermore, the song teaches the young ones to be organised in various aspects of life including in farming activities where an individual requires entrepreneurial and managerial skills. The sound the woodpecker produces in boring trees is a metaphor of a disorganised person who does not finish his/her projects.

However, the woodpecker's behaviour of making holes in trees and feeding on larvae, ants and termites creates an ecological interconnectedness with other organisms in the environment. Styring (2002) notes that "in the habitats where they occur, woodpeckers form not only a distinct taxon, but also a discrete ecological guild" (63). The woodpecker's inadvertent promotion of natural relations in the environment elevates its activities beyond what traditional knowledge is under-lexicalised to decipher meaning. Mikusinski (2006) also explains that through the woodpeckers' activities, "facultative sap-consuming species are also benefited by their drilling for phloem sap and their activities can influence entire community structures" (86). The different species of animals that live under different conditions in the environment benefit from the tree excavating activities of the woodpecker form a network of interconnections, an ecological association based on sharing similar feeding interests. The song about the woodpecker encourages boys and girls to be focused on their work and avoid unfinished projects.

Similarly, boys and girls are encouraged to help their parents in farming activities. This is because *msyungu wa ndannda* (the first song that constitutes the core of *jando* and

nsondo teachings) is *kulima alimeje tachilapa sala kogoya* (work hard in the fields lest you talk about the dangers of famine or hunger). The Yawo believe that *mtela wa sala nikamulisya masengo mpini* (literally, the medicine to end hunger and/or famine is to strongly get hold of a hoe). If boys and girls are too young to be actively involved in farming activities, they must help their mothers to take care of babies. The *msyungu* for this is called *ndileleleni mwana kulima simulima konse mukungogona* (look after my baby, you are not even cultivating but only sleeping). The following song is sung against a lazy person who clears a bush around a piece of land and leaves uncleared bushes in the middle:

Kulima kungulimaku asikatinji,	This cultivation I'm doing I leave a bushy area in the middle,
Malaŵi timalisye-e!	I finish the next day!
Asikatinji,	A bushy area in the middle,
Malaŵi timalisye-e!	I finish the next day!

In an agrarian society, the song about the woodpecker suggests that when people engage in farming activities, it is unethical to keep on cultivating new portions of land leaving uncultivated portions in the middle of the farm/field. These two songs *Kulima kungulimaku asikatinji malaŵi timalisye* and *Ndotota kutotota sine, sine syangaŵamba* complement each other. The word *asikatinji* (bush in the middle) derives from *litinji* (bush) and *sikati* (middle) and the bush in the middle of the farm can dangerously keep snakes. The imagery and metaphors of animals in the songs are sometimes implied. *Ndotota* (woodpecker) in the song, on the other hand, is a metaphor of a person who keeps cultivating new pieces of land. The bird's name, *ndotota*, is onomatopoeic based on the sound the bird produces as it excavates cavities in trees, *kutotota* (to make an irritating sound or noise). The woodpecker's sound is thus, interpreted as irksome just like the behaviour of an individual who cultivates one part of his land and goes to cultivate another section of the same piece of land leaving bushes in between.

The people's awareness of the behaviour of the woodpecker entails their presence then as opposed to their extinction now when one can rarely hear the sound of their tree excavating activities because of deforestation. If local communities are allowed to

participate in sensitisation and preservation of wildlife coupled with implementable government legislative policies, the environment has great potential of regaining its biodiversity.

It is also significant to note the song's context is agriculture through which the initiates are taught to be industrious in their cultivation of the fields. The song laments the behaviour of the woodpecker about why he does not fire-dry (*kuŵamba*) his catch to prevent further damage to trees. The *Ndotota* (Woodpecker) song is likened to the song entiled *Kulima kungulimaku asikatinji* (This cultivation I'm doing) because in each case, work remains unfinished. *Malaŵi timalisye* (I finish the next day) creates the imagery of a person with many uncompleted works but embarks on others. Socially and historically, this is what the woodpecker is known for and this is the attitude people have towards the bird. Sax (2001) notes that "[t]he woodpecker is not so much a singer as a musician, but its sound announces the start of the rainy season in many cultures" (82). Indigenous people are aware of seasonal changes and various animals that are associated with particular seasons. The people are also aware of the various symbolic meanings of animals for morally correct human behaviours. Schliephake (2017) observes that "[o]ften practised with the goal of presenting a corrective to social and political developments that [are] seen as root causes of the environmental crisis, ecocriticism is itself a historical phenomenon with specific characteristics" (4). Ecocriticism pays close attention to the representation of ecological wisdom in literary texts and how such wisdom can be used for natural resources management and the restoration of ecological biodiversity.

Sometimes *jando* songs dealing with birds consider them as all-seeing. *Jando* songs represent birds as having the abilities to know and disclose vital, sometimes even hidden, information. Birds that are accorded this ability are usually small, songbirds. Wyndham and Park (2018) note that "[w]orldwide, the domain of 'birds that tell people things' (Thompson *et.al*. 2008) includes diverse ontologies that posit birds as people or spirit beings (essentially or occasionally; Forth 1998); birds as exceptional animals who act as messengers from supernatural realms (Dove 1993); and birds as animals whose own ecological knowledge is an information source (Spottiswoode *et.al*. 2016)" (354). Birds do not only "tell people things" but they also tell things about people because their existence and knowledge transcend ordinary human knowledge. Birds' flight is

symbolic omniscience as they soar high above humanity into the spiritual realm (*kumwamba*, the sky/heaven). Songs about small birds are sometimes metaphors of children as innocent eyes of society. The following song illustrates this:

Timba tii pekonde-e!	*Timba*	[tit] singing
	ti-ti-ti	in the bush!
Kumbonaga uteme nkasimusala-e!	Seeing me sitting on	
	my heels don't	
	disclose who I am.	

Where the bird in this song sings is *pekonde* with locative *pe–* attached to *–konde* derived from *likonde* (bushy thickets). The bird in this song represents omniscient forces, *Kumbonaga uteme* (seeing me squatting), do not disclose his identity to others (*nkasimusala*). In this song, the singer is an elderly person in a defecating posture in the bush. He implores the bird not to inform others what he is doing in the bush. The song teaches children to guard their tongues against being talkative and spreading rumours about the secrets of the elders or whatever they have seen that requires keeping secrets. The *Timba* bird's relationship with the singer of the song is therefore that of confidant. The small tit bird (*Timba*) in this song is a symbol of innocence like a child symbolises childhood innocence. Cohen (2004) posits that "a culture sees its land according to its desires" and "a culture finds what it seeks" (1). The singer in *Timba ti* who tells the bird *Kumbonaga uteme* (seeing me squatting) infers the presence of grass, trees and shrubs behind which he/she hides (*pekonde*, in the thickets), which attracts the attention of the songbird and the elderly person imagines her/himself being seen by a bird. *Timba* bird in the song is the metaphor of a child who comes across secret acts involving grownups. The initiates are seriously warned not to inform anybody about the secrets they have seen. The smallness of the bird symbolises their omnipresence to penetrate hidden issues that a big bird may not penetrate.

Wyndham and Park (2018) observe that "[s]eeking patterns of meaning and guidance in their environments, people pay attention to certain birds more than others, influenced by local ecologies, cultural histories, and species-specific characteristics" (534). Among the Yawo, the letter "A" is added to children's names even if the names do not begin with this letter, for example, Joni (*Ajoni*) significantly to show childish innocence and that adults can confide in children to keep their secrets. The bird is also associated

with bushes of tall grasses near rivulets where they drink water. The diminutive *Atimba nkasimusala* (the small bird, don't reveal me), reflects how the singer implores the child not to reveal not only his identity but what he is doing at that time in the bush for fear of diminishing his reputation.

The representations of birds are closely associated with children in ways that society approves or disapproves human behaviour by associating the birds with humans. *Chiuti* (buttonquail) is a small terrestrial bird that leaves a trail/track in grassy areas where it inhabits. The buttonquail is represented as making trails that children symbolically make when they clean themselves by rubbing their buttocks against the ground after defecating:

Akawuti kulima msewo-o!	A little buttonquail making a trail!
Akawuti kulima msewo-ye!	A little buttonquail making a trail!

Through this song, people teach the initiates that after visiting the latrine they should desist from cleaning faecal remains by rubbing their buttocks against the ground (*kokona*). This is discouraged not only because the children may hurt themselves, but it is also because it also pollutes the environment. Children are encouraged to use water to clean themselves up after visiting a latrine. When the children clean themselves against the ground the trail left behind in the space between the two buttocks as they rub on the ground is similar to the trail left by a buttonquail. In *jando* songs, birds are moral voices that help instil in children the virtues of living in accordance with the values of society. *Akawuti kulima msewo* (A small buttonquail making a trail) reflects how the natural behaviour of the bird is metaphorically transferred to the child who behaves in a similar manner. The emphasis in the song, however, is placed on teaching the initiates not to engage in childish behaviours now that they are circumcised because circumcision symbolises growth and newness. The metaphor of *kulima msewo* (literally, to construct a road) in the song has cultural significations as symbolic of polluting the environment and therefore, the children are told to avoid because it also hurts and it is childish.

Folksongs among the Yawo guide people into good living in terms similar to "art and scholarship might work together to guide audiences to more careful strategies for living on the Earth" (Slovic 2015:5). By generating knowledge from the environment, the people teach the youth ecophilosophical values that help them live as responsible environmental citizens. The symbolic meanings of birds vary from one culture to another and even within the same culture the symbolic meaning of the same bird varies depending on the moral that is being promoted at the time. Gora (2009) asserts that "[b]ird characters in African culture and tradition deserve special scrutiny because literary scholars need to appreciate and understand their symbolic meaning. The symbolic function of different birds may vary according to the contours of specific [genres]" (62-63). The symbolic meaning of the buttonquail's trail may be valid only in the context of the Yawo culture of *jando* but what is significant is that birds are cultural symbols and they influence human behaviours in different ways. Analysing oral discourses from an ecocritical perspective is important and as Iovino observes "not only does it enlarge the borders of ecocritical synopsis up to encompass antiquity, but it also shows how deeply ancient ecologies of matters and ideas can contribute to the development, theoretical and thematic, of ecocriticism. Including antiquity in the critical tool bag of ecocriticism is important also for another remarkable reason. It makes us think about roots" (312-13). The folksongs under discussion are premised on people's roots and genealogies through which they have affiliations to their environment.

Birds have different feeding habits and folklore is replete with discourses that reflect the people's knowledge about birds' survival mechanisms. *Ngwale/nkhwali* (red-necked francolin), for example, feeds on seeds and insects or worms and it therefore scratches (*kupalasa*) on the ground to find its food. Children are also fond of playing with the soil moulding clay dolls and scratching the ground. Before the boys have undergone circumcision, parents tolerate them to do this because their behaviour constitutes *usongolo* (childishness). After they have been circumcised they can no longer be tolerated to play with the soil and be scratching the ground raising dust into the air around them. The following song that imitates the scratching habits of the red-necked francolin, is meant to make the initiates stop the habit:

Kupalasa kwa Nangwale-eee,	The scratching of a little red-necked francolin,

Nangwale palu-palu-palu. Little red-necked francolin
scratch-scratch-scratch!

In this song, children are told to avoid scratching the ground raising dust into the air as red-necked francolins do as they search for food (grains, insects, worms). Culture thrives in nature from which it draws its values and morals. The song imitates the way birds find food by scratching on the ground for worms, insects and granules. *Ngwale* is the red-necked francolin but the use of *Na-* in *Nangwale* personifies the bird in that the bird itself is *Ngwale* (red-necked francolin). *Na-* in *Nangwale* changes from a bird's name to a human being's name. The moral in the song lies in teaching the initiates that they should avoid scratching on the ground as this bird does. If children scratch the ground, they become red-necked francolin (*Nangwale*) whose habits is to scratch the ground in search for food and thereby polluting the air in the process. *Kupala* or *kupalasa pasi* (scratching on the ground) as children do as they play raises dust and this causes pollution of the air. *Nangwale* (Red-necked francolin) is the metaphor of a child who scratches on the ground and the song advises them to desist from this bad habit. The imagery of red-necked francolins in the forest scratching the ground and raising dust into the air is similar to that of children in the village playing with dust. The folksong also marks an environmentally historical period when forests existed as habitats of birds including red-necked francolins that have now disappeared due to human habitat destruction.

Sahu (2014) notes in the context of ecocriticism, that "[t]he relationship between [humans] and nature is not just interdependent but also interrelated" (23). It is through interdependency and interrelatedness in the relationship between humans and nature that shape "the attitude of mankind towards nature" (*ibid* 23). How humans and nature are "interdependent but also interrelated" is in agreement with what Brooke Holmes (2017) says that "[t]he modern use of the word 'nature' [covers] a wide range of ideas associated with the environment, landscape, flora and fauna, and the cosmic totality of all beings" (ix – x). Covering this wide semantic range of meanings, as in Malawian indigenous environmental discourse of *chilengedwe*, nature does not stand aloof from humans but it is conceptualised within the people's cosmovision "and the cosmic totality of all beings." Human stewardship and trusteeship of nature entail responsibility that maintains existential symbiosis. Concerning the term "nature" Holmes (2017)

further notes that "[h]owever much we may want to throw out 'nature' altogether or side-line it in the practice of ecocriticism, it still remains deeply embedded in how we organise our own thinking about the non-human world, haunting forms of scientific inquiry and the epistemic modes of literature alike. 'Nature' therefore, still shapes what we look for when we turn to the past" (xii). The songs about bird-human relationships reflect the people's environmental consciousness and their cosmovision through which the physical, spiritual and natural forces are intricately intertwined.

People's environmental consciousness and knowledge of the environment are also demonstrated by the bird songs that reveal the people's recognition of the dawn chorus. The trumpeter hornbill represents a sense of maturity and responsibility in humans and so humans have positive attitudes towards it. There are some birds, however, whose singing in the morning is symbolic of the noise children make. The next song indicates how people accuse the trumpeter hornbill of making noise in the morning but the bird, as the people imagine, defends itself:

Gomba ngoma kundawî ana ŵani ŵelewo-o?	Beating the drum in the morning, who is he?
Che Lititi ŵelewo,	He is Mr Ground Hornbill,
Che Lititi ŵalikanile nganimba une-ye,	Mr Ground Hornbill denied, it was not I,
Nsongolo gwelejo-o,	It was the uncircumcised.
Nsongolo ŵalikanile nganimba une-ye,	The uncircumcised denied, it was not I,
Ŵawumbale ŵelewo!	It was the circumcised!

The hornbill is "a tropical bird with a large beak"[6] and the Yawo *lititi* (singular), *matiti* (plural), gets its name from its drum-like call, *titi-titi-titi.* I remember we used to imitate in our childhood days the call of hornbills: *m-m-m nichichi? M-m-mg* (m-m-m what is it? M-m-mg). The moral value derived from *Che Lititi* (Mr Ground Hornbill) song is that grownups should behave responsibly. *Gomba ngoma kundawî* (beating the drum in the morning) is an irresponsible behaviour that disrupts the normal rhythm of the

[6] Michael Rundell *et.al.* Eds. *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2006, p. 692. Trumpeter Hornbill is classified as a woodland bird locally known as *Kakamila*. See Deepa Pullanikkatil and Matthews Chilambo, *Bird Activity Book for Wildlife Clubs in Malawi* (Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi), 2010, p. 29.

community. The first accusatory finger points at Ground Hornbill because his calls are heard around the same time. Realising his own mature and responsible calls he makes, Ground Hornbill thinks that the sounds of the drum he heard are the beatings of an uncircumcised person. When the accusatory finger of who makes noise in the morning finally falls on the circumcised, it becomes clear that the circumcised are behaving contrary to societal expectations. This kind of animal/bird-human participation reflects the people's consciousness about ecological interrelatedness. Drengson and Devall (2010) observe that:

> Because we are interrelated, we must respect all forms of life as part of our whole biotic community. In human communities, every person counts, so too in natural communities, all beings contribute and participate. As humans with forethought and self-reflection, we are responsible for what we do and how we participate in local and global systems (50).

Our environmental responsibility depends on the degree of maturity as Mr Ground Hornbill suggests in the song above. *Nsongolo* refers to any person whose behaviour is childish and *usongolo* is childishness, which the people imagine Ground Hornbill sees in humans as disturbing the environment. The correlation of children's noisy behaviour with birds is also reflected in the song: *Masolokoto bwe-bwe pantapwito! Bwe-bwe* is the onomatopoeic sound of birds locally known as *masolokoto,* cuckoo-shrikes or barbets in search of fruits, berries and buds, *matapwito*. Children and birds are, thus, closely linked. Children also learn to identify themselves with birds. They learn not only to love the birds, but they also would cherish to protect them.

Among the Yawo, folksongs about birds constitute the core of *misyungu* (teachings) concerning animals probably because the initiates, below the age of ten, are more familiar with birds than most of the mammals. However, perhaps for its smallness and folklore's representation of a bat as existing between a bird (*mbalame/chijuni*) and an animal (*nyama/chinyama*), it is here included in a *jando* song for its winged bird-like features despite its being described as a nocturnal mouse-like mammal (Sax 2001) that "sleep during the day" and "upside down" (Brokaw 2). Children's behaviours of playing in trees placing themselves legs up and heads down are compared with the actions of bats as the following folksong illustrates:

Manjichi galikoleche-ye,	Little fruit bats hang themselves,
Mu mtela wapanganyapo-ye,	In the tree under which men sit.
Manjichi galikoleche-ye,	Little fruit bats hang themselves,
Mu mtela wapanganyapo-ye.	In the tree under which men sit.

The similitude of children who place their legs up and heads down in trees as they play is that of bats (*manjichi*) that display the same behaviour. The song teaches children to avoid displaying the same behaviour as bats not only because it reflects childishness but it is also because they can display their nakedness to the uncircumcised standing under the tree. The children's behaviour of behaving like bats is wrong on two counts. First, their imitation of the behaviour of bats may lead to the display of their nakedness (*jando*) to those standing under the tree and this is a taboo for the circumcised.

Second, among the Yawo, two spaces are recognisably important: *kunganya* constitutes men's spaces as opposed to women's spaces (*kumatuli*), where there are wooden mortars and pestles for pounding. Disputes are settled *kunganya*, usually under a big tree. Uncircumcised children can be forgiven if they climb this tree, but not for the circumcised. *Manjichi* are bats sometimes referred to as *iputiputi/mileme*. Fruit bats (*manjichi*) "eat fruit and sip nectar" (Sealey 171). The song about bats, *manjichi galikoleche* (bats legs up heads down in a tree) informs the initiates not to misbehave and that they should conduct themselves like grown up in order for them to be respected by society. The song about bats (*manjichi*), however, is also enough information in itself about their availability then and the impact they have had on society in their relationships with people. It is worth noting that "[a]lthough 70% of bats eat insects, many tropical species feed exclusively on fruit or nectar. A few are carnivorous, hunting small vertebrates such as fish, frogs, mice, and birds."[7] The presence of bats in trees, caves and buildings implies that humans have interacted with bats though their population is decreasing now due to the human impact on the environment. This

[7] Night Friends – American Bats: Online Activity Guide, Natiional Wildlife Federation (n.d.), p. 3, www.nwf.org.

negatively affects the ways through which culture relates to the natural environment in passing moral values about bats to children. It is also significant to note, as Brokaw (2010) observes that "ecological services provided by bats include pollination and seed distribution" (4). *Mtela wapanganya* (the tree under which men sit) in the song about bats (*manjichi*) is usually a big *mango, mtundu* or *kachere* tree and if bats visited such a tree seeds could be seen all over the ground under it. The availability of bats in the environment informs the interrelatedness of ecological entities not only in the web of feeding habits but also humans whose behaviour of putting their legs up and their heads down in trees is influenced by bats.

By singing about bats and implying their presence in their local environment, the people use bats instrumentally to mould their children's behaviours but they are not averse to them. Tuker (2001) notes that "each interrelated part of nature has a particular value according to its nature and function. […]. Human flourishing is thus dependent on fostering nature in its variety and abundance; going against nature's processes is self-destruction" (131-32). The animals depicted in the Yao *misyungu* songs reflect a relational view in which animal life and their various niches have weighty implications on human life.

Although tobacco smoking is tolerated, those who smoke should ensure that they do not exhale smoke to the annoyance of others. Bats are used in issuing a warning against this habit. The peculiarity of bats is that despite being mammals, they have wings and they fly. Bats are identified with birds and they are therefore very close to children:

Kaputiputi kakwanga lyosi,	A little bat emits smoke,
Pana achakulungwa,	In the midst of elders,
Kali kumbungoye-ee!	While it sits windward!
Kakwanga lyosi,	It emits smoke,
Pana achakulungwa,	In the midst of elders,
Kali kumbungoye-ee!	While it sits windward!

Bat's being found in the midst of the elders (*pana achakulungwa*) is symbolic of its double identity as both a mammal and a bird; a small bird as a metaphor of a child among the elders. The song's *msyungu* (moral) is that those who smoke should regulate their smoking habits because, being environmentally conscious, the people know that

inhaling smoke from a cigarette is unhygienic to those who do not smoke. *Kaputiputi kakwanga lyosi* (the bat emits smoke) creates the imagery that the bat itself is producing smoke as if it is being expended by fire (*kwanga lyosi*). Lutwack (1994) observes that "[f]amiliarity and transcendence have given birds a wider range of meaning and symbol in the literature than any other animal. The resemblance of their activity to common patterns of human family behaviour makes them exceptionally suitable for anthropomorphic imaginary that links man to the common forms of nature" (xi). *Kaputiputi kakwanga lyosi panaachakulungwa/Kali kumbungo* (A small bat emits smoke in the midst of elders/While it's in the direction of the wind) is based on the people's knowledge that bats' droppings and urine produce an acrid smell. *Iputiputi/manjichi* (bats) are used among the Yawo as symbols of immaturity and childishness. According to DeMello (2012), "[a]nimals are used to symbolise a whole host of characteristics that we see in ourselves, or want to project onto others, but that may be dangerous or foreign to us" (287). In the *Kaputiputi* song, the dangers of inhaling smoke from a cigarette for someone who does not smoke tobacco are projected onto the bat.

Birds symbolise ecstasy represented by the speed with which they fly. *Nanzeze* are birds known for their speed as they celebrate the catching of flying insects during the first rains. In the following folksong, a husband celebrates his wife's pregnancy before she has given birth:

Kawâlewâle nyangalilani-!	The little swallow celebrate for me!
Ŵamkwangu ŵana katumbo-e!	My wife is pregnant!

The swallow bird in Malawi appears with the first rains when flying insects come from the moistened ground. Swallows build muddy nests in human habitations and in caves. They symbolise speed and travelling long distances. Indigenous lore, through the flying behaviour of a swallow or swift bird, teaches us to begin counting the chicks after the eggs have hatched. The word *nyangalilani* (celebrate for me) implies that the singer addresses the bird. The word *kwangala* (to celebrate) from which *nyangalilani* is derived is associated, among the Yao, with the birth of children and the behaviour of birds/animals. After a local chicken has laid an egg, it celebrates *kwere-kwere-kwere*. *Kwangala* also denotes that a person who celebrates forgets the paradoxical situation

in which he/she is in like the proverb *Mbusi kwangala ŵamalonda ali pakuŵandika* (a goat that celebrates its buyers are near). In this connection, Jack Mapanje's poem, "On His Royal Blindness Paramount Chief Kwangala" carries the paradoxical implications of *kwangala*:

> But I fear the way you spend your golden breath
> Those impromptu, long-winded tirades of your might
> In the heat, do they suit your brittle constitution?
> (Vail and White 306)

Among the Yawo, being responsible and self-disciplined is important and *kwangala* (celebration) should be exercised with caution. This illustrates why Mapanje's poem warns Dr Kamuzu Banda against *kwangala* to the point that he is unmindful about his own health; his body reflecting signs of having a "brittle constitution." Similarly, a husband who celebrates his wife's pregnancy and impending life/child forgets how life juxtaposes death. *Kaŵalewale* (a swallow or swift bird) in this song is a metaphor of a man who celebrates an unknown future. Yawo folksongs about birds metaphorise those aspects of human conduct approved or disapproved by society. Buell (2001) describes the term "environmental unconscious" as a "potential […] a residual capacity […] to awake to fuller apprehension of physical environment and one's interdependence with it" (22), indigenous oral cultural forms actualise environmental consciousness.

The representation of animals in *jando* songs so closely relates to human conditions that it reflects the inseparability of the human from the nonhuman. In this environmental embeddedness, humans are in the environment while being of the environment. Among the Yawo, however, the swallow is associated with *kwangala* (celebration) when a child is born. The Yawo name *chiŵalewale* symbolises merrymaking which people associate with child birth. Lutwack (1994) observes that "[o]f all wild animals the bird has always been closest to humankind because so much of its life can be readily observed and appreciated. Flight and songs make birds exceptionally noticeable in every sort of environment" (x). The zigzagging flight of the swallow (*chiŵalewale*) make it easily noticeable by people who therefore, associate it with *kwangala* (happiness).

Sometimes humans imagine that they communicate with birds in matters that affect their lives and in doing so birds act as scapegoats for not proceeding with what an

individual set out to achieve. In imitating the sounds in nature like those of birds, humans can be irresponsible. The bird locally known as *Mwiyomwiyo* (Tropical Boubou) sings "*Mwiyo! Mwiyo! Mwiyo"!* The following song warns the initiates (*ŵali*) that when their parents send them on errands they should not waste their time listening to the *Mwiyomwiyo* bird because it would make them irresolute in whatever they want to carry out:

Che Mwiyo, Che Mwiyo!	Mr Tropical Boubou, Mr Tropical Boubou!
Nkalambusyaga anganga ŵawile!	Do not tell lies that my grandmother has died!

The context of the song is when a young man is entrusted with the responsibility of going to a traditional medicine person (*sing'anga*) to look for medicine to cure a sick person at home. In this song the person who is sick is *anganga* (grandmother). On his way to the sing'anga the young man sings the song imagining himself conversing with the *Mwiyomwiyo* bird making him hesitant to proceed to look for medicine because his grandmother might have died already. This song uses the tropical bird boubou locally known as *Mwiyo* or *Mwiyomwiyo* among the Yawo to show how humans use songbirds to interpret their fate.

The moral behind this song about the *Mwiyomwiyo* bird is that when the initiates grow up they will be responsible for travelling long distances looking for medicine people (*asing'anga*) to cure the sick in their respective homes. In rural settings, this is the responsibility of young men as Kalenga does in Phiri's (1958) *Kalenga ndi Mnzake* when he goes to Kapichi village to invite *sing'anga* Mchenga to cure his father's *mutu wa litsipa* (a splitting headache) (14). In this case, they should not superstitiously call upon *Mwiyomwiyo* the bird asking it how the sick is at home. For Lutwack (1994), "[t]he unfailing rhythms of migration, song and silence, nesting and fledging [of birds], have supplied poets with easily comprehended symbols of the cycle of life and death that all nature seems to suggest" (24). In the song under discussion, the "song and silence" of the *Mwiyomwiyo* bird provides the soloist with a call and response:

Soloist:	*Mwiyomwiyo.*
Boubou:	*Mwiyo!*

Soloist:	*Kuntela kungujaku* (To the medicine person I am going).
Boubou:	*Mwiyo!*
Soloist:	*Naga anganga awile, une tinjile ji, nomwe tin'jile ji!* (If my grandmother is dead, I will be silent, and you will be silent as well).

In the last part of the call and response, if *Mwiyomwiyo* the bird does not respond, it is imagined the sick is dead and the young man goes back home without consulting the *sing'anga*. The initiates are discouraged from this call and response with *mwiyomwiyo* the bird because this is superstition and may not always reflect the real condition of the sick left at home. It is noteworthy that the "vocalisation of some bird groups, including songbirds, hummingbirds, and parrots, develop through imitative learning, in a manner that parallels speech acquisition in humans" (Podos and Mosely 389). Although the representation of bids in the Yawo folksongs is metaphorical, the likelihood is high that it is deeply rooted in "rich experiences, and rich experience includes experiences in free nature. As modern life continues to encroach on our daily lives, millions and millions of people are less and less able to have rich experiences in free nature" (Devall 23). Community participation in natural resources management and environmental conservation are key in addressing this challenge.

It is worth noting that "[c]hildren learn to make the music around them, rather than the music of their genetic ancestors. This is true for vocally learning animals as well. Birds of the same species in different regions may sing different versions of their songs, called 'dialects'" (Doolittle 240). Doolittle cites "cultural/geographical" and "individual" variations that lead to "[b]irds of the same species in different regions [singing] different versions of their songs." Different human cultures also perceive and interpret songbirds differently. Humans perceive birds' songs relative to their linguistic categories. Understood through ecocriticism, the various rhythms in nature help affiliate people to their environment. According to Hutchings (2007) ecocriticism "investigates literature in relation to the histories of ecological or environmentalist thought, ethics, and activism. One of ecocriticism's basic premises is that literature both reflects and helps to shape human responses to the natural environment" (172). The folksongs show that the people's bonds of affiliation to the environment are strong

despite the *mwiyomwiyo* bird song bringing in the dimension of superstition. Behind this superstition, however, are the people's beliefs that help them conserve the environment.

Unity is important for the progress of human society. Birds flock in their large numbers, especially those of "the same feathers" as the saying goes. From birds the people generate ecological wisdom about the importance of cooperation and human-animal relations based on their experiential knowledge. Human beings make deductions or inferences that, if as individuals they can achieve so much, working together they can achieve even much more from the multiplier effect. And when they notice the same in some species of animals that confirms their inferences. The following folksong engages birds as metaphors of cooperation for their flying and drinking together:

Ipingo imwele pamo-o,	Common waxbills drink together,
Ipingo imwele pamo-y!	Common waxbills drink together!

The little common waxbills or bronze manikins (*ipingo*) that drink together emphasise the need for people to work together as a team. The behaviour of the small *ipingo* birds flying together also symbolises unity. The people's knowledge of the environment does not perceive the birds but natural resources like water in streams that birds drink. The song also teaches that the initiates should go to bathe at the river together and not in the company of the uninitiated because their privacy is important now that they have received *jando*. *Ipingo imwele pamo* (common waxbills drink together) is a metaphor of people jointly carrying out important activities together and thereby encouraging group participation.

In Ciyawo the name of the birds, *ipingo*, derives from *mpingo* (group) for their collective efforts. Children like these birds because they are easy to trap around small brooks in the dry season when water becomes scarce. Children also like their songs, which they imitate, and therefore be part of the rich experiences in free nature. Cohen (2004) sees the significance of "eco" in ecocriticism in terms of "positing connection and relationship, [and that it] permits interdisciplinary work to gain authority and analytic power from disciplines outside one's own." He notes that "ecocriticism needs to import scientific authority in order to combat two positions, (1) that culture can be a refuge from nature, and (2) that nature is merely a cultural construction" (7). By

inference, Cohen (2004) suggests that culture is not a refuge from nature and that nature is not merely a cultural construction but ecological entities are interrelated and interconnected. Ecological consciousness in Yawo folksongs reflected in the literary representation of birds, shows character building through environmental education in which culture and nature are intricately inseparable. The emphasis on the people who have similar interests as in *ipingo* birds to work, cooperate and do things together is that those with different interests can divert our attention from our set goals. *Ipingo* birds are symbolic of all forms of human joint efforts. Wyndham and Park (2018) have observed that these "song- and perching-birds […] are the most common avifauna for most of Earth's peoples, comprise about 58% of globally extant bird species" (536). The people's awareness of the habits of these birds is a vital source of experience for deducing indigenous ecological knowledge about human joint efforts for societal development and unity. The people see cogent correspondences between themselves and these non-humans which similitude then reaffirms their own discoveries and inferences/extrapolations about themselves.

The smallness of these birds makes them convenient to compare with the actions of children as well, besides the idea of cooperation. *Ipelepete, timba, isisisi, iwunga* and *ipingo* are small birds (bulbuls, Cisticolas, warblers, tits, common waxbills, waxbills, finches, sparrows, flycatchers) that also frequently visit the places where women pound their maize in search of small grains and husks. They compete for these grains and husks with chickens and other domestic animals and thereby increasing the networking of organisms. These small birds are also those that children learn to hunt and emulate their behaviours. For example, the female *kapelepete* (sparrow) prevents the male from entering the nest when it sits on her eggs. The following song involves *ipelepete* (sparrows), small birds, brown or grey in its plumage with short tails and strong beaks adapted to feed on insects and seeds. Metaphorically, a child becomes *kapelepete* (sparrow) depending on the way he behaves:

Kapelepete siŵila nlango,	A little sparrow close the door
Angaliba ayiche,	*Angaliba* has come,
Ŵangali chanasa!	He is merciless!
Siŵila nlango,	Close the door,
Angaliba ayiche,	*Angaliba* has come,
Ŵangali chanasa!	He is merciless!

Kapelepete (little sparrow) in this song is the metonymy for a child who stands between the doorposts and prevents others from entering the hut for whatever reason. Although the *Kapelepete* song depicts the *angaliba* as a merciless person for inflicting pain on the initiates during circumcision, it is the pain that brings joy to the community because what the *angaliba* does is within the dictates of this specific culture. The song warns children against comparing their fathers to the *angaliba* when they hold grudges against them. *Siŵila nlango* (literally, close the passage) in this case, means the child stands between the doorposts with his arms stretched sideways. This creates the imagery of a bird that stands on the entrance to its nest to prevent an intruding bird or male from entering.

The ironic merciless (*ŵangali chanasa*) *angaliba* (circumciser) becomes the nickname of a father from a child's perceptions thinks is merciless and he is denied entry into his own hut. Paradoxically, though, the fact that a child can stand between the doorposts to prevent his father from entering the house infers a sense of rapport between *Kapelepete* (child) and his father, nicknamed *angaliba*. The *angaliba* becomes the parent bird since to circumcise in this culture is termed *gulusya* (literally, to cause to fly) and in which case, the initiate-*angaliba* relationship is conceptualised in bird imagery. Perceiving *angaliba* as merciless (*ŵangali chanasa*) is therefore, ironic. However, *Kapelepete* the bird is a symbol of courage. Sometimes *Asuwedi* replaces the word *angaliba*, which stands for the name of the person denied entry. *Asuwedi* is also the circumciser's real name, Che Suwedi. The entrance to the nest of *Kapelepete* the bird, like that of another type of bird, *segu*, points downwards to prevent rainwater from entering it. People's knowledge of the behaviours of birds has meaning generative potential to their existence. For example, the saying, *Segu jangalosya nlango wa chisusi chakwe kwinani kogopa kunyoŵa ni ula* (the *segu* bird does not open the entrance to its nest at the top for fear it drenches in the rains), reflects the people's environmental consciousness and the kind of moral values they get from the laws of nature. Wyndham and Park (2018) opines that the "significations of birds vary across cultures and shift over time, but not in arbitrary ways" (533). The meanings attached to the various signs of birds could be culture specific but such meanings are not capriciously derived.

Thus, nature thrives in science from which culture draws its ecological wisdom. The representation of indigenous environmental consciousness in Yawo folksongs shows that people's attitudes towards birds are relative to each bird and what it symbolises. Mthatiwa (2020) explains that in the Yawo *misyungu* songs "[a]nimals [generally] feature as symbols, as effigies of animals called *nambande*, or *inyago* and *mwanambera*, as images or metaphors in the songs" (78). Another important animal metaphor is that of *namungumi* which symbolises the whale. The use of metaphors of small birds in Yawo *misyungu* folksongs to pass on educational values to the initiates reflects not only the "harmlessness" (Mthatiwa 88) of the birds but the small birds also sustain the interests of the initiates. Manes (1996) sees the significance of the indigenous ecological perspective and humbly asserts "[in] addition to human language, there is also the language of birds, the wind, earthworms, wolves, and waterfalls – a world of autonomous speakers whose intents (especially for hunter-gatherer peoples) one ignores at one's peril" (15). Because of the people's environmental embeddedness, they can perceive interrelatedness and interdependence in nature and develop moral values that are ecologically oriented.

The Yawo songs depict environmental consciousness in which humans and animals are inter-related and humans express sympathy, among others, for the plight of birds. With the destruction of grasslands and forests, birds have lost their habitats. In better times, because people had strong affiliations with their environment, they could observe with keen interest different kinds of voices from birds. The threnody in the voices of some birds are compared to the cry of a child who has lost her/his mother. The following song depicts how indigenous people listen to the voices of birds in the environment and relate them to the plight of orphans:

Kajuni kamwana kakulila kwilambo, e-e-e!	A little bird sings in the grassy area, e-e-e!
Kakuti pakulila e-e-e!	It sings e-e-e!
Kajuni kamwana-a-a,	The little bird,
Kusowa pagona!	Has nowhere to sleep!

This is *nsondo* song in which the bird that sings because it has nowhere to sleep symbolises the plight of an orphan. Orphan-hood is a problem that society faces and in this *nsondo* song, the girl initiates are taught that as mothers they shall be responsible

for bringing up children. They shall have to look after them tenderly. They shall also be responsible for taking care of orphans. The cry of an orphan is like the voice of a bird after a bush fire because it has lost its habitat, *kusowa pagona* (it has nowhere to sleep). In the song, a concerned member in the community imagines seeing a little bird "crying" (singing) in the *dambo* (*kakulila kwilambo*), presumably after a bushfire. The little bird's song here is a threnody reflecting on human concern for the homelessness (*kusowa pagona*) (has nowhere to sleep) of birds/animals in the wake of deforestation.

Although bushfires have regenerative effects (autopoiesis) on soil nutrients, plants and animals (Windhager 2009), their impact on the environment is huge. The bird that sings has nowhere to sleep because its habitat has been destroyed. Many other animals, crawling, flying, walking and jumping, are also affected. *Kajuni kamwana kakulila kwilambo* (a little bird sings in the grassy area), because it has no place to sleep reflects that the word *lilambo*, wetland/*dambo* land, rendered *kwilambo*, locative, implies *ukweti* (forest/bush) or grassy area that links the strong relationships between Yawo folksongs and nature. The little bird (*kajuni kamwana*) in the song is any small bird commonly found in grassy areas such as the waxbill or bronze manikin.

Kajuni kamwana kakulila ku ukweti/kwilambo (a little bird sings in the forest/wetland) creates language that is locally understood. The bird that sings is an allegory for the plight of orphans in society whose cries require collective responsibility. The imagery of the bird in the song is for all of us concerned about the plight of the environment just as we are with the plight of orphans, *tujuni twa mwana* (small birds). The song calls for environmental responsibility. The plight of the bird in the song is transferrable to humans. The song *Kajuni ka mwana kakulila kwilambo* (a little bird is singing in the weland) reflects the dangers of habitat destruction in which the bird/orphan plight calls for collective responsibility.

Wetlands are sources of pastures for feeding animals including fishing and aquaculture[8] activities. The song implies that wetlands provide habitats for different species of birds and this explains why birds are grief-stricken for the destruction of wetlands, *ijuni yamwana ikulila kwilambo* (small birds are singing/mourning in the wetland). Erwin

[8] See World Wetlands Day, 2015, "Wetlands: Why should I care? – wetlands are essential to our future", Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

(2009) argues that "[t]here is no doubt that globally, there is a great need to reverse significant human-induced stressors to ecosystems including drainage, flood control, and unsustainable development" (81). What this entails is that humans are responsible for the restoration of wetlands and reversing biodiversity loss. This kind of embedded consciousness in people's environment as reflected in folksongs is useful in environmental conservation and natural resources management. Human identification with the animal implies that "when the self perceives everything in this Nature as her own part, such a self should naturally be an ethical person" (Talukder 226). Songs are significant in providing emotional release while individuals recognise their environmental embeddedness. Crago (2002) observes that "[i]n pre-literate cultures, narrative has always functioned in multiple ways, preserving accumulated knowledge, articulating meaning, offering cathartic release and pleasure, and promoting 'healing' in the broad sense of reassurance as to each listener's place in the scheme of things" (164). Animals are crucially important in the "healing" potential of folklore.

Birds of prey such as owls, hawks, falcons, vultures and eagles also play important roles in teaching moral values to children among the Yawo. Although these birds prey on both big and small animals, the focus in *jando* is on why hawks, for example, prey on chicks leaving the mother hen. The message then shifts from the hawk-chick relationship to an old man (hawk) who sleeps with little girls (chicks) instead of looking for their mother. The animal-animal relationship thus, affects the question of gender and how women and girls are sexually assaulted. Among the Yawo, the hawk is called *chimbanga* or *chitotola*, characteristic of all birds of prey such as hawks, eagles, kites, harriers and vultures, with powerful hooked beaks, strong legs with clawed feet, and good eyesight. These characteristics are transferable to humans who behave like these birds. The following song alludes to the hawk-chicks relationship I have highlighted:

Nsinjili uchekambanga,	The dejection of Mr Hawk,
Wakamula nguku syawŵana,	That he preys on little chicks,
Kuleka syekulungwa,	Leaving big ones,
Twajamile-e kwele kwaluka-e!	Let's jeer at him for his shameful behaviour!

The song gives a reason why the hawk, old as he is (*Chekambanga,* Mr Hawk), preys on chicks, and this reason is *nsinjili* translated here as dejection. *Nsinjili* for the hawk

that leads him to prey on chicks derives (*nguku syawîana*) from his failure to win/catch the chicks' mothers (*nguku syekulungwa*). Out of frustration then, hawk catches chicks. The hawk's behaviour is described as a shame (*kwaluka*) and the society jeers (*twajamile*) at him. The people's jeering at the hawk's behaviour which is a metaphor of a man who sleeps with young girls entails that they do not tolerate gender-based violence. The human-hawk relationship is thus, negative.

There are at least two interpretations to the folksong, *Nsinjili uchekambanga* (the dejection of Mr Hawk). First, the song is a dirge on why the hawk preys on chicks rather than big hens and cocks. The song refers to the death of chicks, *kamula nguku syawîana* (catching chicks). Second, metaphorically, *kamula nguku syawîana* refers to an old man who prefers young girls to women as sexual partners. Because the man, metaphorized as hawk, leaves out big chickens (women) *kuleka syekulungwa*, his behaviour is jeered at as a shame (*twajamile kwele kwaluka*). This contextualises why the metaphoric hawk is jeered or booed. The male initiates are advised to refrain from satisfying their sexual desires with young female children or baby girls left in their care when their mothers have gone to their respective fields for farming activities. The male initiates learn self-restraint as the hawk-chick relationship is shameful. The behaviour of the hawk (man) in the song is loathsome because it abuses female members in society. The song instils in the initiates to desist from gender violence and abuse of women so that society does not plunge into moral degeneracy. The Hawk's preying on chicks is compared with an elderly man who sexually abuses girls instead of going for their mothers, *Kuleka syekulungwa* (leaving out big ones).

The word *nsinjili* (dejection) as used in the song has different connotations related to depression but it also means that a dejected person does not succeed in life as in *nsinjili unandi manyi* (a dejected person does not defecate a sizable heap of faeces). The environmental consciousness depicted in Yawo folksongs shows a close range of metaphorical relationships between humans and birds in addressing various social problems in human communities. The metaphor of the hawk as death and as a man who sleeps with young girls is repugnant. Indigenous ecological knowledge is rooted in experiences in which the physical world is inseparable from humans. Slovic (2008) observes that "we need literature – or art more generally – to help us use our senses more fully and intensely. We need to overcome the abstractness of our ecological

awareness and learn to *live* through such awareness, to *feel* our presence in the world" (137, original italics). Oral literature is one such literature that "we need" to help raise consciousness about the present state of environmental degradation and abuse of women and girls. The indigenous worldview about nature thrives in the interrelatedness of biological entities and helps concretise the cultural values passed on to the next generation.

Reddy (2015) sees "[e]cocriticism [as designating] the critical writings that explore the relations between literature and biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on the environment by human activities" (37). Obviously, we need to rethink the way we conduct ourselves towards the environment. Taylor and Zimmerman (2005) are of the view that "only by 're-sacralising' our perceptions of the natural world can we put ecosystems above narrow human interests and learn to live harmoniously with the natural world, thereby averting ecological catastrophe" (456). One way of revering nature is to rethink and refocus on oral literature.

The narrow personal interests of the hawk (*Chekambanga*) must be viewed against the interests of the larger community whose prosperity is for the common good rather than few individuals. Using animals the Yawo teach moral values that involve discipline in matters of sexuality. In the following, song for example, a brother-in-law who forces his sister-in-law to sleep with him while his brother is away is ridiculed:

Alamu, alamu gonani! (x2)	My sister-in-law, my sister-in-law lie down!
Ikalakasa ya mbango yakulandana,	The skulls of warthogs are similar,
Ni ŵandu alamu,	To those of humans,
Alamu, alamu gonani!	My sister-in-law, my sister-in-law lie down!

The young man cajoles his sister-in-law to sleep with him because he resembles his brother. His analogy is that because the skulls of warthogs are similar, likewise he is similar to his brother. Based on the Ciyawo expression, *mbango ni simo* (all warthogs are the same), the young man intends to convince his sister-in-law that what is

seemingly an immoral act, looks comformable to morality. The young man in the song identifies himself with a warthog. Indigenous people use their knowledge of sexual maturity in boys and they compare with the sexual behaviours of animals. Spermatogenesis in human male adolescents can take a similar pattern in animals. Mason (2015 argues that the "testes mass, epididymis mass and seminiferous tubule diameter […] in adult and sub-adult warthogs indicate seasonal sexual cycle as occurs in many southern African species" (46). People's observation of the sexual behaviour of the African wild swine (warthog), in the song being probed underscores their knowledge of the environment as it relates to living organisms. By emphasising on the similarities between humans and animals rather than differences, existential symbiosis is possible.

The numerous folksongs about birds raise our awareness of their presence then as compared to their disappearance now. Birds are commonly found in forests and grasslands but desertification means the loss of vital indigenous expressions because these folksongs will be sung out of context. This is why "[e]cocriticism is the result of the new consciousness: that very soon, there will be nothing beautiful (or safe) in nature to discourse about, unless we are very careful" (Reddy 37) – consciousness about the beauty of nature oral discourses are depicted to have. The educational values passed on to the initiates through *jando* songs using bird metaphors carry with them environmental ethics. The focal point in all the songs is that humans and animals are integral parts of a unified nature perceived in monistic terms rather than dualistic. The existence of humans and animals is largely dependent on a healthy rapport with nature in an ecologically holistic ecosystem. Olateju (2005) observes that "[a]nimal metaphors involve transference of meanings, and whatever meanings or interpretations are assigned to a particular animal metaphor, are culture and context dependent" (368). Other contexts therefore can yield different meanings and interpretations of the bird and mammal metaphors discussed in this section. The songs involving birds and other animals demonstrate the people's familiarity with these animals. The ecological knowledge generated by the people from these animals reveals not only the people's awareness of animal behaviours, but it also reveals the people's environmental embeddedness and knowledge of human-animal interconnectedness. Bearing this in mind, indigenous people's potential to protect the environment and animals is as strong as their affiliation to their land.

4.3 Cultural implications of human-animal relationships in *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs

Having discussed *jando* and *nsondo* songs involving birds and mammals, in this section of the chapter, I confine myself to the analysis of the various roles reptiles and other mammals play in introducing the initiates into the adult world and its complexities. The animals also function to introduce children to their own environment. The *jando* and *nsondo misyungu* (core teachings) to the initiates focus on animals with symbolic meanings culturally based in teaching environmental education. In the Yawo folksongs, the animals concerned are used to rebuke inappropriate human behaviour. Other animal songs praise the animals and they act as examples for humans to emulate. Reptiles were once "the most important animals in the world" but "[n]early all of the reptiles died out, or became extinct" (Sealey 138) and with the current state of environmental degradation they have become a rarity. The songs about reptiles testify to the important roles they played as carriers of moral values and beacons of environmental consciousness among the people.

In *Animals and Ancestors,* Morris describes the relationship between the Malawian indigenous people and mammals as being "cheek-by-jowl" and by which he means "close and intimate" 31). This close proximity between humans and animals slowly drifted apart. In *The Power of Animals*, Morris attributes this drift between humans and animals to "the decline in larger game animals because of increases in the human population, the creation of game sanctuaries and the imposition of game laws by the colonial authorities specifically forbidding the hunting of large mammals" (63). With syndicated illegal wildlife trade in Malawi (Waterland *et.al*. 2015, Trump 2017), compounded by deforestation, seeing wild animals for Malawians remains the privilege of the few who can afford the luxury of visiting protected areas. In the folksongs, however, animals are ideas through which indigenous people conceptualise the natural environment as a source of ethical values.

Snakes have influenced human thought from time immemorial for different symbolic meanings; for example, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, "the python, puff adder and file snake all have associations with the spirits" (Morris 2000a:145). Snakes periodically shed their skins and this natural phenomenon carries cultural meanings among the Yawo. The snake's shed skin can also be used for medicinal purposes and

some traditional medicine people use skins of snakes to inspire reverence from their customers. DeMello (2012) observes, however, that "[w]hat animals ultimately do […] is allow humans to express ideas about human identity" (296) including "transformation" as in the snake's shed skin. The song entitled *Lijoka Ligwagulilo* (snake and its shed skin) deals with the mystery of the snake shedding its skin to teach eating etiquettes and respect for women who cook *nsima/ugali*:

Lijoka ligwagulilo-o!	The snake and its shed skin![9]
Lijoka ligwagulilo-ye!	The snake and its shed skin!

This song is an epitome of how the local people [mis]interpret a natural phenomenon like the seasonal sloughing of the snake's skin in linguistic cultural concepts that an outsider would easily raise objections. However, in the Yawo culture, the song constitutes *msyungu* (a teaching) that children should desist from doing. In this song, *lijoka* means snake and *ligwagulilo* means its shed skin. The song, however, uses the snake and its shed skin metaphorically to refer to the hardened *nsima/ugali* that has grown a dry layer on top. Through the song, the initiates are taught that they should not peel off the dry layer on top of *nsima* their mothers kept for them. The peeled off dried layer of *nsima* is what is referred to as *ligwagulilo* (shed skin) as a metaphor of the snake's skin. Culturally, there are several roles attached to this *misyungu* in relation to the snake's skin.

First, children should be available at home during meal times and take meals together to instil familial ties among members. Second, removing the dry top layer of *nsima* is compared to undressing the woman who cooked it. Sherman (2008) observes that "snakes hold a place of importance in folklore and mythology from around the world. A snake's ability to shed its skin has made it a symbol of immortality […]. This also may be the reason that snakes appear as deities or representations of rebirth or the return to youth in stories from many cultures" (424). Thus, snakes are closely associated with the spirit world. Among the Yawo *kuwujila ku wanache* (return to youth) is symbolic of *usongolo* (childishness) in peeling off the dry skin of *nsima*. Gray (2012) argues that "because [the snake] is in constant contact with the environment, and thus sustains considerable wear and tear, and since it does not accommodate the growth of the

[9] See "Snakes in Southern Myths and Folklore" available at https://parcplace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/snakemyths.pdf, "Perhaps no other animals have been the object of so much fear, misinformation, and misunderstanding as snakes" (p.1) [n.a, n.d]. Accessed 14/08/21, 12:10.

underlying cells very well, the stratum corneum [the outermost layer of the epidermis] needs to be periodically replaced" (16-17). The "stratum corneum" is what is known as *ligwagulilo* in Ciyawo language and the people's knowledge about snakes shedding their skins finds its metaphor in peeling off dry *nsima* (Chichewa) or *ugali* (Ciyawo).

The central message in the song, however, is teaching children *ngagwagula ugali* (do not peel off *nsima*) not only to avoid wastage, but also to instil in children the habit of being present when meals are served because tradition encourages the communal dish. The docility of the snake during the period when it sheds its skin implies that it ceases to be dangerous to the people and this includes the peeled off skin itself that does not threaten people. *Lijoka ligwagulilo* (the snake and its shed skin) also alludes to a hospitable person who does not instil fear among children and they are called upon to give due respect and not abuse her/his hospitality and/or its docility. The people's hearts soften with their closeness to nature as the folksongs testify.

In the song, *Lijoka ligwagulilo* (the snake and its shed skin), creates the metaphor of rebirth and the cycle of events in nature. The knowledge of seasonal peeling off of the snakes' skin entails the cyclical understanding of natural events that regulate the agricultural year. According to Kääpä (2017), "[c]yclicality emphasises the recurring and holistic nature of existence, both in terms of natural resources and the lifecycle of humans" (137), that regulate indigenous people's activities and reflect their embeddedness in the environment, their being-ness in the land by which life is cyclically renewed. DeMello (2012) observes that "[a]s in other cultures, the snake, because of its ability to shed its skin, is used as a symbol of transformation" (292-93). Similarly, by referring to the newly initiated boys and girls as *achinankopoka ititi ya magombo* (the newly initiated are like the piths of banana trees), it informs this transformation and so the environment plays a critical role in the education of the youth among the Yawo.

The observation that snakes shed their skins periodically attracts moral responsibility among the Yawo for whom snakes have different symbolic meanings such as life renewal and evil. The people learn about different species of snakes and whether or not they are poisonous from their shed skins. Gray (2012) avers that "shed skins may provide evidence of a species without putting oneself in danger by having to get close

to an actual snake" (14). Having encountered the snakes in their favoured habitats before, and having experienced the effects of their bites, this knowledge is then preserved and passed on to the next generations through spotting their shed skins afterwards. Thus, through snakes' shed skins indigenous people generate knowledge about their habitats and their venomous aspects. In order to uphold ecological values, the songs involving animals direct people's minds towards nature. Paterson (2006) observes that:

> Because individual life and environment are inseparable, the state of the environment is a reflection of the minds of the people who inhabit it. Environmental degradation is thus a reflection of people's ignorance of the true nature of life and the cosmos: the interrelatedness of all things (148).

People's interconnectedness to the environment reflects the individual's embeddedness in the environment. Refocusing on the Yawo folksongs through an ecocentric ethic reveals "the degree to which people are aware about environmental issues and are capable of making efforts toward contributing to a solution or, at least, to show a desire to be personally engaged in the environmental matter" (Pires *et.al.* 612). The central message in these folksongs is rational behaviour coupled with responsibility and this is healthy for the environment. Animals as cultural signs help people to infer meanings that forge coexistence between humans and nature. Besides, the songs strive to groom the initiates into reasonably dependable citizens in their communities. The songs deal with the similar question of what sort of persons the initiates should strive to become as they grow up. By drawing from the natural world, the initiates come to realise their inseparability from the environment and thereby the folksongs instil strong bonds of affiliation with nature.

Besides the snake that informs the previous song, another reptile is the lizard. In areas where people bathe at the river, animals also help instil values of respect to others. Children are playful as they bathe in the river or stream. They make the water dirty. As the water flows downstream, it is dirty. This annoys elders who take their baths separately from the children downstream. The behaviour of children making the water dirty is likened to that of the lizard locally known as *sakata* that darkens water in the river with its tail as depicted in this song:

Asakata kuluwi,	The lizard dirtying water,
Kuntundaye-e-e!	Upstream!
Akulu nasamba,	When grownups are bathing,
Kwiŵandaye-e-e!	Downstream!

The lizard in this song stands for a young man/woman who makes water dirty upstream so that elders bathing downstream are using dirty water. It is therefore unethical for the youth to make the water dirty by playing in it. This implies that the monitor lizard is deliberately involved in making the water muddy creating the imagery of children who play in muddy water after a heavy rain. When children do this at the river while elderly people are bathing downstream, it is unethical because they receive dirty water. There is a mixing of languages in the song, Chichewa and Ciyawo. The word *kuntunda* translated here as upstream is Chichewa and in Ciyawo it would have been *kulutando*. *Akulu nasamba* (When grownups are bathing) is Chichewa; in Ciyawo it would have been *Achakulungwa alinkoga*). The word *kwiŵanda* (downstream) is Ciyawo. This explains inter-cultural interactions among Malawians where *jando* is also practised in Nkhotakota, Salima and Dedza in dominantly Chichewa speaking areas and their songs flow from one region to another. *Jando* is also practised among the Lhomwe in Southern Malawi. The imagery of the lizard that makes water dirty upstream and then influencing those downstream entails the connectedness of ecological entities and humans are like water that flows from different directions but it meets often times in unexpected ways. Animals are also used to despise people in terms of their appearances, shortness or tallness and any other body parts.

Wipi mpela ngon'go (Shortness like a tortoise); *Ulewu mpela nswala* (Tallness like a giraffe) and *Meno mpela mbango* (Teeth like a warthog, for someone whose teeth protrude from the lips), are examples of insulting expressions children use against each other as they play. Now that they are circumcised, they are instructed to desist from such kind of insulting language using animals that only exhibit their natural dispositions. The following *inyago* song use tortoise to emphasise this:

Akawona wipi wa ngon'go, e!	Don't despise the shortness of a tortoise,
Akawona wipi wa ngon'go!	Don't despise the shortness of a tortoise,

Mtundu wakwe! It's its physique!

Animals play important roles in setting behavioural patterns that society approves and/or disapproves. The song suggests it is a waste of time to despise others because the humans despised using animals, cannot change their body build as designed and proportioned by nature. The role of animals in handing down humane values affecting different aspects of human life cannot therefore be overemphasised among indigenous people and the songs about animals are crucial in this regard. Ascione (2005) asserts that "[t]he importance of animals in the lives of children is hardly news to parents, teachers, and others whose lives touch young people" (10). Obviously, the inclusion of thematic songs involving animals in *jando* and *nsondo* comes in the wake of this realisation. It is worth noting that "[s]ince the beginning of human history, people have lived in close contact with animals. Naturally, they have developed myths and legends about animals, giving them special meaning or extraordinary qualities. […]. Songs seek to connect with animals through magical, ritual or spiritual means" (Petrovic and Ljubinkovic 106). The many songs associated with different species of animals entail not only the people's close links with animals in the physical environment but they also inform human-animal connections in the spiritual world that constitutes the people's cosmovision.

Yawo folksongs pass on informal lessons to the initiates in ways that reflect deep-seated indigenous ecological knowledge. A man suffering from hernia (locally called *mwela/nsipa*), for example, has his protrusion metaphorically compared to elephant's scrotum. Using this kind the knowledge of elephant's scrotum children learn that when they see a man with hernia, they should not put him to shame or laugh at him as this song indicates:

Andembo kuwupukunya mpwala! Elephant shaking its scrotum!
Andembo kuwupukunya mpwala! Elephant shaking its scrotum!
Ukwi! Ukwi! Nambi yeleyi yambone? Oh! Oh! But, is this good?

The song ridicules a man suffering from hernia and through it children are taught to avoid laughing and making fun of such a man. As circumcised members of the

community, the young boys are now allowed to bathe together with grown up men at the river. This is where they observe the sizes of the private parts of the elderly men. The advice in the song is that when they have seen that any one elderly man has big scrotum, they should not disclose this saying, "So and so, has scrotum as big as those of an elephant's." The Yawo expression *kuwupukunya mpwala* (shaking scrotums) back and forth creates the imagery of incongruity with the man who carries them for the elephant and the man with hernia are incomparable in terms of body build.

Sax (2001) notes that "[t]he elephant is set apart from other creatures by its immense size, its enormous tusks, and above all, its reprehensible trunk. […] this strange, paradoxical nature has made people identify intensely with the elephant, since the animal seems to share with humans an alienation from the natural world" (104). The elephant's huge trunk with some parts being inconsistent with its enormous body creates an image of oddness which children observe in a man suffering from hernia. The song about elephant and its scrotum burlesques the man with hernia and thereby making him alienated from his own body and the natural world. The metaphor of the elephant's huge scrotum transfers the man with hernia whose scrotum are disproportional to his body. The song is in a form of call and response:

> Soloist: *Andembo kuwupukunya mpwala* (× 2). Elephant shaking its scrotum!
>
> Response: *Ukwi! Ukwi! Nambi yeleyi yambone?* Oh! Oh! But, is this good?

The response has biting satire in the interjections and the rhetoric. *Ukwi! Ukwi!* expresses sarcastic surprise about the mismatch. The rhetorical question *Nambi yeleyi yambone*? (But, is this good?), leaves listeners dumbfounded except to agree that it is not good to have scrotums that size. Despite this apparent absurdity, the initiates learn to contain themselves and avoid laughing at such a man. Children are told not to spread the news about the man's hernia for to do so is to behave as if they do not feel ashamed. To accord dignity and respect to a fellow human, implies that "reverence towards and respect for nonhuman nature" (Devall 303) would have its place in human hearts. This is what it means to live a life "premised on a gestalt of person-in-nature.

The person is not above or outside of nature" (Devall 303). Ecocriticism explores a "gestalt" in which "[e]verything is connected to everything else" (Commoner 1971

[1974], 16). Devall and Sessions (1985) explain this ecological wholeness in terms of the "first law of thermodynamics, which is also the first law of ecology, asserts the conservation of energy in an ecosystem as energy is changed and exchanged in its continual flow the interconnected parts. […].The world is active and dynamic; its natural processes are cyclical, balanced by cybernetic, stabilising, feedback mechanisms" (230). This then entails balance in the relations between organisms and their environment. Each organism's ecological niche is in equilibrium with other ecological niches for the proper functioning of the ecosystem. Folklore recognises this interconnectedness and this illustrates why children are introduced to humane values through songs about animals that reflect that no biotic and abiotic entity is a-stand-alone but forms a niche in the ecosystem. The significance of these Yawo folksongs is that they draw from nature and the discipline they instil in children has a lifelong attribute. Commoner (1974) says that the "word 'cybernetics' derives from the Greek word for helmsman [steersman], it is concerned with cycles of events that steer, or govern, the behaviour of a system" (16). In taking communal dishes in the African setting of eating, children suffer. First, they are the last to wash their hands before eating. Before they have finished washing their hands, the meal is almost half-way finished by the elders who washed their hands first. Second, the pace at which children eat is slower than adults. Children prefer eating with the people who are considerate. Metaphorically, children prefer monkeys to baboons. Baboons and monkeys are two kinds of animals representing different eating habits. The eating metaphors of baboons and monkeys infer meanings that the former are gluttonous while the latter eat with restraint:

Che Lijaniwo ngatukwakolanga,	Mr Baboon we need not mention him,
Pakuŵa ŵakulungwa!	For he is big!
Tusyoŵelele anganga Che Katumbiliwo,	We're used to our grandfather Mr Monkey,
Kulya kwa njalale!	He eats moderately!

The word *njalale* rendered here as "moderately" in the song means that the eating habits of baboon and monkey are contrasted. *Njalale* in other contexts would mean greedily, but here it means that monkey eats with some degree of self-discipline unlike the gluttonous baboon. The baboon is big (*ŵakulungwa*) in terms of body size and he/she eats more than monkey does. The context of this song is about the communal dish. Children share the same dish with people of different ages and different levels of

satisfying their hunger. In most cases, they are victims of hunger because elders do not consider them.

The baboon in the song is the metaphor of a person who is not considerate when eating with children. Given a choice in terms of sharing a dish with a baboon and a monkey, children prefer the monkey, the metaphor of one who does not eat much. *Che Lijaniwo ngatukwakolanga* (we need not mention the baboon, insofar as eating is concerned), *pakuŵa ŵakulungwa* (because he is experienced), in this case, in "eating." The word *ŵakulungwa* translated here as "experienced" means an old person from whom we get experience or expertise. *Lijani* (baboon) is bigger than *chitumbili* (monkey) and children in the song prefer the latter to the former. In folklore, the baboon is closely associated with immorality and greed. The monkey's *kulya kwa njalale* (eating moderately) is in sharp contrast to the baboon's *kulya mwa kutondwa* (eating hungrily).

Through the symbolic meanings of the baboon and the monkey, the initiates learn to perceive different eating habits among humans. With the baboon/monkey, symbolism arises a "new cosmic/ecological metaphysics which stresses the identity (I/thou) of humans with non-human nature, [and it] is a necessary condition for a viable approach to building an eco-philosophy" (Devall 310). By drawing attention to indigenous oral discourses and begin to rethink the environmental embeddedness of the people, it becomes recognisable that the solutions to the contemporary environmental problems could be locally derivable.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali explains that "it is not enough for a man [woman] to love his [her] neighbour; he [she] must also learn to love his [her] world."[10] In learning to love one's world, human interaction with the physical environment has produced ecological wisdom of great repute. In teaching children to control their anger, they are advised to desist from picking quarrels that would lead to fighting. There are people who suffer from epilepsy and may lead to loss of consciousness and convulsions if someone beats them up. Some insects/beetles locally known as *chiwansagaja* feign death. Using knowledge of the behaviour of this insect, the people strongly warn the initiates not to involve themselves in fights. This has attracted a folksong through which the initiates

[10] The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – Rio de Janeiro 1992a:1, qouted by Holms Rolston III in Callicott and Frodeman, Eds. *Encyclopeadia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy, vol 1-2*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, p. 224.

are advised not to beat up children because, like *chiwansagaja*, they may lose consciousness and convulse or die:

Chiwansagaja chaŵechete-e!	The little opossum beetle spoke!
Kundutane nikomoka-ye!	You push me I faint!

The speech by the opossum beetle in the song provides self-defence and it announces its disability, falling sickness. Although the people realise that the opossum beetle feigns death as a defensive mechanism against danger, they take it that for some humans it constitutes a disease that requires those around to be considerate. Some of these songs are for both *jando* and *nsondo* and through human-human and human-environment relationships depicted therein, ecological knowledge of great import is imparted to children. The expression *chiwansagaja chaŵechete* (the opossum bettle spoke) is an allegory. The speech of the opossum bettle is only expressed by its fainting action when someone pushes it. Pictorially, the opossum bettle creates the imagery of death. Animals, big and small, play crucial roles in passing on the culture and norms of society among the Yawo. The song that discourages children from fighting each other uses the defensive mechanism of the opossum beetle to project epilepsy among humans.

The initiates are generally discouraged from beating up other children younger than themselves and animals are utilised in order to contextulise human-animal relationships. The use of the natural environment in Yawo folksongs underlines the people's interest in the relationship between culture and nature. The following song about a sable beating up a small grasshopper informs how children are warned against fighting:

Nan'dambojo-e!	A small grasshopper!
Kupikana jwaŵangwile-e!	You hear it has been beaten up!
Mbalapala!	By the sable!

Nan'dambo is a very small grasshopper associated with wet grassland and in the song it stands for a small child who is beaten up by a grownup person metaphorized as sable. The metaphor of a sable beating up a grasshopper is meant to instil sympathy in the children and therefore desist from fighting each other. The representation of animals in *jando* and *nsondo* songs is loaded with cultural implications that infer the sacredness to animals which humans share. Some animals are symbolic of good deeds while others

are symbols of ill omens. The anatomical, physiological and behavioural similarities between humans and animals reveal their interconnectedness that culture exploits.

Some aspects of the cultural implications of the human-animal relationships represented in *Jando* and *nsondo* songs is that they provide moral values embedded in nature and respect for the environment. This is a rich area for "ecocriticism [which] begins with an interest in 'representations', followed by an examination of how nature is depicted in literature and which subsequently leads to raising public awareness of attitudes toward the natural world" (Culajara 156). The representation of animals in these folksongs emphasises on drawing responsible human behaviour through which the initiates' personalities are shaped into rational and responsible members of the community.

Culturally, the girl initiates in *nsondo* are advised to be disciplined as they grow into adolescence and sexual maturity and animals play significant roles in inculcating acceptable behavioural expectations. Girls are advised not to be on the lookout for boys but rather boys should search for them because *litumbi lyangapalila lijani* (a mountain does not go about looking for a baboon). By drawing from the environment the people pass on humane values to their children. The girl child should grow into a responsible member of the society especially now that the roots of *nsondoka* shrub has connected her to her land. Wild birds like guinea fowls are used as metaphors of boys - the girls should desist from visiting their boyhood huts (*gowelo*). The following song uses the guinea fowl to teach that every organism has a niche and it operates within that niche:

Ana ŵelewo akumpalila nganga?	Is she the one who visits the guinea fowl?
Ŵelewo akumpalila nganga!	She's the one who visits for the guinea fowl!
Akumpalila!	She's the visitor!
Ana ŵelewo akumpalila?	Is she the visitor?
E-e! E-e-e, Akumpalila!	E-e! E-e-e, Visitor!)

Guinea fowls are seed-eating and ground-nesting birds and although there are wild guinea fowls they are also often domesticated birds. In this song, the helmeted guinea fowl with featherless head is a metaphor of a clean-shaved handsome young man. The

singer is an elderly woman who notices that the visitor, a girl, visits the guinea fowl's home uninvited. The expression *akumpalila nganga* (pursuer of the guinea fowl), also implies the one who provokes the guinea fowl. *Kusipalila nganga* (to visit guinea fowls) is against cultural norms and values because the behaviour vilifies women.

Among the Yawo, the commonly used name for male animals or humans is *nkambako* and any female is referred to as *nkolo*. The girl initiates learn that *nkolo wangapalila nkambako* (a female does not go about looking for a male), or *nkolo wangapalila tambala* (a hen does not go about looking for a cock). Animals constitute the core values of teaching the youths the kind of people society wants them to become. The words *nkolo* and *nkambako* applied to both animals and humans, metaphorically means docility and virility, respectively and they are culturally loaded tems.

The question in the *nsondo* song, *Ana ŵelewo akumpalila nganga*? (Is she the one who visits guinea fowls?), expresses amazement because the girl exposes herself to the omnivorous habits of the guinea fowl that feeds on seeds, roots and insects. It is worth noting that "guineafowls are reckoned to be poor mothers and this may explain why they hatch many keets, 40 to 100 eggs produced per female per year" (Njiforti 56). The correlation of animal and human behaviours in order to teach sexual discipline among girls reflects the people's environmental embeddedness because the animals so correlated do not occur by chance. Parents usually monitor the movements of the girls and correlating such movements with *kusipalila nganga* (going about looking for female helmeted guineafowls), and what this entails is that the girls are symbolic of the helmeted female guineafowls. As "a terrestrial species" guineafowls have "a maximum migration distance of about 5km" (Njiforti 76) and to manage animals just as to manage people, entails a good knowledge of their behaviour.

The following song is about a chameleon but it turns out to be a metaphor of a young woman looking for a man. The young woman's accountability is called into question:

Kalilombe nyali-nyali!	The chameleon stealthily, stealthily!
Ana chichi nkusosa?	What are you looking for?
Kaponda ngusosa.	I am looking for vegetables.
Nkatiji kaponda nkusosa,	Do not say you are looking for vegetables,
Ŵalume ankolopwele!	A man has beckoned you!

Ŵalume ankolopwele! A man has beckoned you!

Kalilombe here refers to the big chameleon as opposed to the small one, *nalwiyi*. Its slow movement is reflected in *nyali-nyali* (craftily and stealthily) "along branches [of trees]" as it "catches insects by shooting out its long tongue" (Sealey 143). The imagery of chameleon's slow movement is transferred in the song to a girl who pretends to be in search of vegetables when in reality she looks for *ŵalume* (a man). The expression *ŵalume ankolopwele* (a man has beckoned you) entails that the man the girl follows has used tactics in order to win her. The word *ankolopwele* translated here as "beckoned" has its roots in the Ciyawo verb *kolopola* with two interpretations.

First, it means to catch or get something using a hook, as when someone wants to get a mango fruit from a tree using a long bamboo with a small stick tied at the end, locally referred to as *ngolopongo*). *Kolopola* also means to take something stealthily by grabbing it off someone's hands. The chameleon is locally known for having an endless colour of clothes and in this song, its habit of self-grooming is transferrable to the girl who grooms herself and goes out of her parents' house in search of a man. The song works on a symbolic level with animal and plant imagery. The song is in dialogic form in which the chameleon (the girl) speaks once in response to the question "What are you looking for?" The elderly and experienced women realise that her response is a lie and they conclude "But a man has beckoned you!"

By means of the chameleon metaphor to refer to the girl, the song teaches moral responsibility in matters of sexuality. In this perspective "[o]nce we understand nature as an interconnected whole, our perception of its different parts, ourselves included, alters dramatically. […] such a holistic understanding reveals a *commonality of interest* within nature" (Davidson 316, original italics). The craftiness with which the chameleon catches insects is, in the song, related to the quietude of the girl in search of a man and thereby revealing "a *commonality of interest* within nature." In this context, "metaphor represents a class of linguistic expression that says one thing and means another; thus, resembling cases of irony and indirect speech acts" (Jafari 119). By drawing from nature, the central emphasis in *nsondo* songs is not only teaching girls to be responsible, they also learn how to relate well with their husbands and their parents especially to respect their fathers.

The indivisibility that characterises the interconnectedness in nature reflects that the health of humans is dependent on the health of the environment. The representation of animals among the Yawo also reflects how they perceive some of them as totems. Kelbessa (2009) notes about African societies that, generally, "[m]any African societies have perceived wild animals through totemism and other religious beliefs. […]. Totem animals have special cultural value and associations" (16). The reverence accorded to some animals in indigenous lore serves to illustrate how they are considered as totems. The horned chameleon in Malawian folklore, for example, is considered the progenitor of both humans and animals. Although the Yawo may not be sure about their totemic connections with animals and plants, their cultural practices reveal elements of totemism. The description of totemism and totemic objects in this passage fit into the Yawo *jando* practices. For example, before the young boys and girls are excluded into *ndagala* (shelter) for circumcision, and *nsondo* the *amichila* make sacrifices of flour at the sacred *nsolo* tree. The presence of many ants (*mbamba/nyerere*) around a mound of sacrificial flour means the ancestors have accepted the sacrifice. On the eve of the circumcision, the *amichila* lead the parents of the children in prayer to the ancestors in which plants and animals are dominant features:

> *Ambuje, Kwilinga, Abiti Ndogolo, Abiti Uka, Abiti Jana, Che Kalikalanje,*
> *Ŵanachewa kwitinji kwakujaku ajende chenene,*
> *Masimba gajuŵejuŵe.*
> *Majoka gajuŵejuŵe.*
> *Isichi ijuŵejuŵe.*
> *Makoloto gajuŵejuŵe.*
> *Njerenyenye syakaluma*
> *Ŵanachewa.*
> *Achinamame,*
> *Akaguluka.*
> *Masisita gatende ji!*
> (Our ancestors, Kwilinga, Abiti Ndogolo, Abiti Uka, Abiti Jana, Che Kalikalanje,
> We implore you for the safety of these children to the bush they are going,
> Let lions hide.

Let snakes hide.

Let tree stumps hide.

Let scorpions hide.

Let not centipedes bite these children.

Let not nightjars fly.

Let owls remain silent!)

Animals play important cultural and spiritual roles among the Yawo people and their cosmology is linked to animals. The people's cosmovision considers not only the spiritual environment conceptualised through the spirits of the dead, but it also involves the physical environment of which animals are integral parts. Lions, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, barn owls, typical owls, spotted eagle-owls, nightjars or secretary birds mentioned in the above supplication to the ancestors, are culturally regarded as dangerous animals that need spiritual guidance in order to exist in harmony with them. In this way, the environment is not only a significant source of moral values that help instil ecological wisdom among the community members, but it is also a source of solace from the unprecedented natural events. The Yawo, therefore, in their cultural practices, revere animals. The traditional religious values in Malawi are significant in promoting environmental restoration for their inherence in nature. The Yawo traditional prayer reflects the interrelatedness between the human and the nonhuman worlds through totemism and thus human-animal relationships are implicated in the people's religious beliefs.

4.4 Conclusion

Different kinds of animals inhabit *jando* and *nsondo* songs as the foregoing paragraphs testify. The representation of these animals is not fortuitous but it is a result of the people's millennia-long observations, experiences and interactions with the nonhuman worlds. Through folksongs, ecological wisdom passes on to the next generations. In the Yawo folksongs, animal representations reflect not only a high degree of environmental consciousness of the people, but also their sound understanding of animal behaviours and actions by which human knowledge is articulated. Drawing from Naess' concepts in deep ecology, Fox's (1990) transpersonal ecology, and other budding ecocritical perspectives, the Yawo folksongs can be said to constitute a springboard for "Self-realisation" and "identification" that cultivate ecological wholeness. By the end of the seclusion period during which time the initiates sing the aforementioned songs and

others, the people instil ecologically oriented values in children. The initiated come to believe that the environment in which they live is the fountain of untapped wisdom. Children have no option but to respect the environment which forms a significant part of their identity and cultural heritage. It is therefore imperative upon us to engage local communities because they are strongly grounded in their land and this entails that they have every right to protect it.

The Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs deal with environmental awareness by depicting different animals whose actions and behaviours society approves and disapproves. Through these environmentally oriented folksongs, the youth among the Yawo are introduced to their environment, grow up with responsibility, and respect for the environment from which they obtained lifetime moral and humane values. Now that the world has realised the advantages of circumcision, and different non-governmental organisations are campaigning for hospitalised circumcision, the greatest impact about this move is the risk that the Yawo folksongs will be relegated into oblivion.

In *jando* folksongs involving birds, the various symbolic meanings attached to the *misyungu* engage with the initiates' minds to reflect on how small birds locally found in the environment in which they are born introduce them to the wisdom of their land about the *dos* and *don'ts* of their community. In articulating ecological upbringing, these birds are befittingly apt in sustaining the children's interests in what they learn and the symbolic meanings attached to the birds. The numerous folksongs drawn from birds reflect not only their ubiquity then as opposed to their rarity now, but the songs also reflect the people's environmental embeddedness that enabled them to weave ecological wisdom based on their experiences of interacting with birds and what they do. The various reptiles and mammals that constitute the bulk of songs in the second section of this chapter also play significant symbolic meanings in people's lives. The Yawo's attachment to the environment is based on their dependence on it for livelihoods. The seasonal appearance/disappearance of some animals and the cycles in nature are important in marking the agricultural year and regulating human activities.

CHAPTER 5
TRADITIONAL AFRICAN MASKS AND THE REPRESENTATION OF ANIMALS IN *GULE WAMKULU*

5.1 Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapters, indigenous people's cosmology is closely linked to animals. Traditional African masks constitute people's quest for connections between themselves and the spirits of their ancestors reincarnated in animal forms. Animals, therefore, play important roles in the religious, political, economic, social and cultural lives of the people. Among the Chewa, the spirits of the ancestors are represented in the form of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* or *Nyau*. Casimir *et.al*. (2015) assert that "[m]asks are the representation of the African ancestral origin and authority that account for what constitutes human value, worth and meaning. The spiritual ancestors are the source of life, order and continuity in any African community" (116). Good behaviour among the people, *miyambo* and/or *nzeru* (wisdom) are reinforced through recourse to animal masks. Casimir *et.al*. (2015) note that "[i]n Africa, the mask is fundamentally a spiritual and metaphysical value before it transformed into a socio-cultural value that helps the African people to create their sense of what constitutes order, law, authority and the proper way people should be governed" (116). The belief that animals are sacred help people to conceptualise them in the religious and non-material realms of life. Because of their sacredness, animals also symbolise power.

It is important to note from the outset that *Gule Wamkulu* masquerades constitute dramatic forms. Finnegan (2012) observes that "[t]he masquerades – dances of masked figures of various kinds […] all seem to include certain elements of drama and are often referred to as 'plays.' There is generally the idea of some kind of enactment or representation by the masked figure with great emphasis on costume (especially masks) and on music and dancing" (494). The masquerade dramatic performances take a religious solemnity with masks as costumes and the content is represented in songs. Finnegan further notes that "[t]hough different elements of drama are stressed in

different African cultures, one theme that seems to run through almost all these African performances is the overriding significance of music and dance and the secondary importance of the spoken word" (500). From time immemorial, the rain-calling rituals and performances in Africa in general, and Malawi in particular, consisted of singing, dancing and incantations. Therefore, it is no surprise that *Gule Wamkulu* dramatic performance joins the debate in contributing to the contemporary environmental discourse. Thus, as Okpewho (1992) explains, "we may safely discuss traditional African drama under the broad subdivisions of the *ritual* and the *popular*, with the guiding understanding of drama *as an entertainment conveyed basically through suggestive or symbolic action and movement and defining an experience*" (262, original italics). *Gule Wamkulu* theatrical performances in which the dead are involved in the drama of the living through masks dramatize human experience. The experience being dramatized in the present study is environmental degradation and the spirits of the dead are involved through the re-enactment of the creation myth because the land they bequeathed to their children is threatened by destruction and pollution.

It is against this background that the primary aim of this chapter is to examine the representation of traditional animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* as reflections of the people's environmental embeddedness and their complex cosmological interrelatedness with animals. I argue that the Chewa people's interactions with animals transcend the living to include the unborn and the living dead in order to attest reverence to the ancestors and respect to animals. In their cyclical conceptualisation of human existence, animals are significantly integral in regulating the spiritual and physical well-beings of humans. In this chapter, I examine traditional African masks in *Gule Wamkulu* and the symbolic representations of animals in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha: Mvula ndi Madzi Khwakhwalala* (2015), a DVD play that can be categorised within what Ivakhin (2012) refers to as "ecocritical film studies, green film studies, ecomedia studies and ecocinema criticism" (144). What this implies is that the application of ecocriticism is open to various texts including films.

The chapter also scrutinises animal traditional masks in the Chewa *Gule Wamkulu* and the re-enactment of the Kaphirintiwa myth in the play in order to evaluate human-animal interactions and the environmental consciousness of the Chewa. *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is a DVD play filmed by Boucher from Kungoni Centre of Culture

and Art, Mua, in Dedza district. The choice of the play is justified by its oral background in *Gule Wamkulu* as a religio-cultural performance. *Gule Wamkulu* is a Traditional Religion for the Chewa (van Breugel 2001). *Gule Wamkulu* is also referred to as the "great dance" and "a dance ritual of extraordinary complexity and richness. […that] has many dimensions or aspects – ecological, social, religious, political, aesthetic and cosmological" (Morris 2012: v). Korpela (2011) describes *Gule Wamkulu* as the "Great Dance performed by members of the *Nyau*. The term is also used interchangeably with the term *Nyau* to refer to members of the male masking society" (14). In 2005 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), proclaimed *Gule Wamkulu* as "a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" (Boucher 2012: xiv). *Gule Wamkulu* is, therefore, imperceptibly rich in cultural values. It is an important initiation for boys and girls into the heart of the Chewa religious realm.

Gule Wamkulu costumes and masks have a variety of features that tell environmental and cultural stories that reflect their perceptions about the interrelatedness of the human and nonhuman worlds. The animal masks also known as *zilombo* (wild animals) represent the spirits of the ancestors and they have different symbolic meanings loaded with their beliefs and values about the interconnectedness of all creation (*chilengedwe*). I examine this "Intangible Cultural Heritage" focusing on animal masks that constitute the apex "of what it is to be a traditional Chewa" (Morgan 1). Malawian traditional and religious values are so grounded in the environment that flora and fauna, including a variety of landscape features and the entire cosmos, are perceived in the seamlessness that reflects a unitary worldview.

White Jr. (1996) blames Judeo-Christianity of anthropocentrism in favour of Asian religions such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism or Daoism and Buddhism (10). Judeo-Christianity, however, does not teach that humanity should exploit nature for individual gains.[11] Katz (2001) avers that the "world was not created *for* humanity. The events of the natural world – rain, for example, do not take place for the benefit of humanity. Rain falls in the wilderness where no man is; it is thus a mistake to see the rain as God's contribution to human agriculture and livestock" (154, original italics).

[11] *Habakkuk 2:17*, for example, reads: "For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you; the destruction of animals will terrify you – because of human bloodshed and violence to the earth, to cities and all who live in them." Similarly, *Romans 8:20*, "for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it..."

In the interconnectedness of ecological entities, humanity utilises nature rather than abuse it in a manner which falls outside humanity's trusteeship of the environment.

The term *Nyau* also refers to a mask or masked dancer (*chinyago/chingondo* among the Yawo) besides referring to a secret society (van Breugel 126) because the dancers are hidden in "large animal constructions and face masks" (Korpela 32). It is *Nyau* that "re-enacts symbolically, the very disaster, which separated humans from the animals and the spirits in the beginnings" (Ott 183) depicted in the Kaphirintiwa creation myth. *Gule Wamkulu*, on the other hand, carries "religious significance" (van Breugel 130). Significantly for this study, the Chewa religious values are closely associated with animals.

The play, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* (2015), is an ecocinema aimed at what Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) describes as "consciousness-raising and activist intentions, as well as responsibility to heighten awareness about contemporary issues and practices affecting planetary health" (45). The play is divided into six scenes. The first scene begins with the portrayal of the current state of deforestation largely due to charcoal production. Then it plunges into the past, reminding the audience that humans, animals and plants were created by *Chauta*. This scene re-enacts the human-animal relationship in Kaphirintiwa creation myth. In this myth, *Chauta* created humans and animals and made them land on a huge rock on Kaphirintiwa Mountain. Upon landing on the rock which was still soft, the humans and animals left their footprints there as a mark of their primordial harmony and interconnectedness as creatures of the Supreme Being. In the third scene, the human being's accidental invention of fire that ignited after rubbing two sticks together set the forest ablaze.

The people lack rains because the land has no trees after the fire incident and this is the fourth scene. In the fifth scene of the film, *Chauta* gives people another chance to save themselves by sending the Chameleon that carries *Chauta's* message about afforestation. The sixth and final scene sees the people taking Chameleon's message from *Chauta* about planting trees seriously. It is also worth noting that after the fire incident in the Kaphirintiwa myth, most animals ran away from the human being and became wild animals and those few that remained with the human being became domestic animals. The spider through its web helped *Chauta* to escape into the sky. The play was produced to commemorate Pope Francis' *Encyclical Letter* (2015).

Besides the play in question, I also use Boucher's book *When Animals Sing and Spirits Dance, Gule Wamkulu: The Great Dance of the Chewa People of Malawi* (2012), as an inside source to the cryptic meanings of the animal masks depicted in the play. The play's central characters are animal masks of *Gule Wamkulu*. Usually, *Gule Wamkulu* "is performed at the request of the village headman on the occasion of funerals of village members, puberty initiations, and the installation of [a] chief, and [it] is part of the legacy of royal ritual inherited from the Chewa[']s past. As such, *Gule Wamkulu* legitimates chieftainship by linking it to the old Chewa polities and by reproducing the symbolic elements of an older cultural order" (UNESCO 2011:30). In *Gule Wamkulu*, humans and animals do not exist in the same time and space, for the re-embodied ancestors in animal forms reside in the otherworldly realm of *mizimu* (spirits). Korpela (2011) observes that:

> Within the *Nyau* ritual performance, masked performers dance to the beat of drums. The features of the masks or elements of the costumes they wear tell a story, reinforced by the songs that accompany the performance. The masked characters educate, inform, instruct and communicate various messages to the local communities. These messages include the passing on of community norms, values and traditions (23).

From these various roles of the masquerades, I mainly focus on the stories the animal masks and songs sung in the play tell. Indigenous people, as Gunn (1996) argues, "seek – through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales – to embody, articulate and share reality, to bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalise the sense of the majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualise, in language, those truths that give to humanity its greatest significance and dignity" (242). Through their oral cultural performances of *Gule Wamkulu*, the Chewa contribute to the contemporary environmental discourse, especially regarding human-animal interactions and raising environmental awareness. The various stories animal masks tell reflect that "humans experience a kind of 'return' from feelings of disconnection and dis – ease, moving through awareness, recovery, and back into wholeness" (Machiorlatti 65). This suggests life renewal and it is an important aspect of the Chewa's cyclical worldview. The structural configurations of the animal masks

and the songs to which the animal masks perform are significant as cultural symbols from which meanings are derivable.

The Chewa's re-enactment of the Kaphirintiwa creation myth acts as "a reconciliation between man and animals before the cataclysm or fall of man" (Korpela 31; Ott 2000) when God escaped from his midst after the invention of the fire. This reconciliation is through traditional animal masks that are symbolic of the spirits of the dead. Soyinka (1988) explains that the "masks alone occasionally suggest a correspondence to the chthonic realm and hint at the archetypes of transition" (30). The re-embodiment of the dead into spirits in the form of animals requires daring through what Soyinka calls "the fourth stage, the vortex of archetypes" that "must be constantly diminished by the sacrifices, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to those cosmic powers which lie guardian to the gulf" (144 – 145). The representation of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* is therefore in the form of archetypes of rebirth. The person who wears the animal mask (*Nyau*) dares into what Soyinka also describes as the "numinous" stage (146) of transition. Chirila (2011) explains that the "greater the numinosity belonging to an archetype, the more power it has, the greater its potential to project, possess, and influence consciousness" (49). The analysis of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* thus draws attention to a lot of cultural symbols and, significantly, symbolism that reflect the people's environmental consciousness.

As oral religio-cultural products, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* (2015) and *When Animals Sing and Spirits Dance* (2012) construct images that visually represent nature in symbiotic interactions with humans in order to promote the values of *Gule Wamkulu.* These values heavily rely on visual images and a worldview drawn from animal masks represented pictorially reflecting close contacts, experiences and environmental embeddedness of the Chewa. The analysis of these animal masks in the play fits into the ecocritical, zoocritical and deep ecological perspectives. Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) explains the expansion of ecocriticism's "boundaries" saying that "ecocriticism has expanded beyond the area of literary analysis to embrace the study of other forms of cultural production, including theoretical discourse, music, photography [cinematography], virtual environments, and film and video" (1). As both oral and cultural oriented products, animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* are analysable through the lens of ecocriticism, zoocriticism and deep ecology. The purpose of the examination of animal masks in this chapter is to show the various ways through which the Chewa use

animals for symbolic meanings and instrumental values in order to decrypt their environmental consciousness. I argue that the Chewa belief in the reincarnation of the spirits of the dead into animal forms confers respect to animals as ecologically interconnected entities with humans.

This chapter demonstrates using the Chewa religious and mythical outlook of the Kaphirintiwa creation myth that by sharing primordial origins as creatures of *Chiuta* (God), human and animal interconnectedness constitutes part of the cyclical view of human existence conceptualised in *Nyau* (Moto 1994; Boucher 2002). In this cycle, every death in the human community is birth in the animal world of masks purposefully constructed to teach moral values. Zubieta (2016) observes that "[a]nimals […] have a nuanced symbolic role that impacts the way the people behave with each other by embodying cultural protocols of proper – and not so proper – behaviour" (406). Because of this, as vehicles for moral values in the reincarnated animal masks. Among the Chewa, animal masks are symbols of ancestor-hood.

Human attitude towards literary and mythical animals proportionally affects the treatment of animals in real life. Thus, the "[h]armonious living is clearly a pivotal spiritual value given by masquerades [*Nyau* masks] and maintained by them" (Casimir *et.al*. 116) and this harmony does not fall short of real life experiences. Animal masks are responsible for granting belongingness in the Chewa community of its members after initiation (Boucher xi). Furthermore, "masks play a fundamental role because they are the reincarnation of the animal totem, the spirits of the important dead elders, and of the collective spirits of the ancestors of the clan" (Casimir *et.al.* 122). Through animal masks, the Chewa dig into their past and identify their cultural rootedness. Sherman (2008) asserts that:

> In some African cultures, including the Zulu of South Africa, a soul may pass through several incarnations, from insect to animal to human and back again in a never-ending progression. In West Africa, the Yoruba believe that people are direct reincarnations of their ancestors (384).

The Chewa of Malawi through traditional animal masks believe that the dead people return in the forms of different kinds of animals, not just one animal. This is porayed in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, a play that draws from the oral repertoire of the Chewa. The oral overtones in the play make it a fertile ground for the quest of human-

animal relations in the explication of primordial and contemporary cultures using ecocritical theory. Garrard (2004) asserts that "[e]cocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory" (3). Ecocriticism also takes into account "environmental history, and to some extent studies of place, space, and landscape" (Siewers 205). I intend to draw from various ecocritical and ecocentric standpoints to analyse the representation of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* to problematize human-animal relations historicised in the Kaphirintiwa myth through which the Chewa conceptualise "place, space, and landscape" as the cradle of both humans and animals.

Ecocritically, Boucher uses oral cultural forms that engage with the human-animal sharing primal origins in the play in order to "re-integrate humankind into the natural environment" (Childs and Fowler 65) because it is by conceptualising the oneness of humans and animals that we can feel a sense of symbiosis. Symbiosis feeds into ecocentrism, which for Eckersley (1992), "is based on an ecologically informed philosophy of *internal relatedness*, according to which all organisms are not simply interrelated with their environment but also *constituted* by those very environmental interrelationships" (49). *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is a story of environmental degradation in Malawi, which, as the title suggests, is a result of wanton cutting down of trees for timber and charcoal production.

Deforestation has led to serious shortages of rains and food insecurity. The story goes back to the prehistoric time when *Chiuta* created humans and animals and how they coexisted in harmony. Human invention of fire disrupted the harmony. The human being used the fire to make tools that helped him to hunt and kill animals and cut down trees. As human population increases, and coupled with globalisation, logs of wood and other forest products find their way into neighbouring countries and even beyond as far as China. Due to insufficient rains, the land is hit by famine resulting in deaths of humans and animals.

The play then introduces various animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* to mourn this state of affairs. The story is carefully crafted to convey the message that the current environmental crises are human-induced and it is the responsibility of human beings to arrest the situation through government agents and communities working together. The

play fits into ecocriticism, "[t]he study of literary texts with reference to the interaction between human activity and the vast range of 'natural' or non-human phenomena which bears upon human experience – encompassing (amongst many things) issues concerning fauna, flora, landscape, environment and weather" (Childs and Fowler 65). These issues are at the heart of Boucher in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* in which the predominance of green consciousness through animal mask characters make the play ecocritically comprehensible without losing sight of its richness of the Chewa cultural heritage of *Gule Wamkulu*. The representations of the nonhuman and human worlds in the play reflect symbiotic participation of ecologically interconnected entities.

The play promotes indigenous environmental restoration rooted in the Chewa's inherited cultural cosmos in what Siewers (2010) describes as an "ecocentric or nature-centred experience" (207). As I confine my evaluation to the animal masks and *Nyau* songs, I undertake to engage with "what they reveal about human relations with the non-human world" (Childs and Fowler 65). The cyclical view of human existence in which the dead reincarnate in animal forms and become involved in the drama of the living entails symbiosis defined as "the cooperative arrangement that permits increase in the levels of order" (Rueckert 120). The Chewa people's cyclical conceptualisation of life on earth agrees with the natural order through animal structures that are symbolic of ancestral spirits whose energy is derived from humans who wear the masks. The construction of the animal masks reflects artistry and knowledge of the animals constructed. It is worth noting that "[i]n Africa, art is the epitome of the culture and civilisation of society, representing the human capacity to enjoy the sublime aspects of life, regardless of the wider situation, without leading to a rich/poor divide in cultural consciousness" (Ayotunde 140). The artistic construction of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* does not only display craftsmanship, but it also demonstrates human interrelatedness with animals. *Nyau* involves art that epitomises the values and environmental consciousness of the Chewa in which animals are crucially important.

5.2 Deforestation, pollution and the re-enactment of the Chewa Kaphirintiwa myth in Boucher's play, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*

The play opens at the market place where through mime local traders sell an assortment of forest resources such as firewood, hoe handles, timber and charcoal. Imaginary

trucks arrive at the market place and the drivers buy the forest resources, load them into their trucks and drive away. In its opening scene, the play therefore premises the challenge of deforestation in Malawi on "keep cutting the trees and this is the end of our forests" (Boucher 2015). The culmination of this is that "the rains will fail and there will be water shortage on our planet." The play could be referred to as "indigenous theatre" defined by Kamlongera *et.al*. (1992) as "those dramatic performances which have their roots in traditions of this place, but not at the exclusion of interference or borrowing from others. This is theatre we could classify as 'folk theatre'" (15-16). *Gule Wamkulu* originates in the people's traditions and how they are cosmologically linked with animals. *Gule Wamkulu* as indigenous drama is ritualistic and it is the dramatization of the spirits of the ancestors reincarnated in the form of animals and their performances take the form of mystery plays. *Gule Wamkulu* performances constitute different forms of the people's theatrical productions.

The title of the play suggests that deforestation in Malawi leads to insufficient rainfall and water. The forest products such as timber, logs of wood and charcoal sold at the market and some of which find their way to Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, and China are examples of key factors leading to deforestation in the global context. Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) observes that "the crucial function of the emerging genre of eco-cinema [is] to 'challenge and broaden audience's perception and understanding of the complex world that surrounds us'" (43). *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* locates the causes of deforestation in capitalist perspectives and consumer culture. The expressions used in the play create awareness about the state of the environment, for example, *kokotakokota nkhalango zatha* (forests have been denuded), and *mvula ndi madzi khwakhwalala* (rainfall and water driven away). Deforestation is a serious problem in Malawi. Mulwafu (2011) observes that:

> Notable among the challenges to sustainable natural resource management is deforestation currently at an alarming rate across the country. Most mountains and hills have been denuded and it is an eyesore to see only patches of forested areas in the country. Malawi has one of the highest rates of deforestation in southern Africa, currently at 2.4 percent (226 – 227).

The denudation of the once forested areas stripping them of their trees is what *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* first dwells on before it draws the attention of the audience into the Chewa heritage of oral literature with masked animal performances. Poverty, corruption and lack of environmental political governance are key contributing factors for Malawi to rank the highest in the rate of deforestation in this part of Africa. French (1986) describes the problem of deforestation in Malawi as "unsolvable."[12] As we put the problem of deforestation in Malawi into perspective, it is important to take into account the colonial legacy. James (1991) asserts that "[c]olonialism established a trend of exploitation of natural resources of Africa. This trend began when Europeans discovered that the hides, skins, tusks, and furs of animals found in developing nations could be acquired cheaply and then sold in Europe and America for high prices. This action accelerated the decline of biological diversity of African savannahs and forests" (10). In the twenty-first century, as poverty levels increase in Africa, this trend of Western exploitation of Africa's natural resources has not subsided. Europeans, Americans and Chinese are merely acquiring natural resources from Africa. James (1991) further notes that "[o]ne of the contributing factors to the deplorable situation of poverty in Africa is the widespread loss of forests. […]. Global evidence indicates that there is a clear correlation between poverty and deforestation" (116). The title of Boucher's play sums up the plunder of forests due to poverty, rapid population growth and urbanisation in Malawi.

The role of animal masks in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is to raise consciousness among the audience that in the current state of deforestation, wild animals (*zilombo*) have their habitats destroyed besides the challenges human beings face due to deforestation. The presence of the animal masks reminds the audience that they are the spirits of the ancestors coming from the forests (*dambwe*), culturally preserved. Deforestation adversely affects animal habitations and biodiversity. Deforestation has disturbed not only the hydrological cycle, *mvula ndi madzi khwakhwalala*, but it has also affected human and animal lives. The destruction of forests negatively affects the knowledge and values of the *Nyau* cult (Linden 1994; van Breugel 2001). *Gule*

[12] The problem of deforestation in Malawi is compounded by poverty and people do not have alternative sources of energy. Cario Sacchetto (2012) reports that "a study published by the International Institute for Environment and Development in the UK investigates the impact that charcoal has on deforestation [in Malawi]. 231, 177 metric tons of charcoal are necessary only for the consumption of the population in the main four urban areas of Malawi, the production of which involves the cutting down of about 15,000 hectares of forest per year" (p.8). With increase in the human population as reflected in the 2018 Census, and increased urbanisation, in 2021 the rate of cutting down trees is far beyond the 15, 000 hectares of forest per year, and the 2.4% Mulwafu gives in the quotation cited above.

Wamkulu helps in environmental conservation for the institution's closeness to forests/bushes where wild animals (*zilombo*) live. Ikeke (2013) notes that that "[a] key area of the environment is forest. Forests hold great value in every local community and in the global world. Without forests, trees, shrubs, and other plants, which are part of every forest, the only thing you will see before you when you look ahead of you will be bare sand, stones, mountains, and the natural landscape without the beauty of forests and trees" (345). Forests are habitats of animals besides being the warehouses of traditional ecological values. The play emphasises the roles of forests in regulating climate, protecting biodiversity and sustaining human health and thus, it is in line with cinematic ecocriticism.

Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) asserts that "cinematic ecocriticism urges us to incorporate ecological considerations into the study of our experiences as producers and consumers of cinema and, in this way also to acknowledge our role as co-participants with the nonhuman world in the complex symbiotic process we call evolution, a process that includes cultural evolution" (xviii – xiv). The interactions between humans and animals including the supernatural elements represented in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* broaden the audience's cosmovision. The play creates a unified totality in which the audience are attendants in the drama of the masked dancers existing in the liminal space between the living and the dead in order to bring about positive changes towards the way people treat the environment.

The song that forms the background to the opening scene of *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* demonstrates cultural activism in contextualising environmental degradation in human-induced causes:

Kokotakokota mitengo yatha!	Keep cutting trees and this is the end of forests!
Ndimanga bwanji nyumba mitengo yatha,	How can I build a house, there is no timber,
Ndiphika bwanji nsima nkhuni zatha.	How can I cook, there is no firewood,
Owononga achoke-e!	Plunderers must leave!
Ndigona pati, ndidyanji, ndimwanji?	Where can I sleep, what can I eat; what can I drink?

Mvula khwakhwalala.	There is no water.
Ndi mudzi womwe-e!	Our village has vanished!

The song bemoans the loss of trees in Malawi's forests. The loss of implies that people have no timber and other construction materials that use trees. There is also no firewood for cooking. The song demands that plunderes of forests must leave God's earth beause they have betrayed their trust (*Owononga achoke*). The song then laments about climate change that results in unpredictable rains. For a country that depends on rain-fed agriculture, this situation is a great concern. The play creates a local ecological discourse that reflects the gravity of environmental degradation in Malawi. Katz (2001) says that the remedy to environmental restoration is through the reorientation of "human social institutions […] so that they can exist in harmony with the processes and life forms of the natural world" (159). Malawi has had such institutions like *Nyau* long before deep ecological formulations.

The play problematises the question of survival for both humans and animals in the current state of deforestation and the vanishing of the rains. The unavailability of forests and water makes life agonising for humans and animals and the animal masks introduced in this play are intended "for the ancestors to communicate with the people" (Morgan 2) the implications of human behaviours and actions towards the environment/nature (*chilengedwe*). Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) asserts that "as a specific type of environmentally oriented cinema, eco cinema can offer us alternative models for how to represent and engage with the natural world; these models have the potential to foster a healthier and more sustainable relationship to that world" (44). In line with Pope Francis' *Encyclical Letter* (2015), Boucher represents humans and animal masks (*zilombo*) mourning for the loss of the primordial harmony. Animal masks symbolise the cycles of life, death and rebirth among the Chewa and for Moto (1994) "the original harmony of creation is the key to the meaning of the *Nyau* [which] affects the whole life cycle from birth to death" (25). The loss of forests signifies death for which the animal masks mourn in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha,* a play informed by an ancestral environmental memory.

In the play, the extermination of wild animals and exploitation of the earth have their roots in capitalist greed as the following song portrays:

Ndikutseka mvula ndine,	I am the one who prevents the rain,
Ndikudula mitengo ndine osati chakusowa,	I cut down trees not because I am needy,
Chifukwa cha madyera.	But because I am greedy.
Ndawononga chilengedwe,	I have destroyed the environment/nature,
Chifukwa cha madyera aye-e!	Because of greed!

The song suggests that climate change is human-induced, that is, it is anthropogenic. Humans are responsible for environmental degradation and climate change. The song also attributes climate change to capitalist greed and monopolistic tendencies. The song also suggests that deforestation leads to shortage of rains. Wanton cutting down of trees is metaphorically bewitching[13] the land. The song then puts emphasis on *madyera* (greed or corruption) with its roots in capitalism as a key factor that has aggravated the destruction of forests. On corruption, May *et.al*. (2017), have observed that "Malawi is ranked 120 of 176 countries on the Corruption Perception Index, that is, it falls within the top $^{1}/3$ of most corrupt countries in the world" (1). It is through corruption that forests and wildlife have disappeared. Corruption is energised by capitalism which creates both wealth and poverty.

Lok argues that "[n]ature and capitalism are two incompatible entities and they have always been in opposition to each other. Owing to the capitalist development, nature is exploited and sacrificed" (1). The song's emphasis on human destruction of the environment because of greed, informs the failure of the capitalist system to sustain the environment. Storm (2009) argues that "[c]apitalism does *not* work when it comes to protecting our climate change because it is 'flying blind': it lacks the sensory organs that would allow it to understand and adjust to the climate system" (1016-17, italics in the original). According to the song, it is covetousness that informs the lack of environmental sensibility because, as Torres (2007) asserts, capitalism has "deepened, extended and worsened our domination over animals and the natural world" (3).

[13] The expression *Ndikutseka mvula ndine* (I am the one who prevents the rain) in the song, is based on belief some indigenous Malawins hold that there are some people locally called *okhwima* (fortified) who have powers to prevent rains from coming. This is called *kumanga mvula* (literally, to tie the rains) so that rains do not come. The expression implies this situation by emphasising that instead of looking for witches, wizards or sorceres to blame for the failure of rains to come, let us blame ourselves for what we have done to *chilengedwe* (nature).

Animals and forests have become either personal or corporate assets and/or commodities.

Human destruction of nature because of covetousness has resulted in people being alienated from nature. The rise of ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature is closely linked to efforts to stem the environmentally destructive tide of capitalism. Nayar (2010) observes that "[e]cocriticism originates in a bio-social context of unrestrained capitalism, excessive exploitation of nature, worrying definitions and shapes of 'development' and environmental hazard" (297). Capitalists' desire for increased production that exploits natural resources entails insatiability for growth. Boggs (2012) argues that:

> The global crisis reveals the extent to which the classical industrial model has run its course, even as ruling elites scramble to mobilise resources in support of the corporate growth system over which they preside – a system giving rise to rampant material exploitation, vast inequalities of wealth and power, wasteful use of natural resources, militarism, and warfare not to mention escalating habitat destruction on the road to possible ecological collapse (153).

What this passage means is that environmental sustainability is difficult to achieve in the capitalist framework and the developed countries' superficiality in approaching the environmental challenges speaks volumes. Global warming, climate change, deforestation, extinction of animals, overfishing, siltation of rivers, air and water pollution and waste management, *inter alia,* constitute key environmental challenges or problems brought about by an exclusively capitalist approach to development. All these have negatively affected indigenous systems and the people's survival mechanisms. The expression *Ndawononga chilengedwe* (I have destroyed the environment) sums up the various ways through which humans have interfered the normal functioning of *chilengedwe* (nature). *Nda-* in *Ndawonga* which stands for the singular, "I" is generally plural because it refers to all humans as destructive of nature. The play reflects the concern for the larger world of all living things through the participation of different animal masks symbolically representing the real animals and their concerns about environmental degradation. In order for us to restore the environment to its former glory, it depends on the choices we make.

Because humans are responsible for environmental degradation, it implies human failure to be responsible as trustees of nature and natural resources. The structure of the play is such that there is no hero because all human beings have failed to conserve the environment, *Chatikanika ife kusunga chilengedwe.* Human behaviour greatly affects the environment. The following song demonstrates lack of human trusteeship of nature that has culminated in the overexploitation of natural resources:

O, *Chatikanikafe-e! (x2)*	We have failed!
Chatikanika kusunga chilengedwe,	We have failed to conserve nature,
Nsomba, nyama zatha !	Fish, meat (game) depleted!
Chimanga chogula chadula !	Maize is selling at high prices!

Exploitation to the point of diminishing returns has greatly affected the availability of natural resources. The song blames anthropogenic causes of the environmental crises. *Ife* (We), collectively as human beings, have failed to conserve nature. The song highlights the fact that over-exploitation of natural resources has affected the availability of animals and fish. Maize, which people used to harvest in abundance before the acidification of soils with chemical fertilisers and acid rains, is now scarce. The expressions *Nsomba*, *nyama zatha* and *Chimanga chogula chadula* employ concord based on word relations. Overfishing based on "capture fishery" defined as "fish exploitation from the naturally existing water bodies" (Yaron *et.al.* 33) means that the few different fish species available at the market become expensive just as maize has become expensive. With deforestation, rivers have silted up affecting the breeding of fish. The production of maize fluctuates depending on the amount of rains received. All this is suicidal and the play calls upon us to rethink our habits towards the environment in order for it to regain its previous glory.

Boucher takes an ecocentric approach to the environmental challenges of deforestation and pollution. In watching an ecocinematic play, it is worth noting that "[o]ur interest, then, is not only in *what* [plays] show us, but also in *how* they show us these things and how this affects our 'ways of seeing' ourselves and our relationship to the nonhuman

world" (Ivakhiv, 2012:146, original italics). In the play, the songs *Ndikutseka mvula ndine* (I am the one who prevents rains) and *Chatikanika ife kusunga chilengedwe* (We have failed to conserve nature), have demonstrated people's ecological awareness. This creates empathy in the audience by sharing a common understanding with the singers. Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) asserts that "ecocentrism denotes a shift in values that takes into consideration the well-being of the whole ecosphere, which includes humanity. There is no paradox, then, since humanity is part of the biotic community, one of the components of the ecosphere" (47). This means the interrelatedness of the biotic and abiotic entities in nature. Humanity, as an integral part of nature, is responsible for environmental restoration.

The first animal mask to appear in the play is Mr Plastic, *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill). The facemask of this plastic therianthropic figure is gloomy, sunburnt with an elongated nose and the whole body is covered in different shades of colours and layers of plastics. The mask, Mr Plastic, *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill) informs how *Gule Wamkulu* responds to contemporary environmental challenges and its religio-economic and health concerns. The mask, Mr Plastic, as opposed to "Mrs Plastic," also informs male aggression towards nature that tampers with the health and conservation of the land and aquatic habitats understood through ecofeminism. In the Chewa patriarchal society, *Gule Wamkulu* is a male dominated theatrical performance that constitutes the core values of their culture instituted by men while "women are closer to nature" (Davion 241). *Gule Wamkulu* reflects the correlation of sexism and nature considering that the bulk of the animal structures are male except *Maria* and *Kasiyamaliro* and masks that represent wives of some male masks like *Chadzunda*. *Kasiyamaliro*, the most important female mask among the Chewa's *Gule Wamkulu*, is central in focusing on its feminine attributes to teach moral values. It is worth noting that "[i]f we are to enter a sustainable environmental era, we must acknowledge the ways in which human relationships with the land are mediated by cultural norms and practices, including the practice of cinema, and are bound to power dynamics in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, and class" (Willoquet-Maricondi 57-58). The importance of the mediatory roles of animal masks in environmental sustainability in *Gule Wamkulu* cannot be overemphasised because they determine the Chewa people's affiliation to their environment because for them humans, land, water, animals and plants constitute the sanctity of nature (*chilengedwe*) which had its primordial harmony at Kaphirintiwa.

In responding to the contemporary environmental challenges of pollution, the people focus on the non-biodegradability of plastics represented by *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill). Plastics do not only pollute the soil but they also pollute rivers. Vegter *et.al*. (2014) observe that "increased occurrence of plastics in marine ecosystems mirrors the increased prevalence of plastics in society, and reflects the high durability and persistence of plastics in the environment" (225). The plastic mask, *Kwanga Nkupha*, reveals the influence of modern environmental knowledge on traditional practices and the people's observations of key challenges that corrode the environment. It is worth noting that globally, the "production of plastics increased by more than twenty-fold between 1964 and 2015, with the annual output of 322 million tonnes, and [it] is expected to double by 2035, and almost quadruple by 2050" (Barra and Leonard 2018:4). What this entails is that the health of humans and animals, including soil microorganisms, is affected by the life suffocating effects of plastics. Turpine *et.al*. (2019) have observed that:

> Malawians probably generate more than 0.20 kg of plastic waste per person per day. Plastic still makes up a relatively small proportion of the solid waste that is generated in Malawi, estimated to range from about 8% in low income areas, to about 30% in high incomeareas. However, Malawians are producing more waste per capita than sub-Saharan counterparts, and waste management systems and public awareness are inadequate to cope with waste in general. The four largest cities in Malawi together generate over 1000 tonnes in solid waste per day (ii).

Waste management is a very serious environmental challenge in Malawi. Plastic bags and bottles have no proper disposal and they are heaped in any place including in streams or rivers. This infringes on ecocentric and geocentric approaches of protecting the environment from pollution and destruction. Turpine *et.al*. (2019) note that "Malawi is characterised by low waste collection rates and cities lack formal waste management systems. This has serious implications for the amount of plastic waste that remains uncollected and ends up in landfill or the environment" (8). It is a common sight that landfills in Malawi are heaped with platics of different colours, types and sizes. Slowly, they find their way into rivers. Turpine *et.al.* (2019) also note that the "Zambezi River, into which Malawi's rivers drain, is ranked 23rd in the world, carries some 476 000 tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste into the sea every year. While research and monitoring has focused on the oceans, inland lakes such as Lake Malawi are also being

seriously impacted" (11). Therefore, the Chewa's response to the contemporary challenges of plastic by constructing a mask, Mr Plastic, *Kwanga Nkupha*, described as "My Trade is to kill," is timely.

The gloomy and sunburnt face of the plastic mask *Kwanga Nkupha* in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is a therianthropic figure (half-human and half-animal) and it symbolises the negative implications of plastics. With this cultural awareness of the environmental challenges emanating from the use and disposal of plastics including those problems that arise after the disposal of plastics – carried in local expression *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill) – community participation in environmental conservation and natural resources management become unavoidably crucial. It is significant to note that "[p]lastics stay in the environment for a long time; some take up to 500 years to break down; this causes damage, harms biodiversity, and depletes the ecosystem services needed to support life" (Barra and Leonard 8). Although the message about plastics in the play emphasises on *Tiyeni tisamale m'makomo mwathu, titole mapulasitiki ponseponse, tipewe uve* (Let us keep our surroundings clean, let us pick up all plastics, let us avoid dirt), disposal of used plastics remains an unresolved problem in Malawi, especially in the major cities and towns. The different layers and colours covering the body of the plastic mask (Mr Plastic), *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill) and the accompanying performance to the tune of a song and drums are symbolic of the dangers of the plastic culture in Malawi:

Eh! Kwanga nkuphane-e,	My trade is to kill,
Eh! Kwanga nkuphane-e Pulasitiki!	My trade is to kill, I am Mr Plastic!
Eh! Kwanga nkuphane-e, nthaka!	My trade is to kill the soil!
Eh! Kwanga nkuphane-e, nyama!	My trade is to kill animals!
Eh! Kwanga nkuphane-e, anthu!	My trade is to kill humans!

The song suggests that Mr Plastic is specialised in killing, like the Angel of death, my specialty is to kill, emphasises the dangers of plastics to the environment. The recognition of the dangers of plastics in the context of cultural symbols, signs and codes through the mask, *Kwanga Nkupha* (My trade is to kill) and calling upon members of the community to regulate their use is constitutive of identifying a solution to this

environmental challenge. *Kwanga Nkupha* (Mr Plastic) performance uses cultural codes in calling upon people to change their behaviour towards the environment in order to avert catastrophe. In doing this, culture employs "an earth-centred" approach. Animal representations in *Gule Wamkulu* are in the form of structures from which we derive their meanings. Jane Turpie *et.al.* (2019) explain the dangers of plastics that:

> Plastic litter blocks drainage systems and leads to flooding as well as environmental pollution. Left in the environment, plastics break down into fragments and ultimately into microscopic particles. […]. Plastic debris washed into rivers, lakes, seas and oceans has entered every conceivable food chain […] (i).

Beause of the interconnectedness of ecological entities in food webs and food chains, plastics are a health hazard to living organisms, both human and nonhuman. In response to the modern environmental challenges, the *Gule Wamkulu* plastic mask creates awareness about the dangers of plastics in line with contemporary ecocriticism. Mr Plastic, *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill) presents the dangers of plastics when he says he kills *nthaka* (soil), *nyama* (animals, both wildlife and aquatic life) and *anthu* (humans). In "Plasticenta: First evidence of microplastics in human placenta," Ragusa *et.al*. (2021), explain with scientific evidence based on experiments that "several microplastic fragments were detected […] in human placenta samples collected from six consenting patients with uneventful pregnancies (3)" at Fatebenefratelli Hospital in Rome.[14]

Out of six samples collected, four placentas had microplastic fragments, and, "once present in the human body, microplastics may accumulate and exert localised toxicity by inducing and/or enhancing immune responses and, hence, potentially reducing the defence mechanisms against pathogens and altering the utilisation of energy stores" (Ragusa *et.al*. 15). This implies that with microplastics and dioxin in human bodies, pregnant "[w]omen are affected twice: in their own bodies, and – trans- or inter-corporeally – in their babies' bodies" (Iovino 46). The film's representation of the dangers on plastics in killing the soil, animals and humans (*kupha nthaka, nyama ndi anthu*) has scientific proof. In this connection, Morton (2012) argues that

[14] See *Environment International Volume 146*, January 2021, 106274. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/SO160412020322297. Accessed 11/01/2021.

"[r]elationships not only constitute beings as they relate 'between' one another: there are relationships all the way down, affecting the very core of entities. Beneath supposed disconnections between things, there is a deeper level at which things are intricately connected – nay entangled, which is a technical quantum-theoretical term. Entanglement implies a connection so deep as to be a kind of identity" (60). The ineluctable interconnectedness and interdependence of ecological entities entail that even small quantities of microplastics affect many terrestrial and aquatic organisms.

Thus, there are several ways through which plastics kill the soil, animals and people (*kupha nthaka, nyama ndi anthu*) as Mr Plastic exhibits. The role of animal masks like Mr Plastic is to demonstrate that "[t]he human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation" (Pope Francis 21). The dirty plastics covering the body of Mr Plastic are symbolic of poverty and low social standing that correlate negatively with suffering from the effects of environmental challenges in line with Nixon's (2011) postulation about "the environmentalism of the poor" (1). In addition to plastic pollution, chemical fertilisers, insecticides, pesticides, fungicides, bacteriacides and fumigants among other chemicals used in agriculture, have negative effects on both the encironment and and living organisms including humans.

Having analysed the environmental challenges of deforestation and pollution portrayed in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* and having mobilised and discussed relevant sources on the same, I now turn to the Chewa Kaphirintiwa creation myth from which the play largely utilises the human-animal interaction. The play re-enacts the Kaphirintiwa myth and this scene opens with the question: *Zinayamba bwanji*? (How did it begin?). In response to this question, the play chronicles that in the beginning, "God our Mother gathered the clouds in lightning and thunder. She poured down the rain and the earth was. God the Creator soaked the soil and sowed plenty of seeds and they germinated" (Play's Documentary). The God in the Chewa religious belief system does not have, in my view, the attributes of the Christian God although van Breugel (2001) and Ott (2000) draw parallels between the Chewa traditional religion and Christianity.

Ndau (2015) asserts that "the traditional practice of *Nyau* can be seen as a Christian practice" (4). Yet, *Nyau* is a ritualised dance of traditional religious significance that falls outside the Christian 'faith.' Wiredu (2003) argues that there is a "tendency of many African writers on African religions, proud of their African identity, to suggest that their peoples recognise the same God as the Christians, since God is one" (30). The Triune Christian God is inconceivable in indigenous ways of understanding the Supreme Being. Wiredu further says that "[b]ut since they themselves have been brought up to think that the Christian God is the one true God, it has been natural for them to believe that the God of their ancestors is, in fact, the same as the God of Christianity" (30) and this is an erroneaous conclusion. It was avowedly in the name of 'civilising' Christianity that Europeans stole natural resources from Africa and destroyed African philosophy, values, ethics, religion and folklore. Volkmann *et.al*. (2010) have asserted that "the environmental devastation brought about by colonial regimes has often continued or even intensified in postcolonial times and global ecological hazards often have particularly disastrous consequences for the most vulnerable parts of the world's population" (1). The poor and marginalised suffer the most the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

According to Ott (2000) "[a]ll the creation events are framed by a stylised forest, which recalls the original place of peace between God, man, animals, and nature. In the first creatures – animals, human beings, and plants – live together in harmony at the foot of Kaphirintiwa. The whole scene is arranged in two sets of polarities: God above and humankind below; male on left and female on the right" (288 – 289). This arrangement explains the *Chauta/Chiuta* (female/male God) in the Kaphirintiwa myth and the primordial harmony is symbolic of "*logoi* – the purposes or harmonies of creation" (Siewers 26). Among the Chewa, *Chauta* has different names all of which are important in *Gule Wamkulu* as a religio-cultural and political cult of animals.

After creating plants, the Kaphirintiwa creation myth continues, *Chauta* came down to the earth on the spider's thread/web. *Chauta* then made people and animals step on the soft rock on Kaphirintiwa Mountain where they left their footprints. In this primordial harmony, *Chauta*, people and animals lived peacefully together. The Chewa *Chauta* who comes down to the earth using a spider's web reveals the flimsy transport provided

by one of *Chauta's* creatures. At this point in the play, several animal masks appear and they perform to the song:

Nyamanyamaye-ee! Nyamanyamaye-ee!	Animals, animals!
Nyama mdondo!	Animals in the bush!
Namalengaye-ee! Namalengaye-ee!	God, the Creator, God, the Creator!
Wasangalala!	He is pleased!

The song uses the words *nyama* to mean animals and *mdondo* to refer to forest which overall means animals in the forest or bush. That said, however, *Mdondo* is also the name of an elongated animal mask which requires a *dambwe* of its own for its length, 5-6 metres, and hugeness, 2 metres high and 1 metre wide (Boucher 113). This theriomorphic animal mask "has two meanings: "the bush or men's territory" and also derives from *kundondozana,* meaning "to follow each other like a train" and it represents power and chieftaincy (Boucher 113). To the performance of the song above, three animal masks appear in this scene and these are *Chimbwala* (Dog) *Kalulu* (Hare) and *Mkango* (Lion) and they are theriomorphic figures (completely in the animal form). I will return to the analysis of these animal masks in the next section. A significant aspect in this part of the play is the jovial interaction of the animal masks and humans as they perform to the song and beats of drums. The reference to *Namalenga wasangala* (the Creator is pleased) in the song and the jovial performances of the animal masks entail primordial harmony between the physical and the divine environments. The representation of the human-animal interaction reflects the prelapsarian bliss as the animals perform in ecstasy of a religious solemnity of *Gule Wamkulu*. DeMello (2012) explains the roles of animals in "religious thought" saying, "[a]s symbols, animals help us to understand important religious concepts such as purity, sacrifice, morality, and creation. […animals] play important roles in the myths of cultures around the world" (301). The masked dancers, regardless of their economic status in society, are able to draw respect from the society while enjoying "the sublime aspects of life" in their symbolic realm as the spirits of the dead. Okpewho (1992) argues that "[t]he appeal and popularity of African masquerade theatre is supported by the sheer sense of spectacle inspired by the physical form of the masquerades and the feats they perform. Apart from being colourfully decked out and dressed, masquerades are often adorned with features that inspire terror as befitting the beings of the spirit world whom they

represent" (269). Interestingly, among the Chewa, the masquerades include mammals, reptiles, birds and trees (like the baobab tree mask) as the reincarnations of the spirits of the dead. The art that goes into the construction of these masks and how they perform to the beat of drums accompanied by songs reflect indigenous people's dramaturgy.

In *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, animals and animal masks are used as religious symbols that connect and disconnect humans with God. The invention of fire by humans disrupts the primordial harmony previously enjoyed by God, humans and animals in the Kaphirintiwa creation myth. With the fire, the human being makes tools (spears and arrows) and having set the bush ablaze, he goes hunting. Fire made the animals wild and they threaten the humans marking the beginning of enmity. The song in this section of the play is:

Zilombo, zilombo!	Beasts, beasts!
Ziopsa eniŵake-e!	They threaten their owners!

As the core of the Chewa religious belief, animal masks are venerated just like in zoolatry, and their anger in this scene of the play is dramatised by theriomorphic animals. As the fire rages on, demonstrated by the burning of grass placed in clay pots, the theriomorphic animal masks in the play go wild. *Zilombo ziopsa eniŵake* (Beasts that threaten their owners) signify the anger the animals display in the midst of the fire and dizzying smoke in the land. Previously, there was peace between humans and animals but the fire that burns the forest marks the beginning of animals threatening humans, *eniŵake* (entrusted as the custodians of animals). The animals that angrily perform here include *Chimbwala* (Dog), *Gandali* (Rhino), *Bokho* (Hippo) and *Njovu* (Elephant). Like the Greek creation myth in which Prometheus gives fire to humankind in order to thwart "all the best qualities [given] to the animals [by Epimetheus] – strength, swiftness, courage, cunning – until nothing good was left for man" (Sheila Harty 1999:5), the fire in the Kaphirintiwa myth is also a symbol that paradoxically, makes humans trustees of animals because through it they demonstrate power over the animals.

In the disharmony that ensued, *Chauta* went back to heaven by means of the spider's thread that symbolically disconnects humans from *Chauta*. The re-enactment of the Chewa Kaphirintiwa creation myth and the celebration of the Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment (*Laudato Si'*) reflect a common "confluence" that "Mother

Earth" is "our common home" (3). The seeds that germinate into plants when "God our Mother" pours rains in the Chewa Kaphirintiwa myth, and humans and animals leaving their footprints on the surface of the rock at Kaphirintiwa Mountain in Dzalanyama, reflect an entirely inclusive ecosystem. The indelible footprints on the Kaphirintiwa rock symbolise the sense and beauty of belonging, for both humans and animals. *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* represents the environmental challenges of deforestation, pollution premised on human control of nature that began with the invention of the fire and the making of agricultural and hunting tools. Although the play represents only mammals such as dog, hippo, rhino, lion and elephant among others being wild in the aftermath of the fire, there are many flying and crawling animals that suffer in the fire.

In the Kaphirintiwa myth, when animals are alienated from humans due to the fire, humans lose both *Chauta's* presence in their midst and the primordial friendship with wild animals. The myth employs biologically oriented indigenous knowledge that sees the rains *Chauta* sends as essential for the seeds to germinate and grow. The accidentally invented fire has many positive effects for development of human communities and environmental restoration. According to Windhager (2009), "[f]ire can open up space for plants to regenerate; return nutrients in dead plant tissue to the ground; and aid germination by triggering seed release, re-sprouting, and flowering. In some ecosystems, fire is essential to the maintenance of species composition, plant density, structure, and regeneration" (425). The fire provides for autopoiesis[15] through which there is renewal of life in the ecosystem.

The re-enactment of the Kaphirintiwa myth in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* demonstrates that when *Chauta* goes back to the sky after the fire by means of the spider's thread, the "Mother Earth" is rich in biodiversity. Etiologically, the myth also shows that the separation of domestic animals that remain with humans and wild animals that run away from humans is based on the choice the animals make according to their physiological needs. Slightly adapting the Kaphirintiwa myth contextualising it in drought, in *Nyama za M'nkhalango* (1965), Gwengwe illustrates why animals

[15]See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autopoiesis. This term "refers to a system capable of reproducing and maintaining itself by creating its own parts and eventually further components." Accessed on 07/01/2021; 16:39.

behave the way they do, why some animals have 'disabilities' and why some of them are wild, while others are domestic.

Centrally, however, Gwengwe uses animals as stand-ins for humans to demonstrate what happens in human society arguing that although herbivorous animals such as elephant, buffalo and hippopotamus get leadership positions in society for their conspicuousness, and carnivorous animals like lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, wild dogs and crocodile are politically dangerous for their shrewdness, *nzeru zenizeni zoyendetsera [zinthu] alibe* (they have no real wisdom to run things on course) (iv). Only the small animals and seemingly despicable, like hare and tortoise, have tangible solutions to societal problems because they are pragmatic. Animals as stand-ins for humans are, therefore, ineluctably linked to people's cosmology. People's intellectual prowess as well as intellectual sluggishness are measured in terms of animal behaviours and actions.

Among the Chewa, the sacredness of animals is symbolised by animal masks. Animals are culturally loaded to carry "roles in proper behaviour" and for providing "instructions" (Zubieta 2016) at different stages in the cycle of the rites of passage that emphasise an ecocentric ethic and altruism. The ritualised animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* dramatize in the context of the primordial harmony of the Kaphirintiwa myth and the cyclical view of the human existence among the Chewa in which the dead return in the animal form. This serves to illustrate Okpewho's (1992) postulation that "[i]n discussing African drama, it would be useful to draw a line between drama that is based in a ritual or religious environment or context and drama that has a broad popular appeal or setting" (261). *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is a ritual play that retells the primordial harmony and elegises the present state of the environment. The representation of the harmony between animals and humans before the invention of the fire and the disharmony thereafter in the Kaphirintiwa myth help to contextualise the functions of myth. These are "(a) to reconcile one to the mystery of the universe; (b) to render a cosmology for interpreting it; (c) to reinforce a moral order; and (d) to unveil the psyche" (Harty, 1999:1). The animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* are a means of reconciling humans with animals and the spirits of the ancestors. Forests with their different resources such as plants, animals and rivers constitut the core of life for indigenous peoples. Different kinds of mysterious spirits are believed to dwell in

forests, caves and trees and they play crucial roles in conserving forests. Because of the indigenous people's ecocentric values, forests remained intact, their autopoietic processes (self-renewal) undisturbed. It is worth noting that:

> If we look back over the total course of planetary development, we find that there was a consistent fluorescence of the life process in the larger arc of its development over some billions of years. There were innumerable catastrophic events in both the geological and biological realms, but none of these had the distinguishing characteristics or could cause such foreboding as Earth experiences at present" (Berry 10).

This passage refers to the advantages of recognising the role of indigenous ecological knowledge in environmental conservation and natural resources management. Disasters have happened in the past but the gravity of the present environmental challenges is overwhelming. The rate at which forests are disappearing to charcoal production in Malawi overwhelmingly surpasses the past geological and biological catastrophic events. The current state of the environment, sickened by global capitalism, knows no remedy. Unfortunately, due to economic pressures, indigenous values that protect the environments have become insipid, recent recognition notwithstanding.

5.3 Traditional masks, animals as cultural symbols, images and environmental consciousness in *Gule Wamkulu*

In this section, I confine my discussion to the symbolic meanings of animals and animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* as represented in the play, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*. The play's combination of the re-enactment of the Chewa Kaphirintiwa myth with the celebration of the *Encyclical Letter* by Pope Francis (2015) emphasises the religious aspect of *Gule Wamkulu*. Omonzejie (2013) argues that "African peoples believe that their lives are directly connected to and narrowly reliant on the flukes and fortunes of nonhuman forms (animal and vegetation). They believe that a shared sacredness connects animals and humans" (73). Since, animal masks are symbolic of the reincarnated spirits of the ancestors, animals are, among the Chewa, sacred. The Kaphirintiwa creation myth demonstrates the separation of both *Chaut*a and animals from humans. The dramatisation of death and the reincarnation of the spirits of the dead in animal masks constitute the mystery play in *Gule Wamkulu* performances. The masks in their animal forms play mediatory roles between the world of the dead and

the world of the living dead and thereby acting as reconciliation agents between humans and animals.

The presence of animal masks presupposes the presence of the spirits of the ancestors. Animal masks therefore, facilitate human-animal reconciliation and the harmony that existed before the fire episode. This also includes humans reconciling genealogically with their ancestors re-embodied as animals (*zilombo*). Van Bruegel writes, "*Nyau* are *zilombo* (wild animals) reincarnating the *mizimu* [the spirits] of the departed" (132). In this section, I select key animal masks represented in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* for the ecocritical analysis of the "cinematic representations of nature and of environmental issues" (Willoquet-Maricondi 2010:7). *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is the first play in Malawi to portray the challenge of environmental degradation in the context of the relations of culture (*Gule Wamkulu*) to nature. Exploring this play through the lens of ecocriticism which, according to Buell *et.al.* (2011), "converges with its sister disciplines in the humanities: environmental anthropology, environmental history, and environmental philosophy" (417), is worthwhile.

The first set of theriomorphic animal masks to which I now turn consists of *Chimbwala* (Dog), *Kalulu* (Hare) and *Mkango* (Lion) that appear in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* during the primordial harmony before the invention of the fire. Usually, in folklore, dog, hare and lion are not portrayed together as friends but in the play they are happy in their coexistence. After the fire episode in Kaphirintiwa myth, the dog remained with man. When man named all the animals, he forgot to name dog. All the animals laughed at dog for being forgotten to be named and in anger, the unnamed animal said, "What are you laughing at? Do you take me for your dog" (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 18) and that became his name, *galu*; a name with negative connotations.

In indigenous communities, attack dogs are used for both hunting and security and they attack on command. In the play, *Chimbwala* (Dog) performs affectively in the *bwalo* (dancing arena) and interacts with the men and women who sing, beat drums and clap their hands in the play. In *Gule Wamkulu* the dog animal mask carries different thematic concerns such as sexual taboos because a man who does not control his sexual appetite is symbolic of a dog. The dog also portrays the theme of patience for patiently guarding and protecting masters/mistresses properties. A person who fails to regulate his or her

anger is a dog. Drug addiction is a social problem and a drug addicted individual is a dog as well. Animals are important in what Gwengwe entitles his book *Kukula ndi Mwambo* (1965) as a representive view of the Chewa, which encapsulates growing up with both wisdom and traditional knowledge. Animals play important roles in bringing up children with *mwambo,* for example, *anthu ophedwa ndi zilombo* (people killed by animals) (Gwengwe 94) means misfortune. People's fortunes and misfortunes are explained by their encouters with animals. It is a fortune if a person dreams about collecting flying insects (*inswa*), fishing or *kuwonjola chinziri pa msampha* (removing a buttonquail from a trap) but it is misfortune if one dreams about being chased by a lion (*ibid.* 97).

Dogs have different symbolic meanings among the Chewa. According to Boucher, "[t]he image of a dog (*galu*) is very derogatory in Chewa society" (156). This is in spite of the dog being the first animal to choose to remain with the human being for protection after the fire episode in Kaphirintiwa myth (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 1985). Dependence on the human being and the myth surrounding its naming have, perhaps, earned the dog its negative image. Despite the important security and hunting services that the dog provides, it remains a symbol of lack of appreciation in humans; *galu wosayamika* (a dog does not appreciate).

Despite the Chewa's use of dogs in hunting and in guarding their homes, their relationships with dogs remain oxymoronic, love/hate. The restlessness of *Chimbwala* (Dog) as the animal mask performs in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* reflects the negative attitudes, mostly associated with "evil," that the Chewa have towards the dog. Besides *Chimbwala* (Dog), another animal structure that depicts the madness of a dog among the Chewa is *Galu wapenga*, (the dog is mad). This animal mask "portrays a husband who has to keep sexual taboos because a child is sick or his wife has recently had a baby. He has been deprived of sex for a long time and cannot bear it any longer" (Boucher 156). The dog, therefore, is a symbol of impatience in *Gule Wamkulu* though ambivalently, the dog is also a symbol of fidelity in folklore.

However, it is worth noting that "*Nyau* emphasises social reversal by the constant use of obscene language in which most of the things are expressed in terms of male and female organs, and by the performance of acts which go against normal behaviour and would provoke sharp reactions in ordinary circumstances" (van Bruegel 154). Since

humans share similar "male and female organs" with animals (mammals) and that such "organs" have similar physiological functions, *Gule Wamkulu* utilises them to teach human moral values. Human-animal relationships are not fixed and their symbolic significations are dependent on context. As for dogs, Sherman (2008) observes that "they were among the first domesticated animals and are descendants of a more mysterious canine, the wolf. This duality may explain the mixed folklore and myths that exist about dogs. They are variously presented as friends to humans, supernatural entities, or even dark, menacing creatures" (118). In Malawi, for example, the expression *galu wakuda* (black dog) means hunger/famine or something is ominous. Accordingly, Bekoff (2010) observes that:

> Our relationships with nonhuman animals are complicated, frustrating, ambiguous,
> paradoxical, and range all over the place. The growing field of anthrozoology […] is concerned with reaching a more complete understanding of how and why we interact with animals in the many different ways that we do (xxx – xxxi).

Folklore is replete with the various ways through which humans and animals interact like the prey/predator and other symbiotic interrelationships. Because by means of human interactions with animals people find meaningful interpretations of life through animal stories, sentient and non-sentient beings become rich sources of ecological wisdom. The Kaphirintiwa myth makes *Chauta* appear on earth via the spider's thread and disappear from the earth by means of the same spider and thus, human identity is tied to animals. Sax (2001) notes that "[t]he spider symbolises archaic mother-goddesses, the weavers of fate" (238). Animals have symbolic and instrumental values through which humans understand natural phenomena. The representation of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* in interacting with humans in order to celebrate the primordial harmony against the backdrop of the contemporary challenges of environmental degradation shows that "[c]ulture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment" (Pope Francis 64). The knowledge and values shared by a society do not merely consist of those inherited from the ancestors, but they also include those a society generates and practices depending on society's adaptability.

The flexibility of *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha,* is reflected in employing animal masks for environmental activism. Because animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* are "performance specific and develop through cultural understanding" (Korpela 40), their flexibility entails that culture can adapt to the changing environmental conditions. Sutton and Anderson (2010) have observed that "the primary mechanism by which humans adapt to their environment is culture, probably 'the most potent method of adaptation' available to humans. […]. In traditional societies, the cultural system one is born into tends to be more influenced by the natural environment" (97). The Chewa ontological and metaphysical being and knowledge are inseparably interrelated with animals and it is through cultural specific animal performances that they draw from the physical environment to show cultural adaptability to the changing environmental conditions.

Another animal that performs in the play is Hare, a popular trickster in Malawian folklore. The characters of hares and rabbits are not easily distinguishable. People refer to them interchangeably. *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, *Kalulu* (Hare or Rabbit) performs to the beat of the drums and tune of the song in a manner that demonstrates his role as a trickster in Malawian folklore who dupes many animals. The theriomorphic structure of *Kalulu* is covered with sisal or leaves of cobs of maize coloured in brown and white, lifting his head up and ears raised. Kalulu is symbolic of the roles of powers and powers of the chief, unity and harmony, guardianship of *mwambo* (appropriate conduct and living well with the community's set values and wisdom), promptness (Boucher 101). These attributes of *Kalulu* regulate human conduct and actions and thus, humans would more than willing to protect animals that inform their behaviours.

According to Boucher (2012), "[t]he hare symbolises the ability of the Chewa chief to listen *(akumva*) to the voice of the ancestors and to the complaints of his people" and "the long erect ears of the structure" (101), reflects the chief's eagerness to listen and serve the community and to work shrewdly. The Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu* utilise the cleverness of the hare in folklore to confer the hare's attributes to a good chief. Sax explains that, "[a]ll across Africa, the hare is an important trickster figure, and he often matches his cleverness against the size and strength of a hyena or a lion" (138). With the attributes of *Kalulu,* the age of the chief does not matter insofar as he can cleverly handle people in his community of the "hyena" and "lion" calibres. In *Animals and*

Ancestors (2000b), Morris explains that *Kalulu* (*the scrub hare*) "is an important figure in *nyau* performances, invariably opening the ceremony" (144). The animal structures reflect indigenous art's interest in drawing from the environment in order to generate ethical values.

Buell *et.al*. (2011) summarise "six specific centres of interest" in ecocriticism. The last two are "(*e*) ecocriticism's evolving interest in indigenous art and thought, and (*f*) ecocriticism's no less keen and complex attentiveness to artistic representation and the ethics of relations between humans and animals" (417). `The artistically constructed animal structures in *Gule Wamkulu* and the complex human-animal relations reflect these two interests in ecocriticism. The *Kalulu* animal structure in *Gule Wamkulu* symbolises the qualities of a leader whose cunning helps him ably manage social, cultural, political, economic and environmental challenges in his community. Besides symbolic meanings, animals in *Gule Wamkulu* have instrumental implications involving taboos to be avoided and acceptable practices to be praised.

Besides the attributes of *Kalulu* in *Gule Wamkulu*, *Kalulu* is also the hero of Malawian folklore represented as a trickster and cunning, the qualities that people admire. Ezra Chadza's book, *Kokha Mcheperawakalulu* (1986), and the protagonist's courageous acts in interacting with animals testify to the high esteem in which *Kalulu* is held. The title of the book draws from the proverb *Mchepera wa kalulu, mtima unga Phiri* (The hare is small, but his heart is as big as a mountain) (Chakanza 190). Malawians, therefore, compare the hare with great-minded people. The metaphor of "thinking like a mountain" that emulates hare's cleverness in finding solutions to problems energises people's indigenous ecological knowledge.

The lion is recognised as the king of beasts or king of the jungle. It is a carnivorous mammal with different symbolic meanings among Malawians. *Mkango* (Lion) has also mixed interpretations among the Chewa with such themes as guardianship of the *mwambo*, roles and powers of the chief, royalty and fertility (Boucher 2012). Malawians described Kamuzu Banda as *Mkango wa Malawi* (The Lion of Malawi) and the following song was sung in his praie:

A Kamuzu ndi mkango eee!	Kamuzu is a lion!
Ndi Mkango!	He is a lion!

This association of lion with Kamuzu Banda was linked to his oppressive rule and despotism and created an imagery of Malawi as a jungle dominated by one man. Kamuzu Banda's attracting of attention as a lion including Malawians treating him as a lion is due to the reverence accorded to lion in folklore and how humans identify themselves with animals. *Mkango* (Lion) in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is represented as a big theriomorphic structure about two metres long artistically constructed from grass and sisal fibres with an elongated nose, bright eyes and open mouth revealing its dangerous teeth. Generally, the lion is commonly associated with power and chieftaincy besides symbolising brutal strength. In *Gule Wamkulu, Mkango* (Lion) theriomorphic structure also represents "bad spirits" (*chiwanda*) (Morris, 2000b:145) as well as symbolising the "terrible power of *mizimu* [spirits]" (van Bruegel, 159). With rapid deforestation and the subsequent disappearance of animals, animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* remain a significant point of reference to the real animals in what Buell *et.al.* (2011) refer to as "pre-modern peoples as offering alternative or supplementary recourses for reimagining Earth's environmental future. […indigeneity offer] insights into the challenges of sustaining or restoring eco-cultural identity" (429) and "*Nyau* – the heart of Chewa identity" (van Bruegel 126) provides a significant entry into a worthwhile ecocritical interpretation. In terms of symbolising fertility, the lion is the father of the pride and is therefore, connected with a large progeny. Among the Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu,* the lion is responsible for *kupisira anamwali* (ritual sexuality that ends a chief's sexual abstinence)" (Boucher 116). Animals, therefore, play important roles in the cycles of human lives.

After the fire episode of Kaphirintiwa myth represented in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, several animal masks perform in anger and these are *Gandali* (Rhino), *Bokho* (Hippo) and *Njovu* (Elephant). The play works upon the emotions and feelings of the animals in the fire episode that destroys their habitats and this informs how "[b]odies, human and nonhuman, are perhaps the most salient sites at which affect and ecocriticism come together" (Bladow and Ladino (2). Elephants and rhinoceroses are important megafauna that are endangered.

African rhinoceroses are important animals that are on the verge of extinction. Their representation as animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* enlivens people's memories of their

structures and configurations. James (1991) explains that "[b]lack rhinoceroses numbered about 65,000 in Africa twenty-five years ago; unfortunately, senseless exploitation of these maginificent animals has reduced the number to about 4,000" (11). Globalisation is key in aggravating illegal wildlife trade and the reduction in the number of rhinos. Trump (2017) notes that "[t]he high demand for wildlife products like ivory and rhino horn is booming in various Asian countries and is the driving force behind poaching in Africa. […]. Demand for rhino horn is particularly high in Vietnam and China. Historically, it has been touted in *traditional medicine* as a fever reducer and antispasmodic" (15, emphasis in the original). The therapeutic roles of animals cannot be overemphasised and various animals have been and they are still being used as medicines. In the play under discussion, *Gandali* (Rhino) is a therianthropic animal structure of a red-faced mask with a baldhead to reflect old age.

The introduction of this animal mask in the play is to represent the voice of the generation of old people in the community about the challenges of environmental degradation. Boucher's description of *Gandali* is that he is "depicted as a senior man, a chief, signified by a white spot at the centre of his baldhead. The middle of that spot is topped with a black protrusion like a mushroom: it represents a penis without strength" (156). The symbolic representation of *Gandali* (Rhino/*Chipembere*) is that in occasions like funerals married couples should strictly observe sexual taboos; neither a husband nor a wife should force a spouse into it. According to van Bruegel, "*Gandali* represent[s] the *mizimu* of wise men, former councillors of a chief. The animal has a white spot on top of its head which symbolises the baldness of an old man" (160). According to Sax, the rhino is "one of the most important cult animals in the world" (208), and its horns are a symbol of "invincibility" (209), that is, it cannot be subdued. The Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu* draws from these symbols of the rhino and load them with sexual innuendos because *Nyau* is an institution that is hardly separable from obscene language.

The hippopotamus[16] is a herbivorous animal known for its massive thick skin. It is a significant animal in folklore and its thick and heavy body is a lesson for humans to

[16] This animal is probably the one described in the Bible at *Job* 40:15-24: "Look at the Behemoth, which I made just as I made you; it eats grass like an ox. Its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly. It makes its tail thick like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are knit together. Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like bars of iron. It is the first of the great acts of God – only its Maker can approach it with the sword. For the mountains yield food for it where all the wild animals play…"

learn from. In the play, the *Bokho* (Hippo) that makes its performance is a therianthropic animal structure that takes the form of a hippopotamus only in its head. *Nyau* employs animals or parts of animals in various symbolic significations. The presence of the hippopotamus from the river or lake into the human community symbolises a stranger among humans. This stranger with a stiff tail disproportionate to his/her body symbolises, among the Chewa, promiscuity (Boucher 177 – 178) in either a man or a woman whose male/female organs the tail represents. The *Bokho* depicted in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* performs with a lot of energy and affectation in the direction of the women. There are different versions of *Bokho* (hippo) in *Gule Wamkulu* but generally, according to Boucher (2012):

> The Chewa portray hippo's behaviour as promiscuous. They argue that the bull shows preference for the female young, as the mother shows the same towards the male offspring. They reckon that the bull kills the male young or chases them out of the herd because of jealousy. This is the reason why the hippo is described as […] an incestuous father. In Chewa life, incest is perceived as a severe breach to the moral code. It is identified with witchcraft because it is conceived as an attempt to acquire hidden powers (213)

The attitudes that people have towards real animals, have significant bearings in the representations of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* and they draw parallels with human life. The father hippo's sexual "preference for the female young" and the mother hippo's sexual advances "towards the male offspring" as observed in *Nyau* is the reversal of Sigmund Freud's "infantile sexuality" and "Oedipus complex" where the male and female children express their "libido" towards the mother and father, respectively. Interestingly, this view about the hippo's behaviour in *Gule Wamkulu* agrees with what "wildlife specialists say" (Boucher 213) and it is here explored in eco-cultural literature and indigenous ecophilosophy of *Nyau* where animals are spiritualised as carriers of moral values.

For Morris (2000b), "God and spirits of the dead (*mizimu*), for the Chewa, are distinct beings. But *Chiuta* seems hardly to play a role at the *nyau* rituals – focused as these are on animals, sexuality and human fertility" (155). The representation of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* carries the instrumental value of instructing humans in various societal norms

but the emphasis on "sexuality and human fertility" based on animals could also be demeaning the animals. The human-animal relationships demonstrated among the Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu* are therefore, not without ambiguities. The *Gule Wamkulu* focus on the external features such as protrusions, colours, tails, ears, teeth and horns, among others, of the animals in their symbolic representations reflect how human-animal relationships are tinged with complexities. Van Breugel (2001) observes that "[a]ll the animal structures represent wild animals (*nyama za ku tchire*). […]. They are the symbolic representation of something powerful and frightening. […] these animal structures represent powerful spirits [as well]" (156 – 157). Through the traditional animal masks the Chewa believe in the immortality of the soul since the dead still exist in the form of masks as spirits and their closeness to graveyards, rivers and streams reveals their environmental consciousness not only by revering animals but also by their association with forests and water.

While the hippopotamus described in the previous paragraphs, has small ears, the elephant has enormous flapping ears and ivory tusks and it is the largest land animal. Elephants are an endangered species because many of them are killed for their ivory. Trump (2017) observes that "[t]he great demand for 'white gold' has its price, especially in China: Over the last years, more African elephants have died than were born; the population is in rapid decline. Between 2007 and 2015, around 110,000 animals disappeared – which represents a good 20% of the estimated Africa-wide population of 395,000-570,000 elephants" (5). What this implies for indigenous lore is the death of oral discourses about such animals because there will be no point of reference to real animals. *Njovu* (Elephant) is a theriomorphic animal structure that participates in the performances in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha,* especially after the fire episode in the Kaphirintiwa myth.

Among the Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu*, animal masks represent the spirits of the ancestors re-embodied in animal forms. Thus, animal masks constitute a pantheon of the spirits of the ancestors hierarchically organised from the greatest to the lowest. The *Njovu* mask depicted in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is of medium size covered in black with two white tusks, a long trunk and it performs in a dignified manner deserving its status among the spirits. According to Morris (2000b), *Njovu* "is the senior and most important theriomorphic structure and its appearance marks the climax of the *nyau*" (145). The appearance of *Njovu* in the play after the fire episode in the Kaphirintiwa

myth testifies to Morris' observation. Van Bruegel explains that, "*Njovu* represent[s] the *mizimu* [spirits] of important chiefs [and it] is considered the king of the animals because of its massiveness" (157). With the reverence given to the *Njovu* (Elephant) in *Gule Wamkulu*, this animal has a lot of symbolism.

According to Boucher (2012) the "elephant's trunk symbolises the male organ and the power of fostering life as father and chief. […] two tusks protrude forward […] symbolise the male organ and the two lips of the vagina" (124) and the whole animal is a symbol of power and fertility. The representation of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* in one way or another also abuses the welfare and rights of the animals despite the moral overtones of the *Nyau* institution. As Buell *et.al*. (2011) observe, "the relationship between people and animals is sometimes juxtaposed with or metaphorically superimposed on social relations between unequal social groups, at the service of both progressive and reactionary political thought, and advocacy of animal rights is sometimes at odds with environmental thought in spite of considerable overlap" (430 – 431). In indigenous perspectives of the unitary view of the cosmos in which humans and animals are integral parts in the people's cosmovision, animal rights are implied because human trusteeship of animals/nature entails responsibility. In *Gule Wamkulu*, the Chewa jealously guard and protect animal masks at the *dambwe* and during their performances and this entails that animals have rights to protection just as they have rights to find shelter and food. Animals also have rights to life.

The exploitation of animals in order to construct a religio-political and cultural identity culminate in constructing a cult of animals. Re-embodying the spirits of the dead through animal masks (*zilombo*) entails that humans recognise themselves as wild animals as well and thereby belonging to the same ontological level. Furthermore, the Chewa are also hunters who consider the animals they hunt as dangerous and demanding thorough preparations by means of observing taboos and having right medicines before they embark on hunting. It is worth noting that "Hunter-gatherers tend to see animals as rational, intelligent creatures just like themselves, with the same spiritual importance as humans" (DeMello 67). This is a significant perspective where the Chewa *Gule Wamkulu* institution achieves highly. Many animals find their representations in traditional masks. Morris (2000b) cites the following theriomorphic structures among others:

> *Chigalu* (large dog), *chilembwe* (roan antelope), *chimbwe* or *fisi* (spotted hyena), *gwape* (grey duiker), *kasenye* (Sharpe's grysbok), *mbawala* (bushbuck), *mphalapala* (sable), *ntchefu* (eland), *ngoma* (kudu), *ng'ombe* (cattle), *nguluwe* (bush pig), *njati* (buffalo), *nkhandwe* (jackal), *tsanchima* (blue monkey), *songo* (the black mamba), *nsato* (the python), *kakowa* (egret), *nang'omba* (ground hornbill), *ng'ongwe* (saddle bill stork) (148).

The richness in the mental lexicon of the names of different kinds of animals bears testimony to the Chewa's environmental embeddedness. The Chewa via animal masks identify themselves with these and many other different species of animals in ways similar to transpersonal ecology's identification. Eckersley explains that "transpersonal ecology proceeds by way of a cosmological and psychological route and is concerned to address the way in which we understand and experience the world. The primary concern of transpersonal ecology is the cultivation of a wider sense of self through the common or everyday psychological process of *identification* with others" (61). For Fox (1990), "[i]dentification should be taken to mean what we ordinarily understand by that term, that *is*, the experience not simply of a sense of *similarity* with an entity but of a sense of *commonality*" (81, original italics). The human-animal relationships represented in *Gule Wamkulu* animal masks reflect Fox's view of "similarity" and "commonality" and thereby creating a sense of human/animal solidarity, though not without ambiguities.

5.4 *Kasiyamaliro* (Antelope) and the message from *Tonkhwetonkhwe* (Chameleon): Religio-cultural significance of animals in *Gule Wamkulu*

Animals are venerated, as in zoolatry, among the Chewa traditional religion because they play important roles as intermediaries between humans and *Chauta*. As "the heart of Chewa identity" (van Breugel 126), *Gule Wamkulu* "has a specific religious significance, namely it is the symbolic representation of the invisible spirit world" (*ibid.* 147). When *Chauta* goes to the sky through the spider's web/thread after the fire episode in Kaphirintiwa creation myth, chameleon brings the message of life to the people from *Chauta*, but it is already too late because the blue lizard has already brought the message of death to the people (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 1985:23-4). Thus, people have mixed attitudes toward chameleon and blue lizard in explaining life and death.

However, the Chewa's interest in interacting with animal masks as the spirits of the dead entails their interest in the quest for rebirth. The play then concludes with songs calling upon Malawians to be actively involved in planting trees and avoid wantonly cutting down the remaining trees in our forests so that the environment regains its previous glory. Several animal masks perform such as *Matako alingana* (the buttocks are the same, Baboon), *Chilembwe* (Roan Antelope), *Kamba* (Tortoise), *Tonkhwetonkhwe* (Chameleon) and *Kasiyamaliro* (The Great Mother of all Mankind) among others.

In this section, as I analyse the symbolic representation of these animal masks and the messages in the songs to which they perform in the play, I intend to concentrate on *Kasiyamaliro* and *Tonkhwetonkhwe* because these two animal masks are associated with motherly care and hope as constant reminders of the Chewa's closeness to nature. Boucher (2012) explains that *Kasiyamaliro* is "one of the oldest and arguably the single most significant of all *Gule* manifestations, is a mother figure, a symbol of the womb" (37). This animal mask plays a central role in the Chewa conceptualisation of the cyclical nature of human existence. *Tonkhwetonkhwe*, on the other hand, is considered not only as the ancestor of both humans and animals, but also as a bringer of the good tidings of life and a message of hope.

The Chewa venerate *Kasiyamaliro* as the symbolic Mother spirit of the invisible world. It is also worth noting that when the Kaphirintiwa myth explains the origin of death after the fire and *Chiuta* ascends into the sky on spider's thread, chameleon is the messenger of life while lizard is the messenger of death. Ott (2000) observes that "[i]n many African myths, including one ancient variant from Malawi, the chameleon is considered to be the original ancestor of humankind" (305). This significant role of chameleon as the progenitor of humankind illustrates why *Tonkhwetonkhwe*, the Chameleon carries the final message from *Chauta* about environmental restoration in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*. I propose to briefly analyse the animal masks of *Matako alingana* (the buttocks are the same, Baboon), *Chilembwe* (Roan Antelope), *Kamba* (Tortoise) for their symbolism and instrumental value in *Gule Wamkulu* before embarking on a lengthy discussion of *Tonkhwetonkhwe* (Chameleon) and *Kasiyamaliro* (The Great Mother of all Mankind).

Matako alingana (Baboon) is a theriomorphic animal figure of a baboon with dark face, hairy head and its body covered in sisal smeared with dark grey mud. The performance of the *Matako alingana* structure involves quick and energetic movements enabling him to cover a lot of ground of the dancing arena while behaving like a baboon in every way. Symbolically, the masks' name, *Matako alingana* (the buttocks are the same), implies that women are different only in "their characters, talents, and the qualities that make up their personalities" (Boucher 171), but their anatomic and physiological functions are the same, likewise, men. Therefore, it is immoral to eye for and grab someone's wife/husband because "the buttocks are the same" (*matako alingana*). Used with a touch of euphemism, *matako alingana* means female genitalia is the same in configuration and constitution. In this sense, therefore, the proverb *Chigololo ndi mwini thako* (literally, a sexual activity is only possible if the owner of the buttocks gives consent) and this is the woman and in which case *kuperekera thako* or *kumupatsa thako* (to give one's buttocks, is a woman's acceptance to make love) with a man.

Matako alingana (Baboon) mask is a fitting symbolic representation of being satisfied with one's wife because folklore attributes to the baboon immoral behaviour that should discontinue for the proper health of the community. *Matako alingana* dramatizes that women are the same or similar in their physiological configurations and therefore, there is no need for a man to go about "tasting" different women. Finnegan (2012) observes the "existence and supposed nature of drama [in] mimetic dances, or masquerades in Africa" (485) in which the masqueraders "make themselves up to resemble the animals represented by using paint, or the skins or horns of animals" (488). Every animal mask that resembles a particular animal carries the moral embodied in that animal. The song about *Matako alingana* also points to the importance of self-restraint in matters of sexuality:

Kuona akazi, anzanga,	When you look at women my friend,
Matako alingana pasiyana n'pa moto,	The buttocks are similar but their performance on the fire differs,
Matako alingana!	The buttocks are similar!
Matako alingana!	The buttocks are similar!

(Boucher 172)

The expression *Kuona akazi, anzanga matako alingana pasiyana n'pa moto*, that women are the same but their performance on the fire differs, could also be interpreted to mean that women perform differently not only in the way they cook their food but also to mean that they perform differently in bed (*pasyana n'pa moto*) despite sharing other similarities as women. The lexicon every animal mask carries is linked to the moral attached to it. Another animal mask is *Chilembwe* (Roan Antelope), a theriomorphic animal structure "that resembles the shape of an antelope. The details of the roan are missing owing to the rarity of this species today" (Boucher 2012:142). The dance of *Chilembwe* (Roan Antelope) in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha,* like that of *Njovu* (Elephant) is dignified, but for its fertility symbolic significance, the animal insists on remaining in touch with the women in the dancing arena. The performances of the different animal masks in the play point to one central concern for the Chewa and the *Gule Wamkulu* myth, that of "fertility" they pray for from the spirits of the dead re-embodied as animals. Weisser (2001) argues that "[o]ur identities are always already ecological; we are who we are as a result of people, places, things, animals, and plants that have touched our lives. It is only for us to realise these connections and incorporate them into our discourse" (93). The bulk of indigenous discourse is replete with ecological overtones as folklore testifies.

In the face of the current environmental degradation, the *Gule Wamkulu* prayer for fertility is needed more than ever before in order to resuscitate the environment. Ott (2000) observes that "it is from the *mizimu* in their intercessory role, that the Chewa expect fertility for humans and animals" (181). The belief in the spirits of the dead as intercessors between the living and *Chiuta* is crucial in the *Nyau* traditional religion where the question of fertility reigns high.

Kamba (Tortoise) or *Mkulemetsa* (to be tired from carrying something heavy with reference to tortoise' shell; Boucher 160), is a significant animal in Malawian folklore. The tortoise's carrying of its shell means life is burden that every individual bears like the Yawo proverb *Likoswe lyangapela kuwuta mapwisi gwakwe* (A rat is never tired of pulling the pouch that contains its own testes). Thus, from animals, humans learn to accept responsibilities and responsible behaviours. For *Gule Wamkulu*, the *Kamba* (Tortoise) animal mask is a model for expressing sexual symbolic meanings, which in

my view, abuses the animals rather than assuming the roles of the ancestors as spirits reincarnate in animal masks. Boucher (2012) explains the symbolic significance of traditional mask, *Kamba* (Tortoise):

> The head and neck of the tortoise are obvious sexual symbols. […]. The shell symbolises the testicles […] if the tortoise does not manage to show the head then this husband cannot be called a man and he cannot beget children. […] the withdrawal of the neck of the tortoise teaches sexual abstinence on the occasion of death and other transition rites […]. Chewa tales inevitably stress the wisdom of the tortoise. The *Nyau* members reinforce that such wisdom comes from the ancestors (161).

The Chewa people's keen interest in animals and their experiences about animals make them not only construct animal masks for display, but they also attach symbolic meanings to the animals. The Chewa people's environmental consciousness is therefore, seamlessly connected with animals from which they generate indigenous ecological wisdom. Their understanding of human existence from the world of the unborn, the world of the living and the world of the dead, is interpreted in terms of their closeness to animals and therefore, symbolic of both the physical environment and the spiritual environment.

While these animal masks, *Matako alingana*, *Chilembwe*, *Kamba* or *Mkulemetsa* and others are dancing in the *bwalo* (arena), the song that carries the key message in this scene of the play is:

Chauta akunena kuti (x 2),	God says,
Tibzale mitengo,	Let's plant trees,
Tilimbitse nthaka,	To conserve the land,
Mvula izibwera!	And bring about rains!

The message in the song comes from *Chauta* but relayed to the humans by *Tonkhwetonkhwe* (Chameleon), "so says the Chameleon." The chameleon is a revered animal in Malawian myth not only as progenitor of humans and animals as in "Horned Chameleon and the Origin of Life (Chewa)" (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 1985), but also as the messenger of life. After the fire in Kaphirintiwa myth "chameleon escaped by climbing to the top of a tree. […] called God to follow him, but *Chiuta* answered that he was too old to climb" (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 19). Animal and human lives are

recycled but the chameleon's role is that of bringing the message of life to humans contrary to lizard who brings the message of death from *Chiuta*. *Chauta akunena kuti tibzale mitengo, tilimbitse nthaka, mvula izibwera* (*Chauta* says let's plant trees to conserve the land and bring about rains) reflects the play's environmental activism with the message from the chameleon. This also demonstrates, how in the people's view, the chameleon has the welfare of the people at heart.

Tonkhwetonkhwe (Chameleon) brings from *Chiuta* to the people the message of life, *Chauta* says, "Plant trees, in our land in order to conserve the land and bring about rains." The message about planting trees that comes from *Chauta* through the Chameleon puts a religious dimension to environmental conservation in the play. Houghton (2004) supports the integration of scientific and religious approaches to environmental conservation, because, "[a] religious person would want to be more specific and say that we are stewards on behalf of God. The religious person would also argue that to associate the relationship of humans to God with the relationship of humans to the environment is to place the latter relationship in a wider, more integrated, context – providing additional insights and a more complete basis for environmental stewardship" (208). The message of life that was upset by lizard's message of death in Kaphirintiwa myth, finds its signification in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* where humans accept environmental trusteeship.

Chauta akunena kuti tibzale mitengo (*Chauta* says we should plant trees), is the message of environmental activism that Chameleon communicates from *Chauta* to the people as trustees of the environment. As an indigenous theatre, the virtuosity with which animals are represented in the play being probed concurs with Marchiorlatti's (2010) observation that "indigenous cinema is, at its roots, an activist endeavour that looks to the past in order to make visible the enduring effects of colonisation, to reclaim annihilated ways of being, and to envision an affirmative future for contemporary [indigenous] peoples" (65). The play under discussion makes a power statement about environmental activism through recourse to indigenous myth.

The chameleon as the progenitor of humankind (Schoffeleers and Roscoe 1985), carries the message that encourages people to plant trees *kuti tilimbitse nthaka* (so that we conserve the soil) and *mvula izibwera* (rains should come). This is a powerful message especially considering the mediatory roles of animals between humans and the divine

world. Despite the positive view of the chameleon in most Malawian myths, Morris (2000b) observes:

> Yet the overwhelming connotations of the chameleon in Malawi is a negative one, and it is the focus of numerous folk beliefs. […]. Throughout Malawi, chameleons are held in fear and awe, […]. Indeed, chameleons seem to be more feared than snakes and the fact that the chameleon is able to inflate its body and hiss quite loudly adds to its fierce reputation (180).

In *Gule Wamkulu*, however, Chameleon is accorded high respect not only because of his message of life, but also because in the Kaphirintiwa myth, it was chameleon who first attempted to rescue God from the fire before spider's intervention. The representation of *Tonkhwetonkhwe* (Chameleon) in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* carrying the message of life from *Chiuta* about the roles of humans in replenishing the land with trees re-establishes chameleon as the bringer of good tidings about life previously frustrated by lizard when he brought the message of death. In *Gule Wamkulu* the Chameleon is held with admiration as the bringer of good tidings.

In the closing scenes of the play, God comes down through the spider's thread in order to restore the lost harmony on earth. *Kangaude* (Spider) lands in the dancing arena to demonstrate the coming of *Chauta*. The play then leads the audience into witnessing a parliamentary caucus where:

> The people and Government of Malawi make a pledge to conserve the environment and make it a better place for all who share this country of ours. We the people, and you the Government, let us work together to restore the environment. Let us work together for our wildlife is threatened, has nowhere to live. Our forests have vanished.

This is the core message in the play and it seems to be in agreement with the last objective (d) of Government of Malawi's *National Environmental Policy* (2004), "to promote cooperation between Government, local communities, and women groups, non-governmental organisations and the private sector in the management and sustainable utilisation of the natural resources and the environment" (iii). The film's message in the closing episode, *Ifeyo, inuyo a boma tigwilire ntchito limodzi, kuteteza chilengedwe* (We, and you in the government, let's work together to preserve the

environment) attests to the people's recognition of this objective. Marchiorlatti (2010) notes that "[w]hen humans gain an awareness of our disconnection from self, from each other, and from the environments that sustain us, we may begin to experience a phase of remembering and recuperation" (64). In its agendum of environmental recovery, the film, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, brings the audience to celebrate a rich array of the harmonious past, to mourn for the contemporary environmental degradation and to hinge the audience's hopes for the future on behavioural change. In this connection, Cohen (2004) argues that "[e]cocriticism focuses on literary and artistic expression of human experience primarily in a naturally and consequentially in a culturally shaped world: the joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hopes for harmonious existence, and fears of loss and disaster" (10). By adapting animals from the natural world to the use in human life, and by applying knowledge and power of animals to practical purposes, *Gule Wamkulu* is a great art.

The message in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is clear in calling upon Government and local communities to work together to restore the environment. Mulwafu (2011) observes that "[t]oday, the issue of sustainable natural resource management has become central in environmental discourses in Malawi, to the extent that it has produced a certain measure of environmentalism" (215). However, as I have highlighted before, corruption, although this is due to government's failure to provide alternative sources of empowering the people economically, continues to warp whatever efforts put in place concerning environmental and natural resource management in Malawi. The people have no alternative and renewable sources of energy and the government is numb to what the people are going through. The final scene in the play closes with the cryptic language of *Nyau* in a song:

Kamtsinje dede-ee!	A small river, as it flows despicably!
Kang'onong'ono,	Very, very small,
Kamtsinje dede-ee!	A small river, as it flows despicably!
Katulutsa nyama!	It has produced an animal!

This song is understood in terms of its meaning rendered in the film as "the small stream has generated a huge river; a mother has given birth to a genius, the saviour of tomorrow." *Kamtsinje kang'onong'ono katulutsa nyama* (a small stream has produced an animal) infers the rebirth archetype. What the song cryptically entails is that the

animal masks (*Nyau* or *zilombo*) are fished out from the river that is symbolic of a grave yard. A small grave yard has the potential of producing a huge animal like an elephant or *Nyama mdondo*. What this means is that as humans we should not belittle ourselves in terms of combatting the environmental challenges we are facing. One of the key messages in the play is that since environmental degradation is human-induced, it is humans who are responsible for the environment to regenerate. The film provides for the possibility of autopoiesis. Then with the song that concludes the film, *Kasiyamaliro* (The Great Mother of all Mankind) appears and performs alone carrying the message of rebirth:

> *Tiyemo tibadwenso,* Let's accept to be born again with a new life,
> *Ndi moyo watsopano, tatiye-e!* New spirit of unity towards all the living beings!

This last part of the play emphasises on mind-set change towards the environment in order to restore it to its previous harmony after raising the audience's consciousness about the gravity of destruction humans have caused. *Kasiyamaliro,* whose performance concludes the film, is, according to Morris (2000b), "the most important *chinyau* [animal mask]. […]. Its name means 'to leave the funeral'" (144), the euphemism for "to bury the dead" (*kusiya maliro or mtembo m'manda*, to leave the dead person in the grave). Thus, from birth to death, the Chewa's lives are inseparable from animals. Animals are not only represented in folktales, fables, proverbs, riddles, folksongs and burial rites, but they are also represented in indigenous ecocinema as symbols and images loaded with cultural meanings. In *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, the description of *Kasiyamaliro* is that of "the great mother of all mankind." This theriomorphic animal structure is both high and long and its dancing style involves spinning and squatting in the arena. Ott (2000) describes *Kasiyamaliro* as an "awesome mask," "an antelope" whose "colour and huge round belly suggest a pregnant animal" (475) and that its "structure […] has a quintessentially female structure" (477). By making "the most important *chinyau*" female and symbolic of "a pregnant animal" the Chewa are very much concerned about the future as a matrilineal society.

As the last to perform in the play, Boucher makes *Kasiyamaliro* a symbol of hope and the child she carries is symbolic of this hope for the future. The masquerade

performances do not only rely on authorial commentaries and the various colours of the masks, but they also rely on the protrusions of the animal masks as symbols of the oral culture. Finnegan (2012) argues that the "greater reliance on auditory forms is something which would not seem at all strange to those brought up in the traditions of *spoken* literature characteristic of Africa. Indeed this reliance on the spoken word – and thus on oral forms of expression – may well increase rather than decrease in Africa in the future" (506, original italic). In this frame of things, the oral culture in Africa paved the way for the reading culture but now it glides to the oral culture in which people are more interested in listening/watching than reading.

Boucher (2012) describes *Kasiyamaliro* as "an antelope of unidentified species" (106), while van Breugel (2001) calls her an "antelope" and "a symbol of *mizimu*" (158). The persistent imagery of *Kasiyamaliro* as an "antelope" and that this animal mask is crucially important in the baptism of both female and male initiates into the *Nyau* traditional religion makes Ott (2000) to draw parallels with the Christian "dove" as "symbols [that] evoke a flood of interrelated associations" (479). The antelope figure of *Kasiyamaliro* that concludes the dramatisation of animal masks in the film, for example, has the "basic shape of the body [which] is abstract and portrays the female pubis and her sexual organs in her inverted position. […]. She is the maternal womb that conceives, nourishes and tends the Chewa from birth to death and even beyond death itself. It is from her womb that the Chewa is born and to which he [she] must return regularly during each stage in his [her] life in order to mature into a full human being" (Boucher 107). In view of the reverence that the Chewa accord to *Kasiyamaliro*, the film logically concludes with the performance of this animal mask as a mother figure.

The *Nyau* focus on sexual fertility of animals in relation to humans provides an area of positive comparison of *Kasiyamaliro* with the "Greek demigod Comus" whose roles Meeker (1996) describes as "a god of fertility in a large but unpretentious sense. His concerns include the ordinary sexual fertility of plants, men, and animals, and also the general success of family and community life insofar as these depend upon biological processes" (159). *Kasiyamaliro's* performance in the film to the song *Tiyemo tibadwenso ndi moyo watsopano* (Let's accept to be born again with a new life), alludes to the interests in the continuity of life.

According to Boucher (2012) *Kasiyamaliro* is "the great mother who gives birth and rebirth […]. [The] concept of fertility is all embracing and permeates the entire world of nature: the coming of the rain, the productivity of the land and the livestock. The women's cycle is seen to be part of this natural pattern of fertility […] their hierarchy and their unity with nature and the animal world" (107). Like the Greek Comus, *Kasiyamaliro* takes great interest in "the maintenance of the commonplace conditions that are friendly to life" (Meeker 159) and thereby maintains "equilibrium among living things, and restoring it once it has been lost" (Meeker 159). The call for the audience to be reborn again with the new spirit of unity towards all the living beings and the performance of *Kasiyamaliro* in the closing lines of the play emphasise humankind's potential to work towards environmental restoration.

Human-animal relations in rituals and the performances of the archetypes of rebirth and sacrifices as in *Gule Wamkulu* reflect the interconnectedness pragmatically oriented rather than merely blossoming in idealism. It is significant to note that while "ecocriticism […] examines the manifold significance of nature (treated as a reality rather than as a construct) and the environment in literature" (Habib 772), conflating the natural world in various philosophical constructs from misunderstood Eastern religions reflects deep ecologists' fatalistic view after denouncing Judeo-Christianity for its 'anthropocentrism.' Animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* are cultural symbols through which the Chewa remain in touch with their environment. The portrayal of the anatomy and/or physiology of the animal structures reflect the Chewa's environmental embeddedness. The various ethical values attached to animals in *Gule Wamkulu* reflect how among the Chewa animals are morally considerable.

Although the message in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* calls upon people to restore forests through afforestation or re-afforestation in order to bring about rains and provide for animal habitats, it requires concerted efforts between local communities and the government for them to realise their goals. Rigby (2017) observes that "[b]ut neither can works of the creative imagination, nor for that matter, eco-spiritual practices of whatever ilk, transform the world in the absence of socio-economic and eco-political changes that would enable new ways of living, within which such works and practices might make sense" (306). The Government of Malawi is therefore, key in providing

alternatives that can avert further environmental degradation. The local communities on their part have demonstrated their environmental consciousness and knowledge of the environment and that their willingness to utilise the environment sustainably cannot be doubted. Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms reflect the various ways in which the people are environmentally conscious. Despite the people's environmental embeddedness and ecological knowledge, insofar as Malawi lacks environmental leadership, apocalypse hovers the future of environmental restoration.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the representation of animal masks and animals among the Chewa in *Gule Wamkulu* is loaded with symbolic meanings and instrumental values that reflect both positive and negative concerns about animals. *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* draws from animal masks in order to respond to the current environmental degradation beginning with deforestation. The rate at which Malawi's forests are denuding is alarming and key factors to this environmental challenge are poverty, corruption and inept regimes that have failed to provide environmental leadership. Deforestation has robbed Malawi of its invaluable natural resources and biodiversity. With deforestation, Malawi has lost various kinds of animals that constituted the rich heritage of folklore. Despite the interest in *Gule Wamkulu* to conserve forests as dwelling places of *zilombo*, the rate of deforestation is so overwhelming that even *dambwes* are restricted to specific graveyards. The loss of forests means that animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* have lost the practical realities of animals on the ground and thereby rendering the *Nyau* cult as rooted in animals that have no application in real life since they have no existence beyond the psychic constructions.

Besides irresponsible human behaviour that animal masks are meant to correct, the play, *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha*, also locates the cause of deforestation in global capitalism. Its insatiable desire for growth overexploits the environment. Furthermore, pollution of the environment due to plastics and plastic products suffocates the environment. Plastics are non-biodegradable and their effects on terrestrial and aquatic life have far-reaching consequences. This illustrates why, the first animal mask in the play, *Kwanga Nkupha* (My Trade is to Kill) is Mr Plastic, with a darkened gloomy and elongated face to symbolise the affective impacts of environmental degradation. The

representation of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* reflects the environmental consciousness of the Chewa and their response to the current environmental challenges. The various animal masks represented in *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* are replications of the creation of *Chauta/Chiuta* depicted in the Kaphirintiwa myth. Here, both humans and animals are creations in nature (*chilengedwe*) whose existence is symbiotic. Despite the disruption of the blissful coexistence between humans and animals in the aftermath of the fire, which separated domestic animals from wild animals, the environment remained intact inasmuch as indigenous people relied on subsistence agriculture and hunting. The animal masks in the play dramatize the primordial harmony between humans and animals to demonstrate the oneness and interdependence of ecological entities.

The footprints of humans and animals left on the rock as depicted in Kaphirintiwa myth serve as a symbol to remind humans of their similar origins and interconnectedness with animals. *Gule Wamkulu* exploits this human-animal interconnectedness through animal masks in order to derive moral values that help mould human personality. Sound human personality correlates positively with environmental stewardship or guardianship. The moral values drawn from animals help establish strong interconnectivity between humans and animals and provide space for humans to dignify and respect animals. The intergenerational values about animals passed in *Gule Wamkulu* become the blueprint for community collective responsibility towards animals perceived as integral parts in the cycle of human existence.

The environmental consciousness of the Chewa as reflected in animal masks engage cryptically with animal attributes approved and disapproved by the community. The religious roles of animals in *Gule Wamkulu* entail not only human perception of the totemic functions of animals, but also animals perceived as intercessors between the living and the dead. Thus, among the Chewa's *Gule Wamkulu*, animals are sacred beings symbolically represented as masks of the reincarnated spirits of the dead. In this embodied environmental consciousness, the interrelatedness of the living and the dead is perceived through the symbolism of animals.

I have argued in this chapter that the Chewa's close interactions with animals through masks (*Nyau)* in *Gule Wamkulu*, their focus on sex education in initiations and taboos

using the animals' private parts imply keen observations of the animals and the people's environmental consciousness. This kind of animal representation entails a cosmology that is closely linked to animals (Zubieta 2016). Most of the relevant environmental information in the play under discussion emanates from the documentaries and songs spiced by the performances of the traditional animal masks. In recognising "intergenerational mapping" and "generational interlinkage"[17] in its Agenda 2063, the African Union should also recognise the role of indigenous knowledge as a platform for the realisation of such linkages.

[17] See *Capacity Requirements for New African Vision Agenda 2063 – "The Africa We Want."* The African Capacity Building Foundation, 2016, pp. 7-9.

CHAPTER 6

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters reveal results of research in environmental consciousness in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms from ecocriticism, zoocriticism and deep ecology perspectives. The Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms explored and analysed in this study are folktales, proverbs, folksongs and traditional animal masks. The focal point of analysis in these oral genres and performances has been the representation of animals and how through human-animal interactions, the people's environmental consciousness is demonstrated. Historically, African ecocriticism in general, and Malawian ecocriticism in particular, is inseparable from colonial and postcolonial marginalisation, but also from being undermined by the affluent Anglo-American ecocriticism. Yet, indigenous oral cultural forms reveal the people's environmental sensibility that reflects a wide array of untapped environmental knowledge that can be used for environmental restoration.

In this study, I have argued that the representation of nature generally and of animals particularly in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, does not only reveal the people's environmental embeddedness and knowledge of their environment, but it also shows how familiar they are with animals and their knowledge of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and nature and/or animals. The people's cosmovision reflected in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms consists of an ecophilosophy, African in nature, which considers the physical, spiritual and natural forces as entangled, an attitude that can be enhanced to promote environmental sustainability and resilience. Indigenous ecological knowledge can be utilised for natural resources management. This argument notwithstanding, since animals embody the values of the people, some of those values can undermine the integrity of animals and this entails that human-animal relationships are tinged with complexities. Because of the ubiquity of different species of animals which interact with humans in various ways in both the animal and human worlds, people's

experiential and observational knowledge has been used to generate indigenous ecological knowledge of great standing. This knowledge is reflected through folktales, proverbs, folksongs and traditional performances that feature animals interacting with humans.

This study set out to achieve four specific objectives: to analyse the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales, to assess how animals are represented in Malawian proverbs as sources of justice and personality building, to examine the role of animals in introducing children to their local environment in *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs and to examine the representation of animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* as reflections of the people's environmental consciousness. Through these objectives and using concepts from ecocriticism, zoocriticism and deep ecology, I have argued that the mobility and ubiquity of animals provide a rich source for indigenous people to conceptualise complex human-animal relationships and generate ecological knowledge of great standing.

By focusing on how animals are represented in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, this study has applied zoocriticism to the reading of cultural-literary productions. The ethically animal-loaded Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms are utilised to generate ecological wisdom. The people's identification with animals in the indigenous oral cultural forms analysed is relative to their conceptualisation of the cosmovision that takes into account a unitary view of the environment comprising the physical, social and spiritual environments. I have also argued that indigenous people have always been conscious of the environment as their folklore demonstrates. Human-animal relationships are therefore, primordial and folktales, proverbs, myths, folksongs and animal masks demonstrate not only the people's environmental consciousness but they also reflect the people's environmental embeddedness.

In this study, I have analysed the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales, proverbs, folksongs in *jando* and *nsondo* initiation ceremonies and traditional animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu,* drawing from ecocritical theory and deep ecology. In analysing the representation of animals in these oral genres and cultural practices, I have demonstrated the people's environmental consciousness and knowledge not only about animals' behaviours, actions and body parts, but also the

people's knowledge about the environment and the complex human-animal relationships. Because the people are embedded in their environment, it is with experience that they depict the various animal behaviours and actions correlated with those of humans and thereby generating the interpretation that human existence is relational to the existence of animals. Both humans and animals depend on the environment for resources that propel their lives and reproduce young ones for intergenerational survival. The human-animal interactions in oral literature are facilitated by the representation of animals through anthropomorphism and to a lesser degree, theriomorphism. In folklore, anthropomorphism facilitates human-animal interactions.

The environmental consciousness of the people testifies that the interest in the relationship between literature and the environment, currently termed ecocriticism, is not new. Indigenous people have been close to their environments and their perception of animals/nature reflect sound knowledge based on environmental rootedness. In Malawian oral literature and cultural practices like initiations of *jando* and *nsondo* as well as those of *Gule Wamkulu*, humans and animals are intertwined not only in eco-literature but also in their participation in eco-spirituality in ways that reflect the concerns of deep ecology.

The Chewa Kaphirintiwa creation myth and other myths of creation in Malawi reflect that the boundary between humans and animals is clear. Malawians believe in the Creator, *Namalenga* who purposefully created the entire creation including humans, animals and plants. Indigenous people's belief in God with different attributes has nothing to do with the Christian God. In the non-anthrpocentric indigenous scheme of things, humans are responsible as trustees of animals/nature to treat them with humility and nothing was created for its own sake. African traditional religions, just like Confucianism, Taoism or Daoism, Buddhism and Shintoism are rooted in the interconnectedness of nature/animals and the need for humans to symbiotically co-exist in harmony with nature and/or animals.

With this frame of mind, human neighbourliness with animals/nature informs Malawian oral literature and cultural practices and, metaphysically speaking, any violation of societal norms and taboos has serious ramifications on the environment

such as droughts and pandemics. In Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, the physical and spiritual environments are constitutive of the people's cosmovisions through which they conceptualise the interrelatedness of ecological entities with life-centred perception where every life counts and not sentient beings only. Human animals, non-human animals, insects, reptiles, birds, and non-living things are not merely for show and their existence and coexistence involve specific niches in their ecosystems.

My own understanding of ecocriticism is that despite the absence of the term "ecocriticism" due to under-lexicalisation among indigenous Malawians whose literary texts I have analysed, the environment and literary imaginations have been at their hearts. The use to which I have put the term "ecocriticism" in this study bears some resistance considering its Anglo-American origins and the white supremacist ideological overtones. For Estok "Western environmental theory" is marred by "one sidedness of information flows, a one-sidedness that predictably and dangerously reiterates colonialist dynamics and structures" (2). Furthermore, the transcendentalist origins of American ecocriticism and the romantic origins of the British green studies are incompatible with Malawian indigenous ecological knowledge where nature is not depicted as idyllic but actively involved in the drama of creation. My interpretation of the human/animal relationship is largely from the vantage point of the people whose views are privileged in my analysis of the oral pieces, as they perceive their own experiences of interacting with animals in the environment. Human identification with animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms is dependent on the attributes of the animals correlated with the attributes that humans desire and/or abhor amongst themselves. Just as people avoid fellow humans who misbehave, for example, Zuze in *Kalenga ndi Mnzake* (1958), who is commonly referred to as *chilombo cha m'mudzi* (the village beast), people also like to associate themselves with the traits of animals of high calibre and integrity, whether big or small. The human choice about which animals to associate with and which animals not to associate with creates positive and negative attitudes about animals. In either case, such relationships agree with deep ecology's interest, which is also reflected in indigenous ecological knowledge, "in an absolutely relational ontology that affirms the radical interdependence of all beings" (Mohilina-Motos 2019:3). Predator/prey, host/parasite and symbiotic relationships depicted in

indigenous oral cultural forms all point to the interconnectedness and interdependence of ecological entities.

Having considered the various Western viewpoints about animals, anthropocentric, mechanistic, utilitarian, and rights theories, for example, what features highly in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms is that animals have emotions similar to those of humans. Without imagining animals as having emotions, most of the interconnections between humans and animals depicted in oral literature would not have been possible. This explains why animals are depicted in anthropomorphic conceptualisations. Indigenous lore emphasises on human trusteeship of animals/nature and that any betrayal of the trust leads to catastrophic consequences on the environment.

As a multi-ethnic study that has drawn from folktales, proverbs, folksongs and traditional animal masks, the people and performers of these oral genres and practices reflect environmental consciousness. They reflect the kind of awareness of environmental phenomena deeply rooted in their experiences and embeddedness in their environments that take into account their cosmovisions. Animals, both sentient and non-sentient, just as non-zoological entities in the environment, are key subjects of philosophical wisdom in Malawian folklore. The human-animal/nature interrelatedness is ineluctable and in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms, the human and the nonhuman worlds are relationally defined one in terms of the other. In indigenous environmental consciousness, organisms are unequal in value and environmental restoration relies on human fidelity to their trusteeships of the earth. The representation of animals in Malawian oral genres and practices shows that despite the various human-animal interactions, the human/animal boundary remains recognisably intact, even if these boundaries are often figuratively and metaphysically breached to reflect cross-species ontological continuities.

Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms reveal the people's environmental consciousness and animals are significant not only in the people's conceptualisation of spirituality in which all things are naturally interconnected and animals help explain the myths of human origins and ritualised ceremonies, but animals are also sources of indigenous ecological wisdom. Indigenous ecological knowledge is generated from the interconnectedness of human with the more-than-human world. Animals are crucially important as projections of human traits and as conceptualisations through which

humans and animal share attributes. The transformation of animals into handsome men, the speaking birds that reveal secrets, the insects that communicate with humans depicted in Malawian folktales inform a culture that sees the porosity of the human-animal boundaries.

The analysis of the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales has revealed the people's environmental consciousness and their knowledge of the environment and animals. Malawian folktales reflect how animals are culturally relevant in mediating how the people are bonded to nature. The representation of animals in Malawian folktales reflect the people's interest in the power of intelligence by projecting what humans think on animals. Through the folktales the people become *raconteurs* (skilled in storytelling and anecdotes) and thereby revealing a wide range of environmental consciousness.

My assessment of how animals are represented in Malawian proverbs in reflecting the people's environmental consciousness and the various ways through which animals are used in seeking justice and personality building reveal the centrality of animals in generating wisdom while instilling religious values. Reading animals in Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms brings into the fore what Strømmen (2017) in this passage describes as "witnessing through a re-engagement with the animals that already inhabit its archives as well as through re-thinking notions of justice, compassion and ethics as a response to the question of the animal" (388). Although various Malawian oral genres and traditional practices engage with animals for their instrumental values, the recognition of "animals as beings in their own right" (Strømmen 388) does not escape the attention of indigenous people.

Animals play important roles in Malawian "religious and literary archives" (Strømmen 388) as vehicles through which the people's environmental consciousness is reflected and conceptualising their values of ecological interconnectedness understood within the people's cosmovision. Although environmental consciousness is waning in the present generation, through oral genres and practices the people who lived in the previous generations have revealed that they were environmentally conscious and recognising animals as culturally and spiritually symbols for generating mores that govern human communities and their conduct.

In indigenous environmental consciousness, the people's cosmovision through which the human and the non-human worlds are interconnected is pivoted on the spiritual realm. David Miller (n.d.) argues that "[r]eligious and philosophical concerns have their place within traditional worldviews. Often a hierarchy between divine beings, spiritual beings, especially the ancestors, men and women, and natural forces, such as climate, disease, floods, soil, vegetation, animals, is indicated. [This] cosmovision gives rise to several rituals in which the elders, the priests, soothsayers and spiritual leaders play a prominent role. Cosmovision, to a large extent, dictates the way land, water, plants and animals are to be used" (21). Indigenous discourses about weather, the stars, the moon and the sun reflect the people's concerns with "natural forces" as well as the physical environment from which they are inescapably interconnected.

Miller also notes that animals play important roles in indigenous people's religious beliefs so that "cattle, sheep, goats and chicken are often used for sacrifices and other religious purposes. Creeping wild animals frequently feature in religious concepts. Snakes, lizards, chameleons and certain birds are considered messengers of the spiritual world" (23). The human-animal connections are, therefore, primordial and they are hinged on "the spiritual world." Kamlongera *et.al.* (1989 [1992]) observe that "*gule wamkulu* performance should be seen as a mystery play as well as ritual drama, in which masks represent ancestral spirits and animals of the forest temporarily come from the bush to the village to associate with human beings" (35). As mystery play and ritualised indigenous dramatic performances involving human-animal interactions, *Gule Wamkulu* mediates between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

Iovino (2017) notes that "[b]y reading world and text together, ecocriticism tries indeed to reconnect what is real and what is thought, things and stories – especially if by 'world' and 'things' we mean the emergencies of *physis* and the intersections between the human and the nonhuman-human dimensions. […] ecocriticism provides new keys to rethink what has already been thought for centuries or millennia" (310, italics in the original). In rethinking "what has already been thought for centuries or millennia" we have a rich inheritance of the people's environmental sensibility that can be utilised to sustain natural resources. For Clark (2019), "ecocriticism has become a diverse and vast field, a mix of literary, cultural, political scientific, and activist strands. […]. Its mantra is that the environmental crisis demands a reconsideration of society's basic values, constitution, and purposes, and that art and literature can be vital in that work"

(15). In reconsidering "society's values" the centrality of indigenous ecological knowledge cannot be overemphasised.

Key to revitalising indigenous ecological knowledge is the introduction of environmental education in schools in Malawi focusing on oral literature and indigenous practices. Malawian indigenous oral cultural forms do not only invoke indigenous liturgy that brings us close to our environment, but it also has the potential of instilling in us the values about the sacredness of the environment to which we are trustees. Any betrayal of this trust is detrimental to the environment and since indigenous ecological thought emphasises on environmental sustainability, to reinvigorate it remains our duty. In the words of Olney and Viles (2019), the indigenous people's "traditional knowledge, which cuts across numerous aspects of sustainability and resilience – from forecasting weather patterns, improving agricultural practices, to customary institutions for approved management of natural resources – has increasingly gained recognition at international level as a vital way forward" (iii). There is need to take seriously the reduction of inequality and poverty and making indigenous ecological knowledge inclusive in managing the environment.

Malawian folktales, proverbs, folksongs, myths, riddles, indigenous dramatic performances like initiation ceremonies and *Gule Wamkulu* contain an intangible cultural heritage that is rooted in the environment. The success of Agenda 2063, Goal 7, for example, "Environmentally sustainable climate resilient economies and communities"[18] is largely dependent on empowering local communities and the use of indigenous ecological knowledge in natural resources management. Inherited belief systems in which humans imagine conversing with mammals, birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles, *inter alia*, place indigenous people close to nature/animals as reflected in their afro-ecophilosophy and cosmovision.

Therefore, the representation of animals and human-animal relationships in Malawian folktales reflects the people's awareness and knowledge of the environment and how humans and animals form an indivisible network of interconnections and interdependence. In the Malawian folktales that deal with human and animal marriages, the grooms are male animals while the brides are female humans. The female characters portrayed as marrying male animals are often times described as very beautiful women

[18] See *First Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063*, African Union, African Union Development Agency, 2020, p. 54.

admired by both people and animals. While the people fail to find their way through to the fellow humans, the animals succeed. First, people transfer the qualities of cunning and calculating they admire in themselves to the animals. Second, a woman can be beautiful but that beauty should be accompanied with responsibility to her family and to her community. Despite the patriarchal dominated indigenous communities, the folktales are emancipatory to the women rather than demonstrating gender bias because in the African context, a woman has no choice to remain single but to marry. The various relationships between humans and animals represented in the folktales reflect ambivalent situations humans and animals find themselves in. By interacting with animals and demonstrating knowledge of their habitats, behaviours and actions, indigenous people are interested in ecological diversity and they therefore have the potential to protect the animals they so cherish to interact with. Mammals, reptiles, birds and insects carry different symbolic meanings in indigenoius cultures.

The representation of animals in Malawian proverbs reflects how animals are gemstones of environmental wisdom and ethics. Animal proverbs are not only used in conflict resolution but they are also used for personality building. Malawian animal-oriented proverbs do not only include sentient animals but they also include non-sentient beings like insects. The ubiquity of animals entails that they are easy vehicles through which humans traverse the environment, terrestrial and aquatic. The representation of animals in proverbs involves metaphors that connect humans with other beings in the physical environment and thereby reflecting the people's ecological awareness. Humans do not only learn to identify themselves with animals but they also identify points of commonality with animals. The numerous animal loaded proverbs reflect a period in history when animals and humans lived in close proximity and compared to the scarcity of these animals now. Considering that the bulk of animals proverbs originate from the environment, what this entails is the people's keen observation of environmental phenomena through an interaction with which they are able to generate knowledge of universal applicability. The people's interest in different species of animals in generating proverbial lore demonstrates their potential to conserve that which is at their heart. The ecological diversity then as compared to the loss of ecological diversity now entails that the present generation has lost touch not only with indigenous expressions but it has also lost touch with the warehouses of such expressions, forests.

The representation of animals in *jando* and *nsondo* folksongs show how animals are sources of eco-pedagogy. The *jando* and *nsondo* songs that are locally known as *misyungu* constitute the core teachings for the novices during the exclusion period. The bulk of the songs involve birds through which the initiates are introduced to their local environment and the adult world of complexities. Since humans think of birds as kind, helpful, gentle and generous creatures, interacting with them does not provide dangers to humans. With their different symbolic meanings, birds are handy in children's songs that involve the teachings of a people. The different *jando* and *nsondo* songs involving birds do not only reflect the people's environmental embeddedness and awareness of ecological interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and birds, but they also show how humans attempt to communicate with birds through mystic language as in imitating their sounds. The availability of different species then was dependent on forests, tall grasses and springs or brooks of water. The availability of birds is related to habitats to which different species of birds are adapted. The people's knowledge of birds and their different symbolic meanings reflect their cumulative experiences from which they draw viable conclusions about the behaviours of birds in relation to human beings. As trustees of the environment, indigenous people have the capacity to protect the environment. Similarly, the Yawo *jando* and *nsondo* songs about mammals, reptiles and insects show not only the ways through which moral values are inculcated to the initiated boys and girls, but they also reflect different cultural implications animals have including taboos and totems.

Finally, the representation of traditional animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* reflects the people's environmental consciousness. Animal masks in *Gule Wamkulu* are not only the archetypes of rebirth, but they are also the reincarnations of the spirits (*mizimu*) of the ancestors who participate in the drama of the living in animal forms. Animal masks involve the dissolusion of the dead residing at *dambwe* (grave yard) into the world of the living but whose existence is dependent on the passion or mystery play in the numinous realm. What *Gule Wamkulu* animal masks entail is that death is not the final measure of human existence because the dead have the capacity of living in animal forms.

Animals therefore are reflections of the dead and they are a means through which the living and the dead interact. This entails that humans revere animals as images of the living dead. Through the representation of animal masks, *Gule Wamkulu* responds to the contemporary environmental issues. The different parts and colours of animal masks carry symbolic meanings that guide the lives of the Chewa whose cosmology is closely linked with animals. Because humans and animals share primordial origins in the Kaphirintiwa creation myth, the accidental invention of fire by humans marks the beginning of disharmony between humans and animals. The central message in Boucher's *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha* is that since environmental degradation is anthropogenic, humans are also responsible for environmental restoration and ecological diversity. The thesis of this study therefore is that the representation of nature in general, and animals in particular, does not only reveal the people's embeddedness in their environment and their environmental knowledge (awareness), but it also shows their familiarity with animals and their acknowledgement and/or appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and animals/nature. Because animals embody the people's values, some of the values could undermine the integrity of animals and therefore human-animal relationship is tinged with ambivalence.

The study has shown that the people's environmental consciousness can be utilised for environmental restoration and ecological diversity. The different facets of nature/animals explored in this study reveal how indigenous environmental knowledge is experientially based and accumulated over many years. Folktales, fables, fairy tales, proverbs, myths, folksongs and theatrical perfomances are key sources of indigenous environmental philosophy. Animals constitute an entire range of human knowledge and behaviour including mirroring the people's environmental embeddedness and indigenous ecological consciousness. Since animals are the embodiments of human values through which people traverse the environment, for them environmental restoration and ecological diversity inform their symbiotic beingness. The idea of the sacredness of nature encapsulated in people's belief systems and the unitary view of the cosmos that inform indigenous people's worldview, infer an atomistic perception of the environment. The people's perception of a seamless cosmology in which the physical and divine environments exist in an ineluctable interplay, imply their affiliation not only to their land, but also to their genealogies through which the

environment is but a bequeathal to be sustainably used for the nourishment of the human and nonhuman worlds.

WORKS CITED

Aboluwodi, Akinjide. "Exploring African Proverbs as a Learning Resource in the Contemporary Society." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 4(17),* International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE), 2014, pp. 33-39.

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary Literary Terms*. 7th Edition. Heinle and Heinle, Thomson Learning, 1999. http://www.hbcollege.com.

Adamson, Joni and Salma Monani: "Introduction: Cosmovisions, Ecocriticism, and Indigenous Studies." *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos* edited by Salma Monani and Joni Adamson, Routledge 2017, pp. 1-19.

Adeoti, Gbemisola. "The loudness of the 'Unsaid': Proverbs in Selected African Drama." *Legon Journal of Humanities Vol. 30(1),* 2019, pp. 82-104.

Adugna, Ashenafi Belay. "Exploring Environmental Discourses in Oral Literature: Ecocritical Analysis of Oromo Proverbs." *Journal of Languages and Culture Vol. 5(2),* 2014, pp. 24-35.

African Proverbs: Wisdom of the People. Comboni Missionary Publications. 2019. www.combonimissionaries.co.uk.

Ahi, Berat *et.al*. "The Concept of Environment in Folktales from Different Cultures: Analysis of Content and Visuals." *International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education Vol. 4(1),* Research Article, 2014, pp. 1-17.

Ahmed, Salwa: "Educational and Social Values expressed by proverbs in two cultures: Knowledge and Use of Proverbs in Sudan and England." PhD Thesis, University of Berlin. 2005.

Akinmade, Arinola C. “Some Ondo Philosophical Proverbs for Practical Living.” *African Research Review: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, Vol. 3(2), 2009, pp. 109-118.

Akiyama, Mitchell. “Speaking of Animals.” *Land and Animal and Nonanimal* co-edited by Anna-Sophie Springer and Elienne Turpin in association with Kristen Einfeldt and Daniela Wolf, K. Verlag Press, 2015.

Akoma, Chanji. *Folklore in New World Black Fiction: Wringing and Oral Traditional Aesthetics*. The Ohio State University Press, 2007.

Aristotle. *History of Animals*. 350 BC (Translated by D’Arcy Wentworth).

_____*The Poetics of Aristotle* edited with Critical Notes and a Translation by S.H. Butcher, Third Edition Revised, Macmillan Co. Ltd., 1902.

Arluke, Arnold. *Just a Dog: Understanding Animal Cruelty and Ourselves*. Temple University Press, 2006.

Ascione, Frank R. *Children and Animals: Exploring the Roots of Kindness and Cruelty*, Purdue University Press, 2005.

Ashcroft, Bill *et.al*. Eds. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, 2007.

Ayinuola, Fortress Isaiah and Onwuka Edwin. “Yoruba Eco-Proverbs in English: An Ecocritical Study of Niyi Osundare’s *Horses of Memory* (n.d.).

Ayotunde, John (Tunde) Isola Bewaji. “African Aesthetics.” *A Companion to Aesthetics*, edited by Stephen Davis *et.al*. Willy-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 39-42.

Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast: Animals. Identity and Representation*. Manchster University Press, 1993.

_____. *The Postmodern Animal*. Reaktion Books Ltd., 2000.

_____. "Guest Editor's Introduction: Animals, Representations, and Reality." *Society and Animals 9(3),* Koninklijke Brill, 2001, pp. 189-201.

Banda, Felix and Dennis Banda: "Nyanja/Chewa Proverbs as Didactics: Re-contextualising Indigenous Knowledge for Academic Writing." *Studies of Tribes and Tribals 14(2)* University of the Western Cape, 2016, pp. 80-91.

Banda, Felix and Thokozani E. Kunkeyani: "Renegotiating Cultural Practices as a result of HIV in the Eastern Region of Malawi." *Culture, Health and Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, International and Care*, 17(1). University of the Western Cape Research Repository, 2015, pp. 34-47.

Barnard, Chris. *Animal Behaviour: Mechanism, Development, Function and Evolution*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 2004.

Barnhill, David Landis and Roger S. Gottlieb. Eds. *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds.* State University of New York Press, 2001.

Barnhill, David Landis. "Relational Holism: Huayan Buddhism and Deep Ecology." *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds*, edited by David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 77-106 .

Barra, Ricardo and Sunday A. Leonard: "Plastics and the Circular Economy." A STAP Document *Global Environmental Facility* (GEF) Investing in our Planet, 54th GEF Council Meeting, June 24-26, 2018.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester University Press, 2002.

Beauvoir, Simone de. "The Second Sex." *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader* edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. New York and London: W.W. Norton Company, 2007, pp. 300-322.

Bekoff, Marc. “Animal Emotions: Exploring Passionate Natures.” *Bio-Science Vol. 50(10),* 2000, pp. 861-870.

Bekoff, Marc. Ed. *Encyclopaedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, Greenwood Press, 2010. Bernecker, Sven and Duncan Pritchard. *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, Routledge, 2011.

Berkes, Fikret. “Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective.” *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases* edited Juliana T. Inglis, International Programme on Traditional Knowledge and International Development Research Centre, 1993, pp. 1-9.

Berkes, Fikret *et.al*. “Rediscovering of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Adaptive Management.” *Ecological Applications Vol. 10 No. 5*, Ecological Society of America, 2000, pp. 1251-1262.

Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory. The Basics*. Routledge, 2008.

Bladow, Kyle and Jennifer Ladino Eds. *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

Boddice, Rob ed. *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*. Brill, 2011.

Boggs, Carl. *Ecology and Evolution: Global Crisis and the Political Challenge*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Borlik, Todd A. *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. New York and London: Routledge, 2011.

Bostock, Stephen St. C. *Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals*. Routledge,Taylor and Francis Group, 1993.

Boucher, Claude (Chisale). *When Animals Sing and Spirits Dance, Gule Wamkulu: the Great Dance of the Chewa People of Malawi*. Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, 2012.

_____ *Kokota-Kokota Nkhalango Zatha: Mvula ndi Madzi Khwakhwalala*. Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, 2015.

Brokaw, Alyson. "BATS!" Cornell University's Naturalist Outreach, 2010, pp. 1-5.

Bronner, Simon J. Ed. *The Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. Utah State University Press, 2007.

Brown, C.S. and T. Toadvine. Eds. *Eco-Phenomenology: An Introduction – Back to the Earth Itself*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

_____. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. A. and Beyond*. Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001.

Buell, Lawrence *et.al.* "Literature and Environment." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. Harvard University, 2011, pp. 417-440.

Bujo, Benezet. *Foundations of an African Ethic*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003.

Callicott, Baird J. and Robert Frodeman. Eds. *Encyclopaedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1-2*. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009.

Caminero-Santangelo, Byron. *Different Shades of Green: African Literature, Environmental Justice and Political Ecology*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014.

Caminero-Santangelo, Byron and Garth Andrew Myers, Eds. *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*. London: Martin and Warburg Ltd., 1964.

Cannella, Megan. Book Reviews. Caminero-Santangelo, Byron and Gareth Andrew Myers.

Environment and the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011. *The Journal of Ecocriticism: A New Journal of Nature, Society and Literature 5(1),* 2013, pp. 1-2.

Capra, Fritjof. "Deep Ecology: A New Paradigm." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 19-25.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring.* Fawcett, 1962.

Casimir, Ann K.C. *et.al*. "Masking Traditions and their Behavioural Functions in Accounting for Stability and Order: A Critical Exposition of Select Study of West, East and Central African Masks." *Open Journal of Political Science*. Scientific Research Publishing, 2015, pp. 115-127.

Chadwick, Munro H. and N. Kershaw Chadwick. *The Growth of Literature Vol. III*. Cambridge: At Cambridge University Press, 1940, Reprinted 1968.

Chadza, Ezra Jofiyo. *Kokha Mcheperawakalulu.* Popular Publications. 1986.

Chadza, William: "Policy Dilemmas of Forestry Governance in Malawi." 2015.

Chakanza, Joseph Chaphadzika. *Wisdom of the People: 2000 Chinyanja Proverbs*. CLAIM. 2000.

Chan, Kai M.A. *et.al*. "Why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment." *PNAS Vol. 113 (6),* 2016, pp. 1462-1465.

Chang, Kathryn Yalan: "A Network of Networks: Multispecies Stories and Cosmopolitical Activism in *Solar Storms* and *People of a Feather*." *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos* edited by Salma Monani and Joni Adamson, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2017, pp. 171-187.

Chanunkha, Robert Amos: "Music Education in Malawi: The Crisis and the Way Forward." PhD Thesis in Music, University of Pretoria, 2005.

Childs, Peter and Roger Fowler, Eds. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Routledge, 2006.

Chimombo, Steve. *Napolo ku Zomba*. Manchichi Publishing Company, 2001.

_____. *The Bird Boy's Song*. WASI Publications, 2002.

_____. *Malawian Oral Literature: The Aesthetics of Indigenous Arts*. Centre for Social Research, 1988.

_____. *The Hyena Wears Darkness*. WASI Publications. 2006.

Chirila, Alexander. "Archetype." *The Encyclopaedia of Literary and Cultural Theory. Literary Theory from 1900 to 1966. Literary Theory from 1966 to Present. Cultural Theory, Vol. 1-3*, edited by Michael Ryan *et.al*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011, pp. 48-51.

Chirwa, Wiseman Chijere. "Dancing towards Dictatorship: Political Songs and Popular Culture in Malawi." *Nordic Journal of African Studies 10(1),* 2001, pp. 1-17.

Chivian, Eric and Aaron Bernstein Eds. *Sustaining Life: Human Health Depends on Biodiversity*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment.* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

_____. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

_____. *The Value of Ecocriticism*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Cochrane, Alasdair. *Animal Rights without Liberation: Applied Ethics and Human Obligations*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

Coetzee, J.M. *Lives of Animals*. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values delivered at Princeton University, October 15 and 16, 1997.

Cohen, Michael P. "Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism under Critique." *Environmental History(9)1*, 2004.

Colditz, Ian G. "A Consideration of the Relationship between Animals and their Environment." 2017, pp. 1-12.

Commoner, Barry. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology*. Excerpts. 1971[1974].

Concu, Valentina. "The Speaking Birds: Cognitive Approach to the Symbolic Representation of Animals in Literature." Purdue Language and Cultures Conference, 2016.

Costandius, Elmarie "An Exploration of the Use of African Proverbs and Metaphors in a Visual Communication Design Course." MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2007.

Courlander, Harold. *A Treasure of African Folklore*. New York: Marlowe and Company,1996. Creany, Anne Drolett. "Who is the beast? The portrayal of

animals in multicultural folklore." *Journal of the European Teacher Education Network vol. 8*, 2013, pp. 25-34.

Coutts, Christopher, Tisha Homes and April Jackson. *Forests*. www.mdpi.com/journal/forests, 2019.

Crago, Hugh. "Can Stories Heal?" *Understanding Children's Literature* edited by Peter Hunt.Routledge, 2002, pp. 163-173.

Creany, Anne Drolett. "Who is the beast? The portrayal of animals in multicultural folklore." *Journal of the European Teacher Education Network Vol. 8*, 2013, pp. 25-34.

Cuddon, J.A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. The Estate of J.A. Cuddon, 2013.

Culajara, Khareen B. "Exploring Representations of Nature in Literature: Ecocritical Themes in the Fiction of Satur Apoyon." *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics, Vol. 2, No. 4*, 2016.

Dancy, Jonathan. *A Companion to Epistemology*. Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2010.

Davidson, Stewart. "The Troubled Marriage of Deep Ecology and Bioregionalism." *Environmental Values vol. 16 No. 3*, 2007, pp. 313-332.

Davion, Victoria. "Ecofeminism." *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* edited by Dale Jamieson, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001, pp. 233-247.

Davis, Jason and Mio Bryce: "I love you as you are: Marriages between different kinds" *The International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations, Vol. 7 No. 6,* 2008.

De Gouvenain, Roland. "Forests." *Encyclopeadia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 436-441.

De Jonge, Eccy. “An Alternative to Anthropocentrism: Deep Ecology and the Metaphysical Turn.” *Anthropocentrism, Humans, Animals, Environments,* edited by Rob Boddice, Brill, 2011, pp. 307-319.

Dederen, Jean-Marie. “The Social Life of Sankambe and Friends: Notes on Social Discord in African Oral Literature.” *Nordic Journal of African Studies 17(3),* 2008, pp. 211-227.

DeMello, Margo. *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am* edited by Marie-Luise Mallet (Trans. David Wills. Fordham University Press, 2008.

Descartes, Rene. “Letter to Marquess of Newcastle, 23 Novermber 1646,” in *Descartes:Philosophical Letters,* edited by Anthony Kenny, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Devall, Bill. “The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement, 1960-2000 – A Review.” *Ethics and the Environment 6(1),* Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 18-41.

_____. “The Deep Ecology Movement.” *Natural Resources Journal Vol. 20*, 1980, pp.
299-322.

Devall, Bill and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology*. Gibbs M. Smith Inc., 1985.

Dicks, Ian D. *Wisdom of the Yawo People (Lunda lwa Ŵandu ŵa Ciyawo)*. Kachere Series, 2006.

_____. *An African Worldview: The Muslim Amachinga Yawo of Southern Malawi*. Kachere Series, 2012.

Dobie, Ann B. *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Wordsworth, 2011.

Doolittle, Emily. "Music Theory is for the Birds." *Sound in the Land – Music in the Environment*, edited by Carol Ann Weaver *et.al*. *The Conrad Grebel Review 33 No. 2*, 2015.

_____. "Cricets in the Concert Hall: A History of Animals in Western Music." *TRANS – Transcultural Music Review 12*, 2008.

Douglass, Rebecca M. "Ecocriticism and Middle English Literature." *Studies in Medievalism X*, 1998, pp. 136-163.

Drengson, Alan and Bill Devall. "Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development and Future Prospects." *The Trumpeter vol. 26 No. 2*, 2010, pp. 48-69.

Dudzik, Iwona. "Eco-Philosophy in education for sustainable development." *World Scientific News (WSN) 72*, 2017, pp. 334-346.

Duff, Rosaleen and Freya St. John. *Poverty, Poaching and Trafficking: What are the Links?* 2013.

Durst, Patrick B. and Kenichi Shono. "Edible forest insects: exploring new horizons and Traditional Practices." *Forest Insects as Food: Humans Bite Back*, edited by Patrick B. Durst *et.al*. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2010, pp. 1-4.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory. An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, 1996.

Eckersley. Robyn. *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*. State University of New York Press, 1992.

Eddy, Steve. *Literary Eye GCSE English, Animal Farm, George Orwell*. Cross Academy Limited, 2017. www.crossacademe.co.uk.

Erwin, Kevin L. “Wetlands and Global Climate Change: The Role of Wetland Restoration in a Changing World.” *Wetland Ecol Manage 17, Springer*, 2009, pp. 71-84.

Estok, Simon C. and Won-Chung Kim Eds. *East Asian Ecocriticisms: A Critical Reader*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Estok, Simon C. “Terror and Ecophobia.” *Frame 26.2* (87 – 100), 2013.

_____. *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia*. Palgrave Macmillan,
2011.

_____. “Theorising in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia.” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 16.2*, 2009, pp. 213-225.

_____. “Cannibalism, Ecocriticism, and Portraying the Journey.” *Comparative Literature and Culture Vol. 14, No. 5*, Purdue University Press, 2012, pp. 1-9. https://doi.org/10.7771/148/-4374.2183.

_____. “The Urgency of Ecocriticism and European Scholarship.” *Comparative Literature and Culture 16.4*, 2014.

Feder, Helen. *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture: Biology and the Bildungsroman*. Ashgate, 2014.

Fegurland, Seppo. *Studies on Bird Vocalisation Detection and Classification of Species*. Aalto University publications Series 166/2014.

Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Open Book Publishers CIC Ltd., 2012.

Fox, Warwick. “Transpersonal Ecology: ‘Psychologising’ Ecophilosophy.” *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, vol. 22 No. 1*, 1990, pp. 59-96.

_____. “The Deep Ecology – Ecofeminism Debate and Its Parallels.” *Deep*

Ecology for the Twenty-First Century, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 268-289.

Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, Rome. *Human-wildlife conflict in Africa: Causes, consequences and management Strategies*, 2009.

French, David. "Confronting an Unsolvable Problem: Deforestation in Malawi." *World Development Vol. 14(4)*, 1986, pp. 531-540.

Freyfogle, Eric T. "Land Ethic." *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1 – 2*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 21-26.

Gaard, Greta. Eds. *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Ganyi, Francis Mowang. "The Liberating Potential of Oral Literature in a Globalised Context."
International Journal of Publication and Social Studies Vol. 1, AESS, 2016, oo. 16-30.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. Routledge, 2004.

Gebregeorgis, Mehari Yimulaw. "Discursive Depiction of Customary Conflict Management Principles in Selected African Proverbs." *Folklore 62*, 2015, pp. 225-246.

Girardi, Gherardo: "Teaching economics using proverbs from around the world" London Metropolitan University, 2012.

Glotfelty, Cheryll. "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. xv-xxxvii.

Goldberg, Christine. “Folktale.” *Folklore: Encyclopaedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art, Vol. 1-2*, edited by Thomas A. Green, Thomas A. Green, 1997, pp. 356-366.

Goodbody, Axel and Kate Rigby Eds. *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*. Charlotteville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011.

Gora, Ruth Babra. “The Role of Bird Characters in African Story and Myth.*”* *Altenation Vol. 16 (2),* 2009, pp. 53-63.

Government of Malawi. *Malawi State of Environment and Outlook Report*, 2010.

_____. *Revised Decentralised Environmental Management Guidelines*, 2012.

_____. *Malawi Environmental Threats and Opportunities Assessment*, 2012.

_____. *Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity*. 2019.

Gray, Ernest.”Some Proverbs of the Nyanja People.” *African Studies Vol. 3, No.3*, 1944, pp. 101-128.

Gray, Brian S. *Guide to the Identification of the Shed Skins of the Snakes of Canada*. Printed in the United States of America, 2012.

Gray, Joe, Ian White and Patrick Curry. “Ecocentrism: what it means and what it implies.” *The Ecological Citizen Vol. 1(2)*, 2018, pp. 130-131.

Grim, John A. “Indigenous Traditions and Deep Ecology.” *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds,* edited by David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 35-57.

Gunn, Paula Allen. “The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective.” *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 241-263.

Gwengwe, John W. *Sikusinja ndi Gwenembe*. Dzuka Publishing Company Limited, 1965.

_____. *Kukula ndi Mwambo*. Macmillan Malawi, 1965.

_____. *Nyama za M’nkhalango*. Macmillan Malawi, 1965.

Haase, Donald Ed. *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales Vol. 1, A-F*. London: Greenwood Press, 2008.

Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to Present*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Hall, Dewey W. *Romantic Naturalists, Early Environmentalists: An Ecocritical Study, 1789 – 1912*, Ashgate, 2014.

Halle, B. and J. Burgess. *Country Environmental Profile Malawi.* Commission of the European Communities. EC Framework Contact Europe Aid/119860/C/SC/Multi. Lot 6: Environment, 2006.

Hangartner-Everts, Elisabeth. *Tradition of African Story Telling: Oral Literature in the Homes and Schools (Pre-School/Kindergarten) of Northern Malawi*. College of Education and Human Services Student Publications, Wright State University, 2008.

Harty, Sheila. “DeMythologising Religion with Joseph Campbell.” 1999 [2011].

Heise, Ursula K. “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism.” The Modern Language Association of America, PMLA, 2006, pp. 503-516.

_____. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Globe*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

_____. "Science and Ecocriticism." *The American Book Review 18.5, ASLE,* 1997. Holmes, Brooke. Foreword "Before Nature?" *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity* edited by Christopher Schliephake, Lexington Books, 2017, pp. ix-xiii.

Horowitz, Sala. "The Human Animal Bond: Health implications across the Lifespan." *Alternative and Complementary Therapies Vol. 14(5),* Mary Ann Libert, Inc., 2008, pp. 251-256.

Houghton, John: "From Anthropocentrism to Ecocriticism: Making the Shift" http://www.eco-res.org/shift_econf.html. 2007.

_____. *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Howarth, William: "Some Principles of Ecocriticism." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 69-91.

Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010.

Hunt, Peter. Ed. *Understanding Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2002.

Husien, Aden and Olira Kebede. "The Conception of Morality in Indigenous African Culture." *International Journal of English and Culture, Vol. 5(3),* 2017, pp. 57-64.

Hutchings, Kevin: "Ecocriticism in British Romantic Studies." *Literature Compass* 4/1, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp. 172-202.

Ikeke, Mark Omorovie. “The Forest in African Traditional Thought and Practice: An Ecophilosophical Discourse.” *Open Journal of Philosophy Vol. 3 No. 2*, 2013, pp. 345-350.

Iovino, Serenella. “Rereading Roots – Ecocriticism and the Cultures of Antiquity.” *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity* edited by Christopher Schliephake, Lexington Books, 2017, pp. 309-316.

Ismail, Wan Norasikin *et.al*. “The Symbol of Animals in Malay Proverbs.” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 6(3)*, Centre for Promoting Ideas, 2016, pp. 148-154.

Ivakhiv, Andrew. “Teaching Ecocriticism and Cinema.” *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies*, edited by Greg Garrard. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 144 – 155.

Jafari, Zahra. “Metaphorised Animals: An Investigation of Animal Metaphors in King Lear.” *The Journal of International Social Research Vol. 7 Issue 3*2, 2014, pp. 117-126.

James, Valentine U. *Resource Management in Developing Countries: Africa’s Ecological and Economic Problems.* Bergin and Garvey, 1991.

Jimmy-Gama, Dixon B. An Assessment of the Capacity of Facility-Based Youth Friendly Reproductive Health Services to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Health among unmarried Adolescents: Evidence from Rural Malawi, PhD Thesis, Queen Magaret University, 2009.

Kääpä, Pietari. “Cyclical Conceptualisations of Time: Ecocritical Perspectives on Sani Film Culture” *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies: Conversations from Earth to Cosmos* edited by Salma Monani and Joni Adamson, Routledge, 2017, pp. 136-153.

Kalof, Linda. *Looking at Animals in Human History.* Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007.

Kambewa, Patrick and Levison Chiwaula: "Biomass Energy Use in Malawi." International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 2010.

Kamlongera, Christopher, *et.al. Dance and Theatre in Malawi*. A Research Publications Committee Publication, Zomba, 1989 [1992].

Kamlongera, Christopher Fadeson. Problems in the Growth of a popular art Form: The Relationship between Drama and Society in Malawi and Zambia. PhD thesis, University of Leads, 1984.

Kamoto, Teddie. Forest Governance in Malawi. "Combating Forestry and Wildlife Crimes Through Strengthened Policy and Legal Processes." Department of Forestry. 28th September, 2015, 8.00 – 17.00, Crossroads Hotel, Lilongwe, 2015.

Kamwendo, Juliet and Hassan O. Kaya. "Gender and African Proverbs." *Stud. Tribes Tribals, 14(2)*, Kamla-Raj, 2016, pp. 92-99.

Katz, Eric. "Faith, God, and Nature." *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds,* edited by David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 153-167.

Kaur, Gurpreet. "Postcolonial Ecofeminism, Women and Land in Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 2 No. 21*, 2012, pp. 100-110.

Kayambazinthu, Dennis. "Empowering communities to manage natural resources: Where does the power lie?" *Empowering Communities to Mamage Natural Resources: Case Studies from Southern Africa,* compiled by Sheona Shackelton and Bruce Campbell, 2000, pp. 53-79.

Khamalo, Engress. "The Role of Initiation Ceremonies in the Construction of Gender

Identities: Studies in *Nsondo* and *Jando* Initiation Songs." Long Essay, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, 2018.

Kelbessa, Workineh. *Indigenous and Modern Environmental Ethics: A Study of the Indigenous Oromo Environmental Ethic and Modern Issues of Environment and Development*. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2010.

_____. "Africa, Sub-Saharan." *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1 – 2,* edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 10-18.

Kerridge, Richard. "Ecocriticism and the mission of 'English.'" *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies,* edited by Greg Garrard. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 11-23.

_____. "Ecocriticism." Chapter 18, The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory, 21, The English Association, 2013, pp. 346-374.

Kishindo, Pascal J. "Authority in Language: The Role of Chichewa Board (1972-1995) in Prescription and standardisation of Chichewa*." Journal of Asian and African Studies, No. 62*, 2001, pp. 261-283.

_____. "The Influence of Christianity on Selected Chichewa Writers: A Thumbnail Study." *Kalulu: a bulletin of Malawian oral traditions* edited by Enoch Timpunza Mvula, Chancellor College, 1982, pp. 2-17.

Klassen, Pamela. "Medicines." *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion* edited by
Michael Strausberg and Steven Engler, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 401-414.

Klein, B.A. "Insects and Humans: a relationship recorded in visual art." *Encyclopaedia of Human-Animal Relationships*, edited by Marc Bekoff, Greenwood Publishing, 2007, pp. 1-8.

Korpela, David. *The Nyau Masquerade: An Examination of HIV/AIDS, power and influence in Malawi*. Global Social Work, Tampere University Press, 2011.

Kostkowska, Justyna. *Ecocriticism and Women Writers: Environmental Poetics of Virginia Woolf, Jeanette Winterson, and Ali Smith*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Krikmann, Arvo. *Proverbs on Animal Identity: Typological Memoirs. Folklore 17. Electronic Journal of Folklore*. Folk Belief and Media Group, 2001.

Kull, Kalevi. "Foundations for Ecosemiotic Deep Ecology." *The Space of Culture – the place on Nature in Estonia and Beyond* edited by Tiina Peil, Turtu University Press, 2011, pp. 69-75.

Kumakanga, Stevenson. *Nzeru za Kale*. Longman Zambia Ltd. 1949, [1996].

Kupsch, Mary F. The Prince, the Punisher and the Perpetrator: Masculinity in Animal Monster Groom Tales. MA Thesis, Graduate School of the University of Oregon, 2017.

LaChappelle, Dolores. "Ritual – the Pattern that Connects." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 57-63.

Lauhakangas, Outi. "Use of proverbs and narrative thought." 2007. http://haldjas.folklore.ee/folklore/vol.35/lauhakangas.pdf.

Lean, Geoffrey, Ed. *Gender Equity and the Environment. TUNZA Youth Magazine Vol. 4. No. 4* [n.d.], www.unep.org or www.ourplanet.com.

Leavy, Barbara Fass. "The Animal Groom." *A Narrative on Folklore and Gender*. New York,University Press, 1995. https://www.stor.org/stable.j.ctt9qg995.7. Accessed 20/01/22.

Lejano, Raul P. "Relationality and Social-Ecological Systems: Going Beyond or Behind Sustainability and Resilience." *Sustainability Vol. 11*, 2019, pp. 1-9.

Lok, Tse Ching. “Capitalism, Ecological Crisis and the End of Histoey.” [n.d.]

Love, Glen A. *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. University of Virginia Press, 2003.

Luddeckens, Dorothea and Monika Schrimpf, Eds. *Medicine – Religion – Spirituality: GlobalPerspectives on Traditional Contemporary and Alternative Healing, Religious Studies Volume 13.* Transcript Verlag, 2018.

Lutwack, Leonard. *Birds in Literature*. University Press of Florida, 1994.

Lwanda, John. Politics, Culture, and Medicine in Malawi: Historical Continuities and Ruptures with special Reference to HIV/AIDS, PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002.

Lynn, White Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 3-14.

Lynn, William S. “Animal Studies.” *Encyclopaedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, edited by Marc Bekoff, Greenwood Press, 2010, pp. 42-45.

_____. “Practical ethics and human-animal relationships.” *Encyclopaedia of*

Animal Rights and Animal Welfare, edited by Marc Bekoff. Greenwood Press, 2010, pp. 422-427.

Machiorlatti, Jennifer A. “Ecocinema, Ecojustice, and Indigenous Worldviews: Native and First Nations Media as Cultural Recovery.” *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* edited by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi. University of Virginia Press, 2010, pp. 62-80.

Mafuta, Kishindo Lydia and Wellman Kondowe. *Miyambi ndi Nthano M’Chichewa*

(Chichewa Proverbs and Folktales). Dzuka Publishing Company Limited, 2017.

Magni, Giorgia. "Indigenous Knowledge and Implications for Sustainable Development Agenda" *UNESCO: Global Education Monitoring Report*, 2016.

Majumber, Bipasha. "A Revisionary Reading of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* from the Zoocritical Perspective." *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities vol. 5(5)*, 2017.

_____."'Could I have Done More?' An Exploration of *The Museum of Final Journeys* through the Lens of Zoocriticism." *Research Journal of English (RJOE) Vol. 4, Issue 1*, 2019, pp. 40-46.

Makumbi, Archibald J. *Maliro ndi Miyambo ya Achewa*. Longman (Malawi) (Pvt) Ltd., 1975.

Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC). *Cultural Practices and the Impact on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, Particularly the Rights of Women and Children in Malawi*. 2005.

Malthus, Thomas. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Electronic Scholarly Publishing, 1798 [1980.

Malunga, Chiku with Rick James. "Using African Proverbs in Organisational Capacity Building." *Praxis Note No. 6. The International NGO Training and Research Centre*, 2004.

Malunga, Grain W. Foreword. *Malawi State of Environment and Outlook Report*. Environmental Affairs Department, 2010.

Manda, Levi Zeleza. "Folktales for Development (F4D): A case study and exploration of Malawi Tonga folktales." *International Journal of Development and Sustainability Vol. 4 No. 5*, 2015, pp. 599-613.

Manes, Christopher: "Nature and Silence." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 15-29.

Mapanje, Jack. *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night*. Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2011.

Mason, D.R. "Reproduction in the male warthog *Phacochoerus aethipiocus* from Zululand, South Africa," *Journal of Zoology 21(1),* 1986, pp. 39-47.

Matiki, Alfred. "A Semiotic reading of proverbs used by the Chewa in Malawi." *Language Matters, 27(1),* 1996, pp. 46-55.

May, Victoria *et.al. A Review of Wildlife Crime Court Cases in Malawi 2010-2017*. Stop Ivory and Elephant Crisis Fund, 2017.

Mazumbar, M.R. "Ecocriticism." *Global Research Methodology Journal Vol 2(8),* 2012.

Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann, 1969.

McLaughlin, Andrew." The Heart of Deep Ecology." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by George Sessions, Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995, pp. 85-93.

Meeker, Joseph W. "The Comic Mode: The Biology of Comedy." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology,* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 155-169.

Mfune-Mwanjakwa, Damazio. "Language and embodied consciousness: A Peircean Ontological justification for First Language educational instruction and the need for regional lingua-francas in Africa." *J. Humanities*, 24. 2016, pp. 1-13.

Mines and Minerals Policy in Malawi. Ministry of Energy and Mining, 2007.

Mikusinski, Grzegorz. “Woodpeckers: distribution, conservation, and research in a global Perspective.” *Ann. Zool. Fennici Vol. 43*. Finnish Zoological and Botanical Publishing Board, 2006, pp. 86-95.

Millington, Steve J. and Madalitso Kaferawanthu. *Community Partnership for Sustainable Resource Management in Malawi (COMPASS II): Analysis of Biodiversity and Threat Opportunities in Malawi*, USAID, 2005.

Miller, David. “African knowledge and Sciences: Exploring the ways of knowing of Sub-Saharan Africa.” University for Development Studies, Ghana and Bertus Haverkort – COMPAS/ETC, The Netherlands, [n.d.].

Miller, Tyler Jr and Scott Spoolman. *Environmental Science, Problems, Concepts, and Solutions*. 12th Edition. Belmont: Thomas Brocks/Cole, 2008.

Molles, Manual C. *Ecology: Concepts and Applications*. Mc-Graw Hill Education, 2013.

Molina-Motos, David. “Ecophilosophical Principles for an Ecocentric Environmental Education.” *Education Sciences Vol. 9(37),* 2019, pp. 1-15.

Montaño, Orlando José Ferrer. “Ecology for Whom? Deep Ecology and the Death of Anthropocentrism.” *Opcion vol. 22 No. 50*, Universidad del Zulia, 2006, pp. 181-197.

Moran, Dermot. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. Routledge, 2000.

Morgan, Gary. “Introduction and Background to *Gule Wamkulu*.” *When Animals Sing and Spirits Dance Gule Wamkulu*: *the Great Dance of the Chewa People of Malawi* by Claude Boucher (Chisale), Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, 2012, pp.1-41.

Morris, Brian. *The Power of Animals*. Berg, 2000a.

_____. *Animals and Ancestors*. Berg, 2000b.

_____. *The History and Conservation of Mammals in Malawi*. Kachere Series, 2006.

_____. *Wildlife and Landscapes in Malawi: Selected Essays on Natural History*. Trafford Publishing, 2009.

_____. *Chewa Medical Botany: A Study of Herbalism in Southern Malawi*. MZUNU Press, 2018.

_____. *Insects in Human Life*. Berg, 2004.

_____. Foreword. *When Animals Sing and Spirits Dance Gule Wamkulu*: *the Great Dance of the Chewa People of Malawi* by Claude Boucher (Chisale), Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, 2012, pp. v-vii.

Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

_____. "Treating Objects like Women: Feminist Ontology and the Question of Essence." *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism* edited by Greta Gaard, Simon C. Estok and Serpil Oppermann. New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 56 – 69.

Moss, Marilyn and Joan Johnson-Freese. "Dancing fo Democracy: Understanding Malawi's First Female President." Published for the Foreign Policy Research Institute by Elsevier Ltd., 2013, pp. 268-281.

Mota, Moises Tchijica: "The Role of Folktales in Building Personality: The Case of the Lunda-Cokwe People of Angola" MA Thesis, University of South Africa, 2009.

Moto, Francis. “The Nyau Secret Society. Towards Enculturation of Religious Life.” *ARIMA*, 1994, pp. 22-25.

Moyo, Sam. “The Land Question and Land Reform in Southern Africa.” *Environmental Security in Southern Africa* edited by Daniel Tevera and Sam Moyo, Harare: Sapes Books, 2000.

Moyo, Themba. “Malawi’s Marginalisation of Indigenous Languages in Literary Publications.” *Alternation 8 (1)*, 2001, pp. 134-149.

Mphande, David K. *Tonga Proverbs from Malawi*. African Proverb Project, 2010.

Mthatiwa, Syned. “The Depiction of Forests/Tress and Malawi’s Rural Landscape in the Poetry of Lupenga Mphande and Zondiwe Mbano.” *Alteration* 14, 2, 2007, pp. 53-71.

_____. “Bird Metaphors in Jack Mapanje’s *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* and *Skipping Without Ropes*.” *Alternation 16.2*. 2009, pp. 13-34.

_____. “Human-Animal Relationships and Ecocriticism: A Study of the Representation of Animals in Poetry from Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa,” Doctoral Dissertation (Unpublished), University of Witwatersrand, 2011.

_____. “Singing Morality: Initiation Songs, Imagery, and Moral Education in Rural Malawi.” *Journal of Humanities 28(1)*, 2020, pp. 73-98.

Mulwafu, Wapulumuka Oliver. *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860 – 2000*. The White Horse Press, 2011.

Munthali, Alister C. *et.al.* “YES I DO. Initiation Ceremonies in Traditional Authority Liwonde in Machinga District in Southern Malawi: What do they look like now and before; and they do to influence young people’s behaviour regarding sex and relationships?” 2018.

Murry, Robin I. and Joseph K. Heumann. *That's All Folks? Ecocritical Readings of American Animated Features.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.

Musopole, Augustine Chingwala. *Journal of Development and Communication Studies, Vol. 5. No. 2*, July 2017 - June 2018, pp. 1-21. http://www.devcomsjournalmw.org.

Mvula, Enoch Timpunza. "Chewa Folk Narrative Performance." *Kalulu: a bulletin of Malawian oral traditions* edited by Enoch Timpunza Mvula, Chancellor College, 1982, pp. 32-45.

Naess, Arne. "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 64-84.

_____. "The Shallow and the Deep Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 151-155.

_____. "Deepness of Questions and Deep Ecology Movement." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 204-212.

_____. "The Deep Ecology: Eight Points Revisited." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995, pp. 213 221.

_____. "Equality, Sameness, and Rights." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 222-224.

_____. "Self-Realisation: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World" (pp. 225 – 239) *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 225-239.

_____. "Ecosophy and Gestalt Ontology." *Deep Ecology for the Twenty- First Century*, edited by George Sessions, Shambhala, 1995, pp. 240-245.

Naess, Arne and George Sessions. "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology." The Anarchist Library, 1984.

Naess, Arne and Alan Drengson. "Deep Ecology Movement." Revised article on DEM for Bioethics ed. 2012.

Nandi, Ishani Ed. *First Animal Encyclopeadia: A First Reference Book for Children*. Penguin Random House, 2004, [2015].

National Statistics Office. *2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census Main Report* – May 2019.

Nayar, Pramod K., *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism.* Pearson, 2010.

Nazombe, Mukomele Joseph Anthony. Malawian Poetry in English from 1970 to the Present Day: A Study of Myth and Socio-Political Change in the Work of Steve Chimombo, Jack Mapanje, Frank Chipasula and Felix Mnthali. PhD Thesis, Sheffield University, 1983.

Nicella II, Anthony J. *et.al*. Eds. *Anarchism and Animal Liberation: Essays on Conntemporary Elements of Total Liberation*. McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2015.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2011.

Ndau, Michael Emmanuel. A Study on the Church as God's Family in Relation to the Chewa Traditional Practice of *Nyau* in Central Malawi. MA in Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2015.

Ngam, Gilead Nkwain. “Orature and African Indigenous Economies: An Ecocritical Reading of the African Folktale.” *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science, Vol. 5 No. 3*, 2017, pp. 73-85.

Njiforti, Hanson Langmia. *The Biology and Management of the Wild Helmeted Guineafowl (Numida meleagris galeata Pallas) in the Waza Region of North Cmeroon*, 1997.

Nnamani, Nnamani Sunday. “The Role of Folk Music in Traditional African Society: The Igbo Experience.” *Journal of Modern Education Review, Vol. 4 No. 4*. Academic Star Publishing Company, 2014, pp. 304-310.

Nthala, Samuel Josia. *Nthondo (Man of Africa).* CLAIM, 1933.

O’Brien, Susie. “Nature’s Nation, National Natures? Reading Ecocriticism in a Canadian Context (1998).” *Greening the Maple: Canadian Ecocriticism in Context* edited by Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley, Calgary University Press, 2013, pp. 165-195.

Obiora, Alokwu Cyprian and Ezenwaji Emma Emeka. “African Indigenous Knowledge System and Environmental Sustainability.” *International Journal of Environmental Protection and Policy*, Science Publishing Group, 2015, pp. 88-96.

Oelschlaeger, Max. “Ecosemiotics and the sustainability transition.” *Sign Systems Studies 29.1*, 2001, pp.219-229.

Ogbalu, Janet U. “Significance of Trickster in Igbo Folktales in Education of the Child: A Lesson to all Nigerians.” *Journal of Fine Arts Vol. 1 Issue 4*, 2018, pp.13-21.

Ogunjimi, Bayo and Abdul-Rasheed Na’Allah. *Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance*. African World Press, Inc., 2005.

Okpewho, Isidore. *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character and Continuity*. Indiana University Press, 1992.

Olateju, Adesola. "The Yoruba Animal Metaphors: Analysis and Interpretation." *Nordic Journal of African Studies 14(3)*, 2005, pp. 368-383.

Olney, Shauna and Heather Viles. Preface. *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: Emerging Research on Traditional Knowledge and Livelihoods*. International Labour Organisation, 2019.

Omonzejie, Eunice. "Retelling Human and Non-Human Affiliations in Alain Mabanckou's *Memoireside porc-epic*: A Zoocritical Exploration" *Bhatter College Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, Vol. 3*, edited by Pabitra Kumar Mishra, 2013.

Onwuekwe, Agatha Ijeoma. "The cocio-cultural implications of African Music and Dance." [n.d.], pp. 171-185.

Oppermann, Serpil *et.al*. Eds. *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

Oppermann, Serpil. "Postmodern Theory: Interrelations between Ecological Quantum, and Postmodern Theories." *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, edited by Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby, University of Virginia Press, 2011, pp. 230-244.

_____. "Ecocriticism: Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder." *Journal of Faculty of Letters 16.2*, 1999, pp. 29-46.

_____. "Feminist Ecocriticism: A Posthumanist Direction in Ecocritical Trajectory." *International Perspectives in Feminist Ecocriticism*, edited by Greta Gaard. Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2013, pp. 19-36.

Ott, Martin. *African Theology in Images.* CLAIM, 2000.

Peil, Tiina Ed. *The Space of Culture – the Place of Nature in Estonia and Beyond*. Tartu University Press, 2011.

Paterson, Barbara. "Ethics for Wildlife Conservation: Overcoming the Human-Nature Dualism." *Thinking of Biology, Bioscience Vol. 56 No. 2*, 2006, pp. 144-150.

Petrovic, Milena and Nenad Ljubinkovic. "Imitation of animal sound patterns in Serbian Folk Music." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies Vol. 5 Issue 2*, 2011, pp. 101-118.

Phiri, Josiah E. *Kalenga ndi Mnzake*. Zambia Educational Publishing House, 1958.

Phiri, Kings M. "The Historiography of *Nyau*." *Kalulu: a bulletin of Malawian oral traditions* edited by Enoch Timpunza Mvula, Chancellor College, 1982, pp. 55-66.

Pires, Pedro. "Ecocentrism and Behaviour: A Bibliographic Review of Environmental Values." *Psicologia em Estudo, Maringá, Vol. 19, No. 4*, 2014, pp. 611-620.

Podos, J. and D.L. Mosely. "Vocal Communication in Birds." *Encyclopaedia of Neuroscience Vol. 10*, Elsevier Ltd, 2009, pp. 389 – 396.

Pollck, Mary Sanders and Catherine Rainwater. Eds. *Figuring Animals: Essays on Animal Images in Art, Literature, Philosophy and Popular Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Pope Francis. *Encyclical Letter* (*Laudato Si'*) "On Care for Our Common Home." Episcopal Conference of Malawi, Montfort Media, 2015.

Pullanikkatil, Deepa and Matthews Chilambo. *Bird Activity Book for Wildlife Clubs in Malawi.* Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi, 2010.

Ragusa, Antonio. "Plasticenta: First evidence of microplastics in human placenta." *Environment International Vol. 146*, 2021, pp. 1-23.

Rapport, Nigel and Joanna Overing. *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*. Routledge, 2000.

Reddy, Sanjay M. "The Eco-Criticism: A New Perspective of Literary Study" *Quarterly Research Journal vol. 1, Issue 2*, 2015.

Regan, Tom. "A case for Animal Rights." M.W. Fox and L.D. Mickley (Eds.), *Advances in Animal Welfare Science*. The Humane Society of the United States, 1986, pp. 179-189.

_____. *The Case for Animal Rights*. University of California Press, 1983 [2004].

_____. "Animal Rights." *Encyclopaedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, edited by Marc Bekoff. Greenwood Press, 2010, pp. 36-38.

_____. "The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights." *In Defence of Animal Rights,* edited by Peter Singer, Basil Blackwell, 1985, pp. 31-39.

Rickaby, Joseph S.J. *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation (with some Abridgement) of the Summa Contra Gentiles of St. Thomas Aquinas*, The Catholic Primer, 2005.

Rigby, Kate. "Response: From Ecocritical Reception of the Ancients to the Future of the Environmental Humanities (with a Detour via Romanticism)." *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity* edited by Christopher Schliephake. London: Lexington Books, 2017, pp. 299-307.

Risiro, Joshua. "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Environmental Management: A Case Study of Zaka District, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe" in *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, Vol. 2, No. 1*, 2013.

Robinson, Douglas. *The Deep Ecology of Rhetoric in Mencius and Aristotle: A Somatic Guide*. State University of Albany: New York Press, 2016.

Rodgers, Bonwell. *Agoloso Presents Miyambi ya Patsokwe*. The Series of Rodgers Bounty Books, 2016.

Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, London and Tanzania Publishing House, 1973, Reprint 1983.

Rolston III, Holmes. "Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World." *Ethics and the Environment: Reflecting on Nature* [n.d.], pp. 65-84.

_____. "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value." *Philosophy and the Natural Environment. Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 36* edited by Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 13-30.

_____. "Are Values in Nature Subjective or Objective?" *Environmental Ethics Vol. 4*, 1982, pp. 125-151.

Roscoe, Adrian and Mpalive-Hangson Msiska. *The Quiet Chameleon: Modern Poetry from Central Africa*. Hans Zell Publishers, 1992.

Rouhi, Mehri and Mohammad Rasekh Mahand. *Psychology Research Vol. 1, Issue 4*, David Publishing, 2011, pp. 251-254.

Rudd, Gillian. *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*. Manchester University Press, 2007.

Rueckert, William. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 105-123.

Rundell, Michael . Eds. *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Macmillan Education, 2006.

Rupp, Wayne L. Shape of the Beast: The Theriomorphic and Therianthropic Deities and Demons of Ancient Italy. PhD, Florida State University, 2007.

Ryan, John Charles. *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, National Centre for Biotechnology Information, Rockville Pike, 2020.

Ryder, Richard D. "Painism." *Encyclopaedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare*, edited by Marc Bekoff. Greenwood Press, 2010, pp. 402-403.

Sahu, Geeta. "Ecocriticism – Understanding the Relationship between Literature and the Environment in Indian English Novels" *Sai Om Journal of Arts and Education, Vol. 1, No.1*, Sai Om Publications, 2014.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1993.

Salmon, Enrique. "Kinecentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship." *Ecologial Applications vol. 10. No. 5*. 2000, pp. 1327-1332, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2641288.

Samuel, Sebel. "*Witsaja iki*, or the good life in Ecuadorian Amazona: knowledge co-production for climate resilience." *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: Emerging Research on Traditional Knowledge and Livelihoods*. International Labour Organisation, 2019.

Sax, Boria. *The Mythical Zoo: An Encyclopaedia of Animals in World Myth, Legend, and Literature*. ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2001.

Schliephake, Christopher Ed. *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity*. Lexington Books, 2017.

Schoffeleers, Matthew J. and A.A. Roscoe. *Land of Fire: Oral Literature from Malawi*. Popular Publications, 1985.

Schoffeleers, Matthew J. *River of Blood: The Genesis of a Martyr Cult in Southern Malawi, c. A.D. 1600*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Sealey, Leonard. Ed. *Macmillan Our World Encyclopaedia*. Macmillan Education Limited of London, 1974.

Sefa, George J. "African Indigenous Proverbs and the Institutional and Pedagogic Relevance for Youth Education: Lessons from Kiembu of Kenya and Igbo of Nigeria." *Journal of Education and Training Vol. 1(1)*, 2014, pp. 48-66.

Sessions, George Ed. *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1995.

_____. "Letter to the Editor from George Sessions: David Rothenberg, Pragmatism, and the Crowley/Deep Ecology Controversy" *ISEE, Newsletter*, 2006.

Sherman, Josepha Ed. *Storytelling: An Encyclopaedia of Mythology and Folklore Volumes 1 – 3*, M.E. Sharpe, Inc. [2008], 2011.

Shaŵa, Lester Brian and Boston Jaston Soko. *Tumbuka Folktales: Moral and Didactic Lessons from Malawi.* MZUNI Publications, 2010.

Sheik, Ayub. "The more than beautiful woman – African folktales of female agency and Emancipation, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2018, Routledge, pp. 43-53.

Siewers, Alfred K. Strange Beauty: *Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

_____. "Ecocriticism." *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, edited by Michael Payne and Jessica Rae Barbera, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010, pp. 205-210.

_____. "Pre-Modern Ecosemiotics: The Green World as Literary Ecology." *The Space of Culture – the space of Nature in Estonia and Beyond*, edited by Tiina Peil, Tartu University Press, 2011, pp. 39-68.

Simpson, Jacqueline and Steve Roud Eds. *A Dictionary of English Folklore*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Singano, Ellis and Adrian A. Roscoe. *Tales of Old Malawi*. Popular Publications, 1986.

Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. 40th Anniversary Edition, Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., [1975], 2015.

_____. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., [1975], 2002.

_____. "Animals." *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy,* edited by Dale Jamieson, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001, pp. 416-438.

Sivyer, Caleb. "A Scopophiliac Fairy Tale: Deconstructing Normative Gender in Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber'". *Gender and Fairy Tales. Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies, Issue 44*, edited by Beate Neumeier, 2013, pp. 45-61.

Slaymaker, William. "Ecoing the Others: The Call of Global Green and Black African Responses." *African Literature: Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyani and Ato Quayson Malden, Blackwell, 2007, pp. 683-697.

Slovic, Scott "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology: The Interiority of Outdoor Experience." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology,* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, The University of Georgia Press, 1996, pp. 351-370.

_____. "Ecocriticism 101: A Basic Introduction to Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature." *Social Sciences and Humanities, Pertanika Journals*, 2015, pp. 1-14.

_____. *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreat, and Ecocritical Responsibility*. University of Nevada Press, 2008.

_____. "Ecocriticism" (pp. 225 – 228) *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1– 2*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 225-228.

Smith, Brady. Book Reviews. Caminero-Santangelo, Byron. *Different Shades of Green: African Literature, Environmental Justice and Political Ecology*, 2014, pp. 189-192.

Sone, Enongene Mirabeau. "African Oral Literature and the Humanities: Challenges and Prospects" *Humanities*, 2018.

_____. "Nature in Crisis: An Ecological Construction and Conservation of the Environment in Swazi Oral Literature." *South African Journal of African Languages*, 34:2, 2014, pp. 195-205.

Soper, Kate. "What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human. Blackwell, 1995.

_____. "The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thought." *Comparative Critical Studies* 2(3), BCLA, 2005, pp. 303-309.

Soyinka, Wole. *Myth, Literature and the African World.* Cambridge University Press, 1996.

_____. *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*. New Horn Press, 1988.

Storm, Servaas. "Capitalism and Climate Change: Can the Invisible Hand Adjust the Natural Thermostat?" *Development and Climate Change 40(6),* Oxford: Blackwell, 2009, pp. 1011-1038.

Strømmen, Hannah M. Introduction to Special Issue, Encounters with Animals in Literature and Theology. *Literature and Theology Vol. 31, No. 4*, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 383-390. https://academic.oup.little/article/31/4/383/4668399, accessed 17/04/2021.

Styring, Alison Robinson. "Local, regional, and global patterns of woodpecker (Picidae) Diversity: Ecological explanations and Practical Applications." PhD Thesis (unpublished), Louisiana State University, 2002.

Sutton, Mark Q. and E.N. Anderson. *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*. Alta Mira Press, 2010.

Sztybel, David. "Animals as Persons." *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World,* edited by Jody Castricano. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008, pp. 241-257.

_____. "Animal Welfare and animal rights comparison." *Encyclopaedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare,* edited by Marc Bekoff. Greenwood Press, 2010, pp. 49-51.

Tally, Jr Robert T. and Christine M. Battista Eds. *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Spartial Literary Studies.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Talukder, Munir Hossain. "On Self-Realisation – The Ultimate Norm of Arne Naess's Ecosophy T." *Symposium 3(2)*, 2016, pp. 219-235.

Taylor, Bron and Michael Zimmerman: "Deep Ecology." *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature, Vol. 1*, edited by Bron Taylor, Continuum, 2005, pp. 456-460.

Taylor, Nik: "Anthropocentrism and the Animal Subject." *Anthropocentrism, Humans, Animals, Environments,* edited by Rob Boddice, Brill, 2011, pp. 265-279.

Taylor, Paul W. “The Ethics of Respect for Nature.” *Environmental Ethics Vol. 3*, 1981, pp. 197-218.

Terashima, Hideaki. “The Relationships among plants, animals, and man in the African Tropical Rain Forest.” *African Study Monograph, Suppl. 27*, 2001, pp. 43-60.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible containing the Old and New Testaments: New Revised Standard Version edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, Oxford University Press, Inc., 1994.

Torres, Bob. *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*. Oakland, AK Press, 2007.

Trump, Katharina. *Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade*. WW Germany International, 2017.

Tuker, Mary Evelyn. “Confucianism and Deep Ecology.” *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Grounds,* edited by David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 127-152.

Turin, Mark. Foreword. *Oral Literature in Africa* by Ruth Finnegan. Open Book Publishers, 2012, pp. xvii – xx.

Turpie, Jane *et.al*. *The Case for Banning Single-use plastic products in Malawi*. Report Prepared for UNDP on behalf of the Government of Malawi by Anchor Environmental Consultants in collaboration with Lilongwe Wildlife Trust. Anchor Environmental Consultants Report No. AEC/1836/1, 2019.

UNESCO. *Inventory of Malawi’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Volume I*, Compiled by L.C.J. Mazibuko and C.J. Magomelo, Malawi National Commission of UNESCO, 2011.

Van Breugel, J.W.M. *Chewa Traditional Religion*. CLAIM, 2001.

Vail, Leroy and Landeg White. *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History*. University Press of Virginia, 1991.

Van Huis, Arnold *et.al. Edible Insects: Future Prospects for Food and Feed Security*. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2013.

Vegter, A.C. "Globe Research Priorities to mitigate plastic pollution impacts on marine Wildlife." *Endangered Species Research Vol. 25*, 2014, pp. 225-247.

Vital, Anthony. "Towards an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology, and *Life and Times of Michael K*." *Research in African Literatures 39.1*, 2008, pp. 87-106.

Volkmann, Lawrenz *et.al*. Eds. *Local Natures, Global Responsibilities: Ecocritical Perspectives on the New English Literatures*. New York: Rodopi B.V., 2010.

Warren, Karen J. "Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1 – 2*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 228-236.

Waterland, Shelley. *Illegal Wildlife Trade Review, Malawi*, Germany Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ, and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, 2015.

Weisser, Christian and S.I. Dobrin Eds. *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. New York: State University of New York, 2001.

Whitt, Laurie Anne *et.al.* "Indigenous Perspectives." *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, edited by Dale Jamieson, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001, pp. 3-20.

Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula, Introduction: "From Literary to Cinematic Ecocriticism." *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* edited by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi. University of Virginia Press, 2010, pp. 1-22.

_____. "Shifting Paradigms: From Environmentalist Films to Ecocinema." *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* edited by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi. University of Virginia Press, 2010, pp. 43-61.

Windhager, Steve. "Fire." *Environmental Ethics and Philosophy Vol. 1 – 2*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman. Detroit and New York: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, pp. 425-428.

Wiredu, Kwasi. "On decolonising African religions." *The African Philosophy Reader* edited by P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, Routledge, 2003, pp. 21-38.

Wong, Rita. "Decolonisation: Reading Asian and First Nations Relations in Literature (2008)." *Greening the Maple: Canadian Ecocriticism in Context*, edited by Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley, University of Calgary Press, 2013, pp. 329-355.

Wu, Chengyi Coral: "Towards an African-Focused Ecocriticism: The Case of Nigeria" PhD Thesis, University of Nevada, 2016.

Wyndham, Felice and Karen E. Park. "'Listen Carefully to the Voices of the Birds': A Comparative Review of Birds as Signs." *Journal of Ethnobiology, Vol. 38(4)*, 2018, pp. 533-549.

Yang, Tongjin. "Toward an Egalitarian Global Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Ethics and International Policy*, UNESCO, 2006, pp. 23-45.

Yaron, Gil *et.al*. *Economic Valuation of Sustainable Natural Resource Use in Malawi*. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2011.

Zapf, Hubert. Ed. *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*. Walter de Gruyter, GmbH, 2016.

_____. "Ecocriticism in the Twenty-First Century: The Return of culture to Writing about Nature." *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 45-50.

Zheng, Baiquing. “From Courtly Love to Snow White.” *Gender and Fairy Tales. Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies, Issue 44* edited by Beate Neumeier, 2013, pp. 3-12.

Zubieta, Leslie F. “Animals’ Role in Proper Behaviour: Chewa Women’s Instructions in South-Central Africa.” *Conservation and Society Vol. 14(4),* 2016, pp. 406-415.