

Madness as Ecological Consciousness in Bole Butake's *Lake God* and
John Nkengasong's *Black Caps and Red Feathers*

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Abstract

This paper seeks to demonstrate that madness is not perceived in its strict sense but it can equally stand for ecological sensitization as indicated by Butake and Nkengasong's dramaturgy. The plays of these playwrights indicate that environmental advocacy is a strange phenomenon in the universe and is welcomed by a few persons in the community who are regarded as strange beings in the midst of destructive and domineering humans. The paper argues that modernity and technological development have blinded humanity to an extent that anyone who still holds to environmental conservation is seen as a mad person. Madness is a complex word and the root cause of stigmatization, whose existence and concreteness can be seen in its interpretation. Its paradox lies in its existence or complexities when analyzed. According to Sueellen Campbell, madness is an aspect of the society which humans do not want to accept. Wild, on her part, sees madness as the strange behaviour or frenzy state in man. Madness exposes some realities of man's true self which he does not want to acknowledge in his life/ society. The methodology adopted for this paper is a comparative

and an analytical study of the texts. The article is predicated on the hypothesis that madness is not often regarded in its pure state but often incubates a certain reality when analysed.

The theoretical framework used for the analysis of this paper is ecocriticism that addresses the question of ecological consciousness. Ecocriticism is a theory of literary criticism that studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment as defined by Glotfelty Cheryll and it is relevant in treating the issues discussed here. This work is based on Sueellen Campbell's tenet which holds: "From the Middle Ages on, in different ways at different times, we have called mad what we do not want to acknowledge in ourselves, what we do not want to acknowledge in our society [...]" Glotfelty & Fromm, 128). It considers madness as a means of societal escapism from environmental truth. Campbell's view is of interest as he evokes the term madness which is in light with the objective of the paper. Only abnormal people dodge from societal obligations and stigmatise the just as they are called mad. The conclusion arrived at is that environmental protection is still observed by a handful of persons as a reality. Humans have a long way to go and need sensitization talks in order for it to be understood. Those interested in ecological conservation are termed mad and end up with name calling/ stigmatized as mad.

Keywords: Madness, Ecological Consciousness, Ecocriticism, and Drama.

Introduction

George Nyamndi opines that Bole Butake is widely acclaimed as one of Cameroon's leading playwrights. According to this critic, the reasons for this acclamation is to be sought both in the steadfastness with which Butake has maintained himself among his country's front line artists and his talents which reveal itself in his plays (Jick & Oben,51). Nyamndi's remarks tie with the investigation carried out as Butake's creative worth and ingenuity are as well witnessed in the manner in which he tackles environmental issues. Butake and

Nkengasong have tactfully used madness to educate their readers on the on-going ecological crisis and they have formed a niche where fellow humans stigmatise and attribute names to other humans as mad for the sake and love of the non-humans. Ecological consciousness is understood as the awareness and education about one's surrounding. Ecology deals with topical issues about "Mother Earth". That is, it has to do with what occurs in the biosphere, how the earth is perceived and treated by Man, how writers present and address the environment in their texts and how the outer world reacts to human activities and why they do react the way they do. Consciousness in this context will be presenting how humans understand and have understood the world, educating and awakening human minds as stewards of the ecosystem as entrusted to them by the Creator.

Madness is a technique used by most writers to evade from some societal realities and from censorship. George Kahari insinuates this connection to Marechera as he says: "According to Plato, [...] Marechera is really a mad writer. He is inspired by the muses, by the spirits, and therefore he writes very madly [...] It's some kind of controlled madness which is not appreciated by people who are used to listening to stories that are being censored" (Veit-Wild, 61).

Just as Kahari observes Marechari, Butake and Nkengasong write in order to sound out the impurity and pollution in their surrounding which can be better expressed using the strange ways of the protagonists in their plays. It also serves as a muse to writers who, as of the time of writing, are no longer themselves but are possessed by the spirit of their imagination. Veit-Wild in her analysis on mad writing sees it as 'someone who is set apart from society and has extraordinary powers of insight and imagination' (60). The playwrights have projected in their writings to show how environmental protection is seen as an insane act.

This analysis is applicable in Butake's *Lake God* and Nkengasong's *Black Caps and Red Feathers* which both contribute to the enhancement of the themes discussed in the texts. Scott Matthew Wallin stresses, that "... madness is also a valuable resource for theatre. Madness is used as a theatrical device to push the limits of acting and audience expectations." (Wallin, 1) Mbi Nchia reiterates in her paper that: " Nkengasong uses the technique of mental disorder through which the protagonist Ngwe Nkemasah, recounts his ordeal as experienced from the lone University of Besaardi in the bilingual State of Kamangola [...]" (*Dunia: The Reader Magazine*,2). Madness is just a device which allows communication to take place without a guilty conscience and for a free censorship. In undertaking this study, inspiration will be drawn from Scott's submission.

Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism, is a theory of literary criticism that studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment as defined by Glotfelty Cheryll which is relevant in treating the issues under study. Ecocriticism is the relationship between literature and the environment. It enables critics of literature to interpret texts with ecological and environmentalist tenets in mind. This therefore means that literary texts, as cultural tools can create awareness or raise awareness. This is because humans who are the key for literary imitation (we are referring to Platonic and Aristotelian definitions of literature as human actions) are today regarded as destroyers of nature. In the words of Lynn White Junior, human beings have been at the centre of destroying animals like crops. He writes that both modern science and modern technology especially that of the *Occidental*, have been very negative in their way of treating nature. (Glotfelty & Fromm, 6).

The term ecocriticism shows therefore that literature also interprets and analyses human actions in relation to the natural environment. It is clear that ecocriticism as a theory

equally functions as a broker between the human community and the natural community. Since, it is clear as we learn from Lynn White that the human race, especially guided with ideologies, has separated themselves from the natural. Hans Peter Duerr says that “people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them” (Glotfelty & Fromm,16). Manes argues that human culture has tended to neglect and have little or no regard to nature.

While defining ecocriticism, Glotfelty reiterates that “just as feminist examines literature from a gender-conscious perspective and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes production and economic class to its reading of texts” (Glotfelty & Fromm, xiii). Ecocriticism, according to her, brings out the relationship between literature and the environment. Her comparison of feminism and Marxism to ecocriticism shows that this theory is not only a literary ideology, it is also a political movement. It is left in its nature and like Marxism and feminism, it seeks to transform the world towards an eco-friendly interpretation of literary works.

Greg Garrard in *Ecocriticism* defines this theory as a study which explores ways we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in areas of cultural production. He further says that ecocriticism is motivated by, but also critical of modern environmental movements. Garrard’s works trace the origin of ecocritical movement and explores the issues which have bothered ecocritics.

Ecocriticism is unique amongst contemporary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology, but they must nevertheless transgress disciplinary boundaries and develop their own ‘ecological literacy’ as far as possible. I therefore provide brief discussions of some environmental threats faced by the world today[...] it is essential for ecocritics to recognize that there are serious arguments about the

existence of the problem, their extent, the nature of the threat and the possible solution to them. (Gerrard,5)

Garrard is assured that this theory and the science of ecology cannot be separated. Ecology borrows from ecological science to sustain itself and create environmental literacy. Ecocriticism has gone a long way to provide debates about the crisis in the environment and to involve the complications involved in seeking lasting solutions to the problem which is the exploitation of the biosphere and its species.

In addition, Simon Estok defines ecocriticism in these words:

If we assume that ecocriticism is ethically committed to promoting the health of the biosphere of which we and other animals are a part, then the many uses to which people put non-human animals must surely be important, especially given the degree to which these uses impact negatively on the well-being of the biosphere. Statistics on one of these uses, meat production, for example are easily found, showing that meat pollutes more, uses more resources, and causes more suffering in the world. (Estok, 3)

Estok argues that the reason for this approach is to ensure that both the humans and the non-humans should have equal rights to health conditions. Pollution from meat needs much to be desired. Reason being that the sudden extinction of some species in the society is the cause for concern as this pollutes the atmosphere more than other diet.

From the various proponents, it is certain that ecocriticism is suitable for the analysis of Butake and Nkengasong's plays for ecological sensitization.

Butake's *Lake God* narrates the holocaust which befalls an entire clan due to the Fon's westernized education. He embraces the Whiteman's religion at the detriment of his culture and his subjects. The Fon takes the reverend priest as his model and ignores the divine

priest who serves as the eyes of the gods and the ancestors. The Fon's neglect of Shey Bo Nyo causes great trouble as the Father and the Fon tend to mislead the community. They fail to adhere to Shey's warning and even Angela cautions her husband to follow his people's way but the Fon does not do so. The subplot of *Lake God* presents a group of women who have taken action to chase the cattle from their farms since the Fon and their husbands are not ready to react to their problem. These women come up with a strategy that would compel the resistant group (the men folk) to follow their demands. The women are faced with the problem of farmer-grazier. Their farmland is at Ngangba which happens to be the same area where the herdsman Dewa goes to graze his cattle. The conflict is at this level where these cattle go and feed on the women's maize which is the staple meal of their area. The madness here is portrayed in the action taken by the women which is the starvation of their husbands and in order to succeed, they take an oath of sealed lips. These women tie up Dewa on a bamboo bed and take him to the palace to request that his kind (the graziers) should leave the village or the cattle if they decide to stay. The Fon, guilty of this, instructs Dewa to pay each woman the sum of two thousand francs which they reject and leave his palace. The next step affects the entire men folk and the reverend priest tries to persuade the women to change their action but his effort goes in vain. The conflict at both plots ends with the devastation of the entire clan the humans and the non-humans. The survivors are representatives of each generation who are well placed to educate the next generation.

Nkengasong's *Black Caps and Red Feathers* is a story of two characters acted at the rubbish heap and at the leader's palace. It is a historical play and it is all about dictatorship. Traourou is mentioned but he is not seen on stage. Creature is the main protagonist whose predicament has transformed him as a mad person. The socio-political realities of his society are built on corruption, lies telling, tribalism, and nepotism. Creature stands tall amidst all these happenings as he is determined to speak the truth despite all the empty promises made

by the leader and his entourage to him in a struggle to buy (corrupt) his conscience. He does this at the risk and detriment of his family and his life. Towards the end of the play, Traourou's spirit in the character of Voice visits Creature to confess, lament, and regret how badly he has treated Creature. He begs for daily provision from Creature who tends down his request. The play ends on a positive note as Narrator asks the villagers to cleanse the land which has been soiled with bad governance and greed in the name of power maintenance.

Textual Analysis

Butake and Nkengasong have used madness as a device to raise an alarm in this contemporary era of environmental degradation. Both playwrights have diligently used language and the characters to represent how society operates when it comes to environmental protection. The term ecological consciousness as defined by Aldo Leopold refers to the "ethical community" From the perspective of our study, it is understood as the awareness and education about one's environment. Ecology deals with topical issues concerning "Mother Earth". That is, it has to do with all the occupants of the biosphere, how the earth is perceived and treated by man, how writers present and address the environment in their texts and how the outer world reacts to human activities and why they do react the way they do. In brief, the consciousness in this context will be on how humans understand the world, educate, and awake humans' minds as stewards of the ecosystem as entrusted to them by the Creator.

Madness is a complex noun and it is used by various persons to designate different meanings. It is perceived in society as a strange behavior which is not accepted or recognized by its inhabitants. In its real sense, madness is often witnessed at the physical state, when one is unkempt and mentally ill. Flora Veit-Wild attributes madness to a variety of significations. According to her, "while it can mean an agitated state of mind such as frenzy, mature or

recklessness, it is also a synonym of insanity that is for a mental disorder, a psychopathology” (Veit-Wild, 2). Wild further quotes Sontag who contends that:

The perception that some people are crazy is part of the history of thought, and madness requires a historical definition. Madness means not making sense – means saying something that does not have to be taken seriously. But this depends entirely on how a given culture defines sense and seriousness; the definitions have varied widely through history, [...] A mad person is someone whose voice doesn't want to listen to, whose behavior is intolerable, who ought to be suppressed. Different societies use different definitions of what constitutes madness. (That is of what does not make sense.) (Ibid,2)

Veit-Wild sees madness as the word denotes from the way society interprets one's strange attitude or going contrary to the norm. It is in this light that we derive our working definition.

When one takes a close look at the central characters in the texts, it is observed that they are stigmatized with madness due to the eco-justice they portray towards their environment. The leaders and their entourage do not understand how normal persons will give their lives for the sake of a non-living thing which lacks breath. Butake's *Lake God* exhibits this issue of madness in the plot and in the subplot. In the main plot, Shey Bo-Nyo is the divine priest and the eyes of the ancestors. He is the mediator between the living and the non-living. The reverend priest, the Fon and some of the villagers seem not to understand Shey's position. When he goes to caution the Fon, he is called “mad man” and Shey of the gods”. This is evident in Father Leo and Fon Joe's conversation:

Voice: Terror! God of terror! Terror!

I say God of terror!

Father Leo: It is Shey of the gods again.

Fon: That mad man again! (to guards) Stop him! (9)

From the brief dialogue, one already finds signals of emphasis and repetition from the speakers. The use of 'again' symbolize Shey's persistent coming to the palace to warn the Fon on his abandonment of the culture and surrounding. He is not tired and prefers to lay down his life for the sake of his environment. He is a thorn in the flesh of Father Leo and Fon Joseph acknowledges it:

Fon: Why is he always accusing me?

Father Leo: Typical behavior of the mad. They always have an obsession. Something to cling to. Something they repeat all the time. I wouldn't pay any attention. What trouble have I brought to this village? And yet he says the white man will kill people and destroy the land. Sheer madness (9-10).

It is obvious from Father Leo that Shey is a pest. He is not only considered mad and obsessed with his culture but he is equally a problem to these two. Campbell opines that we regard others mad, when we do not want to acknowledge in ourselves and acknowledge in the society. Shey Bo-Nyo is simply reminding and reiterating the fact that Fon Joe has forgotten the implication of not performing the annual sacrifice to the lake god. The sacrifice is an epitome of blessings, good yield to the land, fruitfulness, peace and prosperity. The lake god symbolizes continuity. Shey's fear is that if the Fon does not perform this ritual, a tragic event might befall the community.

In addition, the Reverend priest expresses his failure to convert Shey Bo Nyo. He is always talking about sacrifice to his lake god" (10) When one listens to Father Leo's talk, one rather takes him to be mad as he has not understood the people's culture and how it works for them. His worry about conversion of Shey informs the audience of his ignorance and an

intruder to this community. This is attested by Fon Joesph whose comparison to both of them is likened by father as blasphemy. The Fon notes: “He will never be converted, father. He is the priest of the lake god as you are the priest of the Almighty God in heaven (10).

Butake uses the Fon to clarify the reverend priest about the importance of every person in a community. No one is superior to the other and for life to be comfortable on earth, there is need for interdependence at all levels (the humans and the non-humans). It equally makes humans incooperate the cultural and the religious for a pure blend. At the end of the play, the playwright ridicules Father Leo and Fon Joe as they die as a consequence of their disobedience.

Another group that goes to the palace to meet the Fon is the women. They go to tell the Fon that all is not well. They have been battling and challenged with the presence of the cattle in their farms. However, the Fon’s shortsightedness blinds him from reasoning and he rather expresses his greed and corrupt nature. He puts the blame on the cattle grazier and the women leave the palace unattended or without a solution. The Fon’s action pushes the women to go contrary the dictates of their culture. They use nature (their bodies) to resolve the farmer/ grazier problem. The women take an oath, as they decide to starve their husbands from the conjugal right and even physical food with a pretext of chasing cattle from the farms. The men see their wives’ action as madness and question to know where they got such guts especially as they are the ones who paid their bride prices. If Butake empowers his female characters, it is in order for him to sensitise humans on environmental protection which includes everybody. It is a clarion call that if humans do not safeguard the land entrusted to their care, then worst things can happen only to remind or awake them from slumber. The men, their husbands are the only ones with a solution as they decide to meet the Fon and solve this problem in order to continue to benefit their marital privileges. The

women's mad action compels the men to confront the Fon thereby seeking for solutions to environmental preservation.

The next set of people who move to the palace is the Kwifon who abducts the Fon to involuntarily go and perform the sacrifice to the lake god. Unfortunately, death strikes them on their way to the place of sacrifice. All attempts to create awareness to the Fon and Father Leo, become futile. The Kwifon's actions are particularly considered insane as they are the political advisers of the Fon and the Fon is answerable to them, it becomes questionable and outrageous that instead of dialoguing, power becomes a solution to protect the land. The only solution to this problem is going contrary to the Fon and the priest. The women take up power upon their shoulders. They go to oath taking and their husbands consider their women's actions as madness. The reverend priest denounces these women's action as he convenes a doctrine class immediately after a morning mass which ends unproductive. However, all the efforts made to stop the women prove unfruitful. Father Leo is rather the one who seems to be going crazy as his multiple actions to convert the villagers are unproductive and even Angela encourages her husband –the Fon to appease the gods. This sounds strange to her Christian husband. This entire attempt is to secure the biosphere.

The context of Shey's madness is understood in terms of his insistence that the Fon who has abandoned and neglected the land entrusted to him by his late father should offer sacrifices to the Lake God. Shey is bent on saving the lives of the villagers to the extent of giving up his own life and family as he is constantly at the grove to intercede to the gods. Boy confirms Shey's madness after the explosion of the lake as he questions and is clarified by Woman who is taken aback by the fact that Boy and his friends used to go for hunting at the grove:

Man: Do you know Shey Bo-Nyo?

Boy: Of course, I know him. Everybody knows the mad Shey who lives in the bush. Whoever listened to a mad man?

Man: So, someone did forbid you from hunting rats in the grove. And Shey Bo-Nyo was never mad. He is not mad.

Boy: A man leaves his wives and children and is living alone in the bush, running after boys with a spear because they are hunting rats and you say he isn't mad?

Woman: Son, Shey Bo-Nyo never abandoned his family. He only went to the grove from time to time to make sacrifices to the lake god. But he always returned to his family. I wonder what has become of them. (32-33)

From the above conversation, it is understood that not only Father Leo and the Fon considered Shey mad, as Boy says “everybody knows the mad Shey who lives in the bush. Who ever listened to a mad man?” (52) (This proves that Shey’s obsession for his culture and his duty to the gods have consciously or unconsciously led to others perceiving him as “mad”. It is ironical that Shey who has sacrificed his family comfort and stayed in the bush, ran after small boys because he is conscious of the dangers these boys’ hunting have on the environment makes him mad in the eyes of others. The grove is another means of preserving an untamed land since it is seen as a place of the gods, which as tradition demands is not supposed to be tampered with by humans. This culture enables humans to preserve the environment or at least parts of it.

Shey’s life is saved as a means to pass across the cultural knowledge on to the next generation. At the end of the play, Butake uses Woman to educate and clarify Boy and the readers that Shey is not mad but he is a man and a father who sacrificed his whole life for the welfare of the entire community. Though, the non-humans (lake god) ends up not

recognising his family at the end of the play, he is still contented and passes the Ngem(power) unto the next generation.

Nkengasong's *Black Caps* is an epitome of madness in disguise. The playwright handles ecological consciousness through an insane character who lives at the mercy of a rubbish heap. The author satirises humans who think they are too intelligent and conscious of their surrounding only to teach them how foolish they act. This he does using Creature, the protagonist whose physical appearance is almost nude and his surrounding is as natural as humans have rendered it as it has been transformed into a degradable area, polluted by humans. Creature's description is captured in these words:

Not far from the heap, is a fire smoking lazily from beneath a tripod of rough stones. On it stands an old can which serves as a pot. Just by is a bundle stuffed with assortments-old tins, rags, bones, etc. Besides is a sheaf of rusty papers.

On the other heap, facing the fire and the bundle, Creature, aged about fifty, is squatted on a stone, his legs and hands brought together as if they were in chains. He has exceptionally a big long bone in his hand. He leans backward, dozing. He is almost nude except for a tattered pair of knickers that reveals part of his phallus resting on his left thigh. He remains fixed in that position staring thoughtfully into space. (9)

Creature's attire and surrounding is not that transformed and he lives like early man, but for the fact that he lives at the mercy of the humans who comprise the berets (soldiers) and Traourou who comes to dump at the rubbish heap in a bid to win him to their camp but to no avail. This is evident as he parodies and also narrates the promises he receives. "We'll send you to stay in the Alps. With your entire family. White men will do your desire. Serve you like a king. You will never know sorrow or anger or torture or poverty. We'll send you with lots of clan's money. You will be a happy man...a king if you swear to the clan that you

told a lie. If you tell them Ganje was not dead. That he was abroad on mission for the good of the entire clan. You promise to tell the clan? We go?”(13-14)

This extract rather presents Traourou and his men as mad. They think that life consists only of merry making and forget about human dignity and personality. Creature would rather be seen as a mad person than sell his conscience for material possession and to encourage environmental pollution as in the case of Ganje and his family members who earn death as a sign of their resistance to ecological destruction and pollution by the leader of his clan.

In addition, madness is viewed as a sensitization strategy as Traourou sends berets and other persons to convince Creature renounce his words of truth about Ganje and Bobe Ngom's death. He uses not only berets to persuade Creature, but he also uses food, family ties and promises which do not move Creature. Creature is persecuted in order to refute the truth he openly told the villagers. This resistance of Creature to abide to the abnormal and corrupt actions of the leader grant him the title mad man as Sueellen Campbell observes: “we have called mad what we do not want to acknowledge in ourselves, what we do not want to acknowledge in our society [...]” Glotfelty & Fromm, 128). This is a typical situation of Campbell's words portrayed in *Black Caps*.

Nkengasong's handling of madness is also seen in the setting and characterization in *Black Caps*. The play is set on rubbish heap which confirms the theme of madness and the names of characters as Lunatic and Creature. The setting of the play shows humans's degradable attitude which ruins the beauty of the Earth. Humans have made themselves comfortable to the stage where they do not think that their lack of stewardship to the surrounding can cause ill health and other effects which might put them in danger. Nkengasong equates and debases humans as he give names which reduce them to the non-humans they under look. It is an ecological strategy to sensitise man on his environment. To

make it convincing he uses the stream of consciousness which warrants each character to air his mind in shifts.

It is important to note how Nkengasong successfully handles the technique of madness using the stream of consciousness which is a method of narration that describes happenings in the flow of thoughts in the minds of character when Creature brandishes his sceptre while pondering about the reason for Traourou not coming to the heap, he claims his birth right over the heap and contrasts this to other leaders who shed blood before acceding to the throne. He is uncontestable as he truthfully says when he brandishes the “big long bone”, “(*Flexes out his chest to assume a posture of majesty, then pointing to the heap.*) I am manor of this lot not by conspiracy or intimidation. Who contests with me here? Let him show up if he won’t lose his head. (*Takes dignifying steps round the heap.*) It’s my natural right and belonging” (35).

His speech is laden with multiple reasons for the fight to gain power. He discloses to the audience, how generations have killed others, and those who prefer riches, wealth with bloody hands. His throne therefore is natural and no one can dare fight him. William Slaymaker quotes Kwaku Asante-Darko who holds the view that fiction should “embody a pedagogy of ecological awareness” and “have a positive influence on the way readers are expected to treat the environment” (690).

From the above analysis, it is evident that Nkengasong intends that the readers should be conscious that humans cannot contest with the environment and emerge victorious. It is not surprising that humans have surrendered in the face of these environmental challenges. Creature who represents a non-human has boldly said and thrown the challenge to which humans such as Traourou and his berets have confessed that they cannot survive without nature, this explains why Traourou finally comes to beg from Creature.

Another element which portrays madness as an environmental sensitization is Creature's thought-provoking display of power. Creature is the owner of the rubbish heap by birth right and he is not guilty of any bloodshed as Traourou who has killed souls and still kills in order to maintain his position as king. At the end of the play, Voice comes back and meets Creature for his survival as he is not fairly treated by the people in the Alps. He comes to self realization which though late as Creature earlier opined: "Let him show up if he won't lose his head" (35). It sounds interesting and ironical as Voice seems to have lost his body, soul and head before venturing to come to Creature's venue - the rubbish heap. It is his ghost that comes to reconcile in order to be at peace with his conscience and environment since he is not recognized in the Alps. Creature does not listen to his plea and treats him as he treated Creature and killed all his family members. We therefore wonder who is actually mad, when Voice comes back to confess to Creature and is filled with a remorseful heart towards all his deeds which do not give him any pleasure as he thought or was promised. All he gets is pains, misery, rejection and regrets. It teaches the audience that nature is patient, tolerant and receptive despite humans' reactions. It is welcoming and understanding. Humans often turn to nature when it is late. Nkengasong uses this play to expose human's wickedness and for humans to ameliorate their ways.

After a series of questions and answers between Voice and Creature, (pause. Voice is not heard again. Creature stares round suspiciously, then blinking as he weeps.) "Gods of my ancestors, bastards have brought woe to the clan. A king in the clan is supreme but his subjects are more supreme. A red feather on a king's black cap is a committed token of love and service to the clan. A king shoots an elephant and shares it to the clan. It is not taken to the Alps as Traourou and his men do." (48) At this level, one tends to question who the mad person is. Is it the corrupt and wicked leader or is it Creature who speaks on behalf of nature? From Creature's utterances, one concludes that he has been stigmatized as mad

because his ways, words and approach are different from the multitude and followers of Traourou. This scene teaches one to rule with love and concern for nature and humans.

Nkengason's play ends with the destruction of his kingdom with the king not having a place to lay his head. The leader's reign fails as Creature decries: " Hoi! Traourou! Was it a plan of yours to untie the knots of the earth and let it crumble on my head? What mad world! Mad Traourou! Mad, mad king Traourou! Send your berets ... So I can be freed...(Loud) Traourou...Traourou... Free me...Fre-e-e-e me-e-e..." (50). Creature's possession of the bone in hand shows power connected with his surrounding in order for things to move smoothly as before. At the end of the play, Lunatic prescribes the cure of such a land. Its cure is simply elements of the land like palm-oil, salt, palm-wine to appease the ancestors for the mismanagement of the land.

The discussion of *Lake God* and *Black Caps and Red Feathers* has shown, and admittedly in a very preliminary fashion, how ecocriticism might open up some new, important ways of looking at African literary texts in terms of environmental concerns and, at the same time, how these texts might be linked with recent study of conservation in Africa and Cameroon in particular. This paper concludes that when one is a conservative to his surrounding without disfiguring the face of the earth, he is seen as a mad person because modernity does not give room to conservation. Modernity and technological advancement have misled humanity to destruction and western beliefs as opposed to our traditional and cultural beliefs, where we see nature as a refuge of ancestral lineage. The divine priest is regarded as an insane person as the subjects are marveled with his attitude of living all his life for the gods and preserving nature. This is well illustrated where he chases little boys who go for hunting around the grove. This image is equally painted in *Black Caps* as Creature persistently rejects Traourou's offers and puts his family members' lives at risk as they are all murdered by the leader. This portrays real ecological madness for the main protagonists in

both plays. These plays are engrossingly passionate about the environment to the extent of using characters who would rather be called mad for the sake of the ecosphere. This is how both authors wish that humans should relate and react towards nature. If humans are to become so protective and possessive about nature, then this environmental issue will become history.

Furthermore, this paper also reveals that women are environmental activists and protectors. Butake has empowered his women from a patriarchal background that relegated women as empty vessels to an activist role. This action challenges the socio-cultural sector and make the people (men folk) reshape their notion about women in the society. The women succeed in their struggle as the men decide to look for a solution in a bid to continue enjoying their marital benefits.

This article further emphasizes that humans and the non-humans are interdependent. This is witnessed in both plays that when men separate themselves from their environment, it always reacts against them and destroys souls. Those who are termed mad end up being the vectors. These plays have enabled humans to address their actions and their mentality.

Butake and Nkengasong have explored madness in their works and the analysis has proven that characters that stand for ecological preservation and cultural sustenance have been regarded as mad, not any less than those who act recklessly towards the environment. Fortunately, the authors have come up with vectors through which they pass across their ecological views. This is through characters who are steadfast to conservative methods and stick to them in the face of adversity and even when their very existence is threatened. The writers have brought out aspects of the green through education and the change of settings. Madness in these texts is discussed with the help of different stylistic devices. The analysis equally demonstrates that madness is subjective. It only represents anyone who goes contrary to the norms of an established society.

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