

## REIMAGING THE PASTORAL IN BARINE NGAAGE'S *SONG OF DAWN*

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### Abstract

Creative texts deploring the oil-induced destruction of the natural environment of the Niger Delta parsimoniously romanticize the lost pastoral environment. The idealization of the pastoral is stimulated not by an interest to essentialize the pastoral, but by a concern with the oil politics in Nigeria with its vitiating import for the human dependants on the environment. As instantiated in Olaniyi Okunoye's "Alterity, Marginality and the national Question in the Poetry of Niger Delta" and a few other essays are examined in this paper, the concern for the effects of the oil politics is also heaved into the scholarship generated by the environmental texts. Departing from the anthropocentric focus of much of the literary scholarship on the Niger Delta environment, this paper with a slant towards culture and environment intersection in Ecocriticism, examines in Barine Ngaage's *Song of Dawn* the imbrication of culture and the environment. The collection reveals a culture and nature interface in which both establish their utility on the basis of the existence of the other with neither being dominant over the other.

**Keywords:** Niger Delta, oil politics, poetry, *Song of Dawn*

### Introduction

At no time in human history have the perilous effects of human's deleterious activities against nature been more felt than in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Humans' daily engagements to modernize society have continued to catalyze the modifications in the biodiversity, humans and non-human-nature imbrication globally. To Eco-critics, the sustained devaluation of nature is facilitated by its subordination to humans' materialistic and damaging activities.

The continuous destruction of the environment has prompted nostalgia for the idyllic past in the eco-conscious globally. For the litterateurs, the nostalgia is expressed through imaginative engagements that idealize the rustic past. Roger Rosenblatt's contention that nature remains inspiratory to man's creative pastime validates this point (qtd in Glen Love 65). Greg Garrard (38) traces the attempt to reimage nature, particularly the pastoral, to classical Alexandrian poet, Theocritus. Garrard (37) also argues that the pastoral midwifed ecological concern in America's precursory nature writings of Henry Thoreau, Walden Emmerson, and Racheal Carson who attempt to reconnect nature to humans. The attempts are trans-historical as Lawrence Buell

also identifies in William Faulkner's *The Light August* the attempt to reconnect humans to the landscape (172). The attempt to re-join with the landscape through literary engagements, consequently, is an attempt to rewire man and nature sometimes through the exploration of the pastoral. Pastoral is generally interpreted as a contrast to or an escape from the urban, retreat or return to the wilderness and or the wild. Shakespeare's *As You Like it* is a quintessential illustration of the kinesis from urban to the wilderness.

Pastoral has been identified by different Eco-critics from the US and Britain. Terry Gifford identifies three types of pastoral. The first is classical pastoral with its provenance in poetry, evolving to drama and discernible later in the novel. Pastoral in this sense was associated with the simple shepherd life (1). This perception of pastoral, according to Gifford, is summed up by Leo Max as "No shepherd, no pastoral" (1). The second is any literature that depicts "the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban." (2) This is celebratory of the country in contrast to the urban. The third is pejorative of the celebration of the mere depiction of nature, interpreting such as idealization of the real country life (2).

Pastoral has had different interpretations across ages. It has ever remained relevant to human existence. To, Ettin, like comedy and tragedy, “the term pastoral denotes experiences and ideas that are permanent parts of our thinking and writing” (qtd in Love). This permanent influence of the pastoral or the environment on parts of our thinking and writing is evidenced in writings that have emerged from Nigeria from the first generation of writers of English expression in the middle of the twentieth century to those of the threshold of the twenty-first century – from the early writings of Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Gabriel Okara, Wole Soyinka J.P Clark-Bekederemo, to Isidore Okpewho, Niyi Osundare, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Tanure Ojaide, Kaine Agary, Helon Habila, Ebi Yeibo, G’ Ebinyo Ogbowei and others.

In Nigeria’s Niger Delta, the sustained butchering activities against the natural environment and their consequences were brought to the fore in the twilight of the twentieth century through creative texts by these writers. They recast the despoiled environment through oil and gas exploration activities by multinational companies, and the corollary forceful environmentalism by the youths of the region. Some of the emergent imaginative texts birthed by the environmental ferment include Isidore Okpewho’s *Tides*, Ken Saro-Wiwa’s *A Month and a Day*, Kaine Agari’s *Yellow-Yellow*, Tanure Ojaide’s *Tales of the Harmattan*, *The Activist*, Ebi Yeibo’s *Maiden Lines*, G’ Ebinyo Ogbowei’s *Marsh Boy*.

Although these texts, in deploring the oil-induced destruction of the natural environment, parsimoniously romanticize the lost pastoral environment. This is because the idealization of the pastoral is stimulated not by an interest to essentialize the pastoral, but by a concern with the oil politics in Nigeria with its vitiating import for the human dependants on the Niger Delta environment. The concern for the effects of the oil politics is also heaved into the scholarship generated by the environmental texts – Olaniyi Okunoye’s “Alterity, Marginality and the national Question in the Poetry of Niger Delta” and a few others that are examined in this paper are quintessential to this focus. In his essay, Okunoye explores in the poetry from Nigeria’s Niger Delta

the fate of minorities in the politics of Nigeria. He interprets the Niger Delta as the postcolonial *other* in the Nigerian nation because of its marginal position in the country. Okunoye’s examination of the poetry collections is exclusive to the pastoral.

Dike Okoro, in his essay on Ojaide’s *Tales of the Harmattan*, seems to be in the same boat as Okunoye as he examines the poems in the collection through the prism of Nigerian politics (19, 20). Okoro’s interpretation is not different from James Tsaaior’s exploration of Ojaide’s “Delta Blues and Home Coming,” which ascribes the polluted Niger Delta environment to the politics of *otherness* in postcolonial Nigeria (175, 77, and 179).

Sunny Awhefeada, Ngozi Chuma-Udeh and Owwoke Owhofasa in their respective essays explore the environmental texts on the Niger Delta purely from Ecofeminists’ perspective, paying particular attention to the consequences of the deleterious activities of multinational oil companies on the environment and the woman. All the scholarly essays sparingly mention the devalued pastoral.

Cajetan Iheka seems to have summarized the African scholarship on the environment, much of which is on the Niger Delta, observing that it foregrounds the human victims of environmental despoliation, marginalizing the nonhuman nature that is the first direct victim of the pollution from the multinational oil companies (1, 2, 6). Iheka’s observation about the essays is consistent with Ecocritics’ contestation, particularly Deep ecologists against anthropocentrism vis-à-vis man and nature duality. Shallow ecologists’ advocacy for a balance between nature or the environment and culture seems to accommodate the connection between the pastoral and culture is illustrated in Barine Ngaage’s collection of poetry, *Song of Dawn* and from the prism of Ecocriticism theory, particularly within the precinct of nature and culture fusion, this essay examines Barine Ngaage’s *Song of Dawn* with an intent to highlight the imbrication of the pastoral and culture in the poet’s part of the Niger Delta.

Written in the heat of the oil-induced Niger Delta environmental crisis that midwived the emergence of the creative texts from the region, Ngaage’s *Song of Dawn* is unexpectedly silent on

the oil politics, foregrounding instead the pastoral. The text's quiet on the blazing issue of the day may be responsible for the paucity of scholarly responses to the collection as the focus of much of the scholarship on the despoiled Niger Delta environment is situated within the mould of politics of *otherness* in postcolonial Nigeria.

### Recalling the Pastoral and Culture Mix in *Song of Dawn*

Ngaage's *Song of Dawn* from its title is suggestive of the beginning, the pastoral, the unsullied nature, time of innocence or the pastoral before the urbanization of the countryside. Through recall of his pupal adventures in the countryside in the Niger Delta, the poet explores the pastoral before urbanization and its attendant devaluation of the natural environment. Given the pastoral interest highlighted in some of the poems in the collection, this essay examines in Ngaage's collection his idealization of the pastoral blended with culture.

The poems in the collection reimagine the pastoral life of a countryside folks in the Niger Delta. The recall is depicted through a voice of innocence associated with shepherding: the innocence serves as a metaphor for the unsullied pastoral before its devaluation through human technological advancement. The recall is also executed in a delightful tone reflecting the poet's nostalgia for the rusticity as revealed from the prologue to the epilogue of the collection. In the "Singing My Devotion," the poem that prefaces the collection, the poet expresses gratitude to the father and mother for exposing him to the pastoral culture in the years of yore:

I sing my devotion to dad for the years my  
Blank mind combed the mangroves and farms  
I sing my devotion to mum for the  
Mores she dished out to me at dawn.

Having been exposed to Western education in his older years (education that disconnect from the African pastoral past), one would expect the poet to have been severed from and ashamed of the countryside past. He rather romanticizes his past seeing it as a proud past that has helped to shape his future as he recalls:

I sit in the chair of folk-farming  
I know the tiny leaves that clothe both traditions  
I sew them as clothes for dogo title  
And weave the rains of years  
Into the sunshine of tomorrow.

Ngaage's reminiscence and romanticisation of the pastoral are symptomatic of Gabriel Okara's in his *Fisherman's Invocation*. The latter in his adult years, he reimagines his riverscape from which adulthood struggles have detached him and longs to reconnect with it. Okara's nostalgia is celebratory of the pastoral as he says:

I hear your call!  
I hear it far away;  
I hear it break the circle of crouching hills.  
I want to view your face  
again and feel your cold  
embrace; or at your brim  
to set myself and inhale your breath; or  
  
Like the tree, to watch  
my mirrored self unfold  
and span my days with  
songs from the lips of dawn. (103, 104)

The two poets relive their relished Niger Delta's past where nature, man and culture cohere. The similarities are suggestive of the influence of the older poet on the younger.

Ngaage's collection, divided into two major parts, is celebratory of the pastoral with which culture is an inextricable part. The headings are parts under which subsume different poems depicting the different shades of Nigeria's deltaic environment – the riverscape and the landscape. The poems dwelling on the riverine milieu in the division come under the heading, "Canoe Song," while those that explore the material land are grouped under the heading "Farm Song." All the poems are a recall of different pupal adventures of the poet in the pastoral expressed through a child-like innocence, aptly underscoring the natural blend of the pastoral and culture. Glotfelty and Fromm validate the fusion of the environment and culture when they contend that, "[...] all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the

interconnections between nature and culture [...] (xix). The connectedness of the two serves as the fulcrum of the analysis of the poems in the collection.

“Picking Periwinkles,” suffused with images from the environment, is one of the poems grouped under “Canoe Song” recalling the poet’s adventure in the swamp of his deltaic environment. The poem is about the poet persona and his young friends’ initiation into the culture of picking periwinkles from the marsh in the Niger Delta. The adventure poem reveals an idyllic culture sculpted by the environment. It is divided into two parts with the first three stanzas ushering the reader into the riches of the natural environment and culture to which youthful adventure is tethered. The unity among the three – nature, culture and humans – is underpinned by the boys’ excitement over their adventure in their idyllic environment:

Our feet drum the paths to the creek  
Hazy dust flies around us.  
Green groves of yam cluster and match hand-in-hand  
Words fence against words as one boy shouts  
“I slay you with that light green species of yam”  
And counters “I slay you with the other” (12).

The above lines reveal a bucolic milieu enriched with abundant yam species that the elated boys jokingly deploy as verbal fencing tools against each other. The stanza immediately succeeding the first two furthers the depiction of the rich environment whose paths are strewn not by groves of yam but by corn as well:

Corn stems are dots in-between yam mounds  
They scatter like helpless grains  
Waiting for the dive of sparrows;  
White seeds line on ridges of corn  
Clothed in their shields against  
Predators and ill-tempered weather;  
Our claps throw birds off  
They dodge like military airplanes. (12).

The expression, “They scatter,” disconnects human agency from the luxuriant growth of the corn. The flourish of the corns provokes intercourse in the biodiversity as the corns allure the birds of the air to themselves.

The above picture of the pastoral is not an Arcadia, an idealized pastoral; it is a realistic picture reimagined by the poet as validated by the humans’ interactions with the environment. The rural humans and nature intercourse, consequently, constitutes the second division of the poem. The persona reveals in the succeeding stanzas:

Our feet are vehicles on the road of youth  
We arrive at the aching joy of the first initiation.  
Air whistles by as we trek the path romanced by  
Many ancient feet that have gone to roost;  
We cement it beyond the power of threatening  
grass. (12)

The above two stanzas reveal the bond between the natural environment and its human inhabitants as a natural part of nature, the “Air whistles” to the joyous feet on the path to the marsh to pick periwinkles (12).

The picking of periwinkles by the young boys might look as interference with nature as argued by Fredrick, who wants a perfect relationship between man and nature in which neither is dominant (147). Ngaage’s position here, in contrast, is in tandem with shallow ecology, which is not a postulation of a radical break with the consumption of nature, but advocacy for a balance between humans and nature. Therefore, the poet’s reimagining of the picking of periwinkle is only man’s innocuous interactions with nature explored through cultural adventure. The harmlessness of the adventure is mirrored in the naive delight of the poet persona and his young friends as he recounts:

Periwinkles fall like a ludo seed on its board  
We dice periwinkle, they sound  
“clink, clink, clink, clink, clink”  
We throw the dice again, again, and again (13).

The poem “Search” relives yet another of the childhood adventures of the poet in the riverscape. Like the poem examined above, the recollection of the past comes laced from its beginning to the end with palpable images of a simple life in a riverside environment. The environment is simply exploited for daily survival, not for showing human baseless ostentatious lifestyle. It is the simple life that binds man to the natural environment with neither seen



as predatory to the other. The persona reveals the bond from the first stanza when he says:

We sit at dawn on a bank, the sea ebbs and breaks  
The cola of silence. We have overtaken dawn  
Our bodies have swept the mists  
From the leaves along the path to the sea (14).

The picture above is that of teenagers with bare bodies symbolic of the Edenic naturalness interacting with the organic environment as expressed in the bare bodies sweeping the early morning mists off the leaves on the path that leads to the sea. They have gone to the seaside to “mine and milk the sea” of some of its riches (14).

The above-quoted lines essentialize a culture resulting from an age-long interface with the environment. This is underscored in the sundry engagements of the young boys in the bucolic environment in the succeeding stanzas – they attempt to fish for such riverine creatures as crabs, periwinkles and mudskippers. Their adventure on the marsh, which might be considered by the city dwellers as dirty, to the young boys is, however, a life to which they are gleefully habituated despite the occasional perils. Their joy in the adventure derives essentially from nature’s generous rewards of their daily effort as persona recounts, “My calabash is a mixed porridge dish –/Crabs, mudskippers and periwinkles have/Travelled one-tenth of the journey to the brim (16).

With this largess of nature, they have to return to the dry land with their catch, crossing the river that has ebbed, covering every part of temporarily the dry marsh, and submerging every part of their bodies, except their necks. The successful crossing of the river with their catches is a significant cultural exploit for which the persona says they give themselves “chicken feathers” as “hunter-heroes of shellfish” (16).

The hunt for treasures of the sea continues in the next poem “*Hunt*” indicating their habitual interaction with the natural environment. The poem explores the different methods employed by the fisher folks – the equivalent of shepherds – to survive in the riverine environment. Eloquent in this childhood adventure is an image of a fishing culture shaped by the riverine environment and this can be seen from the first stanza in which the persona says:

We fly our canoe hunting for treasures of the sea  
The sky descends as a thick blanket  
We pass in-between the tunnel of the blue sky and  
blue sea; volumes of  
Water war against our canoe and run into the mouth  
of the Bonny Sea;  
We turn from the talking sea into a silent creek (17).

The sky and the sea are pictured to have met, leaving only a tunnel for the seafarers. The waves of the sea are configured as an army warring against the canoe of the adventurers that sees as an intruder on its territory.

Despite the seeming inhospitality of the waves of the sea, there is a symbiogenesis between the non-human and human nature as the humans, for their daily survival, make in-road into the former. While the journey on the sea is an illustration of this point, it is further demonstrated in the stanzas after the first. The second stanza, for instance, captures human cultural extension into the depth of the sea by dropping on the floor of water a fish trap that the person refers to as “Our net houses” that “are landlords” “ready to rent out tiny creatures in the creek” (17). Expectedly, the landlordry is transient, but not without its consequences on the aquatic non-human inhabitants that include crayfish and catfish trapped as harvest in the netted houses.

The harvest of catches is then dislocated from the natural environment to an alien one in which they struggle as “They jump, kick, beat mud...” (18).

The poems extol the riverscape life as a conflation of culture and the environment. The same confluence of culture and the natural environment is noticeable in the poems under the “*Farm Song*”.

#### **Nature and Culture Mix**

In “*Farm Song*,” the thrust of the poems under this division is the landscape. Its exploration demonstrates a balance in eco and anthropocentrism. There is a balance between human and non-human nature with independent utility. This is consistent with Garrard (125) discountenance of Deep ecologists’ biocentrism that he interprets as capable of being misanthropic.

“*Mother Emerges*,” which introduces this section of the collection, underscores the utility of

nature to humans. The poems begin with a six lines stanza that exposes the link between humans and nature in the bucolic milieu. The first three lines tell of the communal benefit of the cock to the pastoral community. Its value is considered beyond nutrition, which a single cock is incapable of serving at a communal level. It is rather captured as a major contributor to the daily engagements of the agrarian community as it crows at dawn kick-starts the farmers' day as revealed in the line "Communal cock crows at the wake of the farming season" (41). The bond between humans and nature is continued in the last three lines concluding the first stanza. In these lines, there is however a shift to depict the wholeness of an idyllic society – the imbrication of nature and culture.

The above point is explored in the lines, "Earth drinks gin to mark the season / Urban dwellers ebb home-ward /To drink the ancient wine of tradition (41). Libation to the earth, which ushers in a new season, is indicative of the veneration of nature or its deification. This is consistent with .... position on the relationship between nature and culture – that nature is God-given, the one into which humans are born; while culture is what humans make out of nature. The interpretation of nature as culture is not as loud in the urban setting as it is in the pastoral environment as illustrated in the above-quoted lines. In opposition to the pastoral, the urbanized are dislocated from the acculturation of nature. Consequently, the seasonal return to the countryside is something the city dwellers look forward to as it gives them the opportunity "to drink the wine of tradition," to reconnect with nature and culture (41).

The second and the third stanzas in the unevenly structured poem sustain the depiction of the human, culture and nature synthesis in which none is portrayed as domineering. Each rather derives its utility based on the existence of the other. The intercourse among the trio is mirrored through the mother, a pregnant pastoral woman introduced in the six lines of stanzas two and three. She steps out at dawn, carrying "raffia basket" (41) – symbolic of the age-long farming culture of the people. This signification is clearer in the lines, "She is a mask of tradition" (stanza three) and

"The female mask is the mother of the dead and the living" (stanza four) (41). The "mother" is therefore a link to a long inextricable connectedness of the people's culture to nature as expressed in "mother of the dead and the living" (stanza four, 41).

The persona in the succeeding stanzas extols the pastoral culture where love instead of money functions as a means of payment for services as the persona recounts, "Love buys hands to clear grass and trim trees/She returns again and trades in/Love on another's farm (41). This is a culture of altruism that urbanization has substituted with money. This referent culture of love is not cheap as it is associated with toils as revealed in:

Young men bathe the morning dew  
They toil for hours, labour tows their strength  
Sun frowns at noon  
The ground is armed with resistance  
Blisters leave pain stamps on their palms (41).

The toils of the young men in the blazing African sun for free can be associated only with the idyllic past that the persona relives with delight.

"Crops to Earth," another poem in the Ngaage's poetry collection also explores the agrarian culture, revealing the relationship between the farmer and the natural environment. The poems image nature as a nurse itself for human benefits, particularly in the sundry ways the different seasons of the year that aid the growth of different crops. For pepper, the cool harmattan season is its best nurse. The person also captures the growth process of the pumpkin – being buried in the ground to die to multiply itself anew. The persona seems to exalt nature as he ascribes to it the potency to create a new life from a dead one. This is expressed in the concluding stanza, "Earth kills singleness / In the factory of multiplicity / New forms rise up from death.

The poem, "Harvest" seems to be a continuation of the one above as it explores the planting season as well. "Harvest" examines the joy of planting in the pastoral, particularly at the time of harvest. Structured in three-line stanzas, the first of which reveals the process of harvesting yam that advertises its maturity through its stem turning brown. This discovery is followed by its unearthing.

The second stanza gives a clue to the time of the harvest – the rainy season, a period when the farmlands are flooded by the rains that drown the cassavas, vitiating their usefulness. Nevertheless, the harvest time is one of rejoicing as, “One woman’s world radiates with sunshine” as she sings, “yam is king, his glory is on our lips / Cassava is mother, she feeds us monthly” (49). Significantly implicated in these quotations is an inextricable thread that binds the joys and sorrows of people to their natural habitation. The joys are triggered not by the purchase of an expensive brand-new car or the completion of a luxury edifice, but by the harvests from the farm. This is a collectivized experience symbolized in the referent “woman,” who, as has been earlier stated in this essay, is a representation of the general farming culture of the people and this is validated in the quotation through the use of the pronoun “us” (49), an apposition to the nominal phrase “one woman.” The eulogizing of the crops during harvest with such an epithet as “king” (49) suggests an indissoluble connectedness between the pastoral folks and nature.

“Forest of Yam” in Ngaage’s collection of poems also reveals the relationship between nature and culture. The poem unveils humans’ sundry interpretations of or attitudes towards nature by the pastoral folks. Nature is collectively configured in the agrarian community as a person with multifaceted functions – as a communal guard, benefactor, solicitor, and judge. Mythicized as a woman in the poem, nature functions as a communal guard to everyone’s farm produce, ensuring that every thief is dealt with. Her power as a guard is configured as awe-stirring that, “Nobody cuts a tree and somersaults / Another’s wealth into his custody; / not even the bravest dares” (51).

Feminised, nature is ascribed the tag of a communal benefactor as the persona says she is, “The woman of the forest, whose / Lap carries the farm wealth of the town” (51). As a solicitor and judge, nature is communally adjudged unbiased as thieves are not spared but sent “to their graves” (51).

This quality of nature as a judge is evocative of a parallel between the pastoral life and the urbanized. In urbanised Nigeria, many official

thieves walk free on the streets because of the existence of a corrupt and consequently inept law enforcement system. Conversely, this is not the case with impeccable nature as the poem concludes in the last stanza:

Not even the faithful dream that  
Yam will take wings and fly;  
Not only the faithful know the  
Myth sanitises the head of wrong  
And orders the society on the path of health (51).

The poet eulogizes nature through its mythification. These qualities ascribed to nature may be interpreted as mere myth, yet the significance is validated by the communal sanity the fear of nature’s incorruptible judicial prowess provokes among the people.

“Masquerade Sport” is a further exploration of the overlap of culture and nature in a pastoral setting. Structured in three stanzas of three quatrains, the seemingly sonneted poem begins with a line-up of plantain trees imaged as a fence and mothers, “Carrying twin children in both hands” (52). While they stand on its owner’s farm, the plantains are so jealously protected by the farmer that, “Not even an armed donor offers a / Sick finger to another.” But they lose their protection to a cultural festival as “...a / Licensed masquerade declare” the

“Farm free to performers” (52). These lines educe a picture of an Edenic age festival during which period the individual right of ownership, particularly over plantain, melts into communal ownership. This picture is clearer in the lines of the last quatrain:

Not even the masquerader’s farm  
Is free from selflessness, when tradition  
Issues free booty of plantain for all;  
Plantains fly in the sky in the season of charity  
(52).

These lines above basically reveal not just a cultural life but unveil a simple life of a people threaded into nature.

The blend of nature and the idyllic man is also explored in the poem, “An Old Farmer’s Language.” Also seemingly sonneted in structure, but void of the characteristically defining rhyming

pattern, the poem is celebratory of the bucolic man's flawless understanding of his natural environment. The first quatrain reveals a symbolic picture of a non-Westerly schooled old farmer to whom the word "Geography" and its study of "the wind movements" are alien.

The second quatrain however unfolds contrary information about the aged man – albeit not westerly-trained, he is profoundly educated in nature as:

He orders yam seedlings  
Into peaceful union with the wind  
They sway gracefully in the rhythmic dance  
Against seasonal storms (59).

The last quatrain seems to conclude that his understanding of "Geography" predates western education. It is, "Geography in the folk tradition of the farm" and "He understands the intestines of nature / He professes as a scholar" (59). These quoted lines of the poem suggest that the wisdom of the African pastoral is by no way inferior to western knowledge.

The present urbanization with its westernized life style in the reasoning of the poet is but a continuation from the past and this is argued in the epilogue, "Continuity of Dawn." This is succinctly expressed in the lines of its first stanza, "Stars have climbed the / Rungs of fish and yam / Into the light of modernity. The lines also suggest that the pastoral with its simplicity has grown urbanized people.

## Conclusion

While the poems in the collection, especially those examined in this essay, do not clearly analogize the pastoral past with a contrastive urbanised present, underlying them is however a comparison of the two periods in human interactions and disconnect from nature. These poems, written in a language free from turgidity, underlining the simplicity associated with the pastoral life, reminisce an idyllic past that has doubtlessly bowed to the torrent of urbanization inaugurated by technology. Obvious in the poems is an intersection of a pastoral culture and the nonhuman nature: neither is explored as domineering over the other. The environment is reinvented as the sculptor of the culture of the people. This presentation of the intersection of culture and the environment in the pastoral overturns the anthropocentrism allegation associated with Deep ecologists.

Tried as much as he does to reminisce and reimage the lost pastoral, Ngaage, however, does not decry its extant devaluation and the urgent need for remediation. Consequently, it is bereft of the practical environmental commitment as demanded by Lawrence Buell in his definition of Ecocriticism – that it is "the study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". (430)

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