

## Depictions Of Environmental Destruction By British Colonizers In Ole Kulets “*The Hunter*” and “*Vanishing Herds*”

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**Abstract:** This article examines the ecological legacy of 70 years of British colonial rule in Kenya and to identify some of the ecological challenges faced by the post-colonial Kenyan state, which are reflected in the rapid depletion of the country's forest cover, the alarming loss of the country's wildlife heritage, accentuated by the threat of poaching and human-wildlife conflict. Central to the ecological challenges facing the country is the colonial dispossession of land owned by indigenous communities, effectively distorting and alienating the communities from their indigenous ecological ethics (IEE). Therefore, consistent with our analysis, we conclude that while the country grapples with the thorny issue of environmental degradation, sound ecological policies must be put in place that recognize the validity of indigenous ecological ethics, which have been debased under British colonialism. In the article, the study examines the depiction of characters and characterizations in relation to ecology using the renown post-colonial African literature novels ‘*Vanishing Herds*’ and ‘*The Hunter*’.

**Key words:** environmental degradation, post-coloniality, indigenous ecological ethics, individualization, commoditization of the physical environment.

### I. Introduction

This article attempts to examine the ecological implications of the British colonial era's desire to rearrange and restructure the local landscape to suit their imperial interests. In this framework, historical data on ecological abuses inflicted on the local physical environment by British colonialism are of paramount importance (Costello, 2021). The article therefore attempts to analyze the unprecedented colonial exploitation and destruction of the natural environment, often carried out without ecological sensitivity or ethical consideration for the rights of local communities and non-human life forms. To that end, a historical examination of colonial laws and policies and associated socioeconomic legacies that continue to affect the management and conservation of natural resources is central to the arguments presented in this article. More importantly, the article explores the new sense of ecological subjectivity and individualism created by the intersection of colonialism and indigenous cultural sensibilities. Although the selected primary texts in this study are situated in the postcolonial dispensation, they nonetheless deal with critical ecological issues, the emergence of which can be traced back to the country's colonial experience. In this regard, issues such as the introduction of a private land tenure system, cash crop agriculture, the shamba system, trophy hunting, and institutionalized corruption are critical to understanding some of the ecological underpinnings of British colonialism in postcolonial Kenya.

### II. The History of Wild Animal Hunting in Colonial Kenya

An examination of the historical trajectory of wild animal hunting in Kenya from colonial to post-colonial times is critical in understanding how the British colonial enterprise profoundly reconfigured the Kenyan ecological landscape by upsetting the harmonious relationship that indigenous communities had with the natural environment for generations (Zhang & Mace, 2021). To identify the origins of the ecological challenges articulated in the novels under consideration, an examination of colonial attitudes, perceptions, and modes of governance is required. Steinhart divides European hunting history during the colonial era into three major periods (Carruthers, 2006).

The first phase of big game exploitation can be described as the primary exploitation, which lasted until the First World War. According to Lusinga (2016), large groups of unrestrained explorers, traders, and pioneer administrators were primarily preoccupied with the hunt for ivory and valuable trophies, which was motivated by both commercial and sporting reasons. (Raper et al., 2019) opines that respected hunter-naturalists Fredrick Selous and Captain C.H Stigand, as well as great ivory harvesters Alfred Arsell-Hardwick, W.D.M Bell, and Neumann, were among those involved in this type of hunting. The first-hand account of these hunters' exploits bears witness to the massive slaughter of wild animals in the East African savannah, eerily similar to the imperial plunder and conquest of the Congo immortalized in the Congolese savannah.

According to Cooper (1960) the arrival of White settlers in Kenya in early 1905 triggered the second phase in the destruction of the local flora and fauna. It was also sparked off in particular by the construction of a railroad from Mombasa to Uganda. The expensive project was intended to open up the inland areas to farming, hunting, and tourism. In order to ensure a quick return on the railroad investment, the colonial administration encouraged an influx of European settlers to Kenya in order to farm large tracts of land made accessible by the railway. Veit (2019) argues that, by the beginning of 1905, white settlers had begun to arrive in the colony to take up large tracts of land in the so-called "White Highlands." The arrival of White settlers set in motion the most extensive destruction of Kenya's physical environment in its history. Large-scale habitat destruction became the White settlers' preferred method of establishing extensive privately owned farmlands and grazing areas that were fenced and cleared of all but the smallest game animals and birds. Some settlers, such as Lord Delamere, to whom the colonial regime had corruptly allocated 100,000 acres of land at a penny per acre, saw wild animals as competitors and a threat to his vast livestock (Kibwana *et- al* 140). Lord Delamere, a prominent sportsman and 'progressive' White farmer, actively campaigned for the abolition of wildlife on his estates. Steinhart (1989) argues that the colonial writer Elspeth Huxley, in her book *The Settlers*, expresses poignantly the White settler community's hostility toward wild animals at the time, as well as the need to imprint European civilization on a supposedly exotic indigenous landscape. Africa was still the breeding ground for a plethora of wild animals that could not be found in any other part of the world at the time. According to Yeager & Miller (1986), many of the first settlers to East Africa were drawn by the abundance of wild life and wonderful sport, and there has never been a clearer illustration of the adage that man must destroy what he loves. Everyone knows that game and farming do not mix. Today, farming has triumphed in Kenya, but this was the game's heyday. The settler sowed his seed with great difficulty; the game regarded the resulting crop as rations. Zebra herds trampled the corn, destroying fences; bushbuck and reedbuck leapt over the highest Zareba into a plant nursery or garden. Monkeys swarmed out of the forest, uprooting and stealing. Thousands of birds ripped at fruits and grains. Lions attacked his cattle, hyenas and buzzards attacked his lambs, buffaloes spread rinderpest among his herds, and zebras and hartebeest devoured his grazing.

Huxley uses this passage to justify the 'othering' of nonhuman animals by an alien community that has deprived them of their natural habitat. The portrayal of nonhuman animals as enemies legitimizes their indiscriminate slaughter in order to protect crops and eliminate livestock predation. As a result, as more land was converted to agriculture, wildlife habitats and populations declined dramatically. Furthermore, the prospect of commercial profit from African wildlife enticed trophy hunters from Europe and America to join *safari* expeditions in the ostensibly pristine East African savannah. The main draw was the so-called Big Five: lion, elephant, rhinoceros, leopard, and buffalo. The 1909 Smithsonian expedition led by former US President Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most extensive and outrageous hunting safaris ever witnessed in the East African region (Thompson, 2010). Roosevelt embarked on one of the most savage and brutal hunting safaris ever documented, accompanied by a large contingent of professional hunters, taxidermists, and over 500 porters to carry loads of trophies. Adams & McShane, (1996) argues that the unprecedented safari lasted nearly a year, with Roosevelt and his party killing game to the point of causing controversy due to the sheer number of animals killed. Unfortunately, the Roosevelt expedition gave Kenya a persistent allure and reputation as a new playground for Europe's leading gentlemen and nobles, as well as American millionaires, seeking the perverse thrill of shooting innocent animals for sport.

Similarly, (Tamang, 2021) opines that the establishment of a game department in 1907 to oversee the clearing of animals from large tracts of land to allow settlement and agricultural development marked the third phase in the history of colonial hunting. It is worth noting that the need for hunting regulation was raised at the London convention of 1900, which was attended by representatives from European colonial powers. The convention stipulated that game reserves be established in Africa within 18 months of the signing of a treaty prohibiting the killing of wild animals. Surprisingly, (Ogada, 2014) states that the prohibition did not apply to animals classified as "vermin" and thus to be eradicated both inside and outside protected areas, such as lions, leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, otters, baboons, some monkeys, large birds of prey, crocodiles, poisonous snakes, and pythons. The colonial

Game Department zealously ensured that the blacklisted animals were eradicated under the "vermin" policy, which had a devastating impact on wildlife populations in Kenya. Accordingly, Nyongesa, (2021) relates that by the mid-1930s, thousands of the so-called vermin had been slaughtered by farmers and government officials, as illustrated by the Makueni case, in which an estimated 996 rhinos were slaughtered between 1944 and 1946 to open up an area of 200 square kilometres for settlement. During World Wars I and II, there were also massive killings of game to feed troops, prisoners, and laborers, incidents that went unreported despite being "the most intense legal game use of the twentieth century" (Waithaka, 2012). These efforts resulted in an unusual situation in which the Game Department spent more time and money killing wildlife than protecting it. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of settlers had a licence that allowed them to kill animals on Crown Land. Furthermore, any animal found on private land (settlers' estates) was deemed fair game, and the landowner or his agent could kill it with impunity and without a game licence. According to the preceding historical account, of the British colonial administration, whose declared mission was to civilize not only the natives but also their exotic flora and fauna, viewed the wanton slaughter and destruction of local wildlife habitat and the expropriation of indigenous land as a desirable ecological project.

### III. Wildlife Illegal Trade in Postcolonial Kenya

After considering the historical trajectory of hunting in Kenya during British colonialism, let us now consider Kulet's representation of hunting and the need to preserve Mother Nature's ecological integrity in post-colonial Kenya. According to Mwangi, (2019) '*The Hunter*' is essentially an indictment of the illegal wildlife trade, which threatens wildlife survival in Kenya. Poaching, according to Kulet, is inextricably linked to the country's colonial experience in postcolonial Kenya. The novel condemns the indiscriminate slaughter of wild animals, which is currently being fuelled by global demand for ivory, rhino horns, and other animal products. As we discussed in the history of hunting in colonial Kenya, the pursuit of ivory and other animal products was considered a 'noble' profession under British colonialism. However, Lemke (1998) contends that beneath the thick veneer of nobility lurked a strong commercial impulse that was the driving force behind White hunters in Africa. Under British colonialism, imperial hunters sowed the seeds of illegal wildlife trade that would later sprout in the post-colonial era as the poaching menace in African soil. As Kulet, (2011) reveals in *The Hunter*, the trade in wildlife products is now a lucrative business involving both domestic and international actors. It is a phenomenon that is gradually depleting the country's iconic wildlife heritage. It is important to note that species such as elephants and rhinos are on the verge of extinction because their tusks and horns are highly sought after by poachers. Local poachers, like their white forefathers under British colonialism, are portrayed as bloodthirsty merchants of death in the text. The narrator describes Sipaya as "the bloodiest, richest poacher of our time" (Kulet, 2011: 93) and his motley crew of poachers as encapsulating the ugly realities of poaching in the following episode: Since the last time he was with them, they had killed fourteen elephants, ten of them were hundred-pounders, while the rest were not bad at all. They had also slain two hundred zebras, whose hides had not been badly mutilated by bullet holes.

They all walked over to a bushy place a few yards from the fire. There, spread on old gunny bags, were all sizes of elephant tusks, rhino horns, zebra skins, warthog teeth, lion claws and buffalo heads. Sipaya rubbed his hands together in satisfaction as he turned a buffalo head with his shoe. They walked back to the fireplace. Sipaya called for the cash boxes, opened one and distributed cash according to the type and number of animals each killed, (p71).

The gang is pleased with itself for completing its bloody mission. The slaughter of fourteen elephants and twelve rhinos demonstrates the two species' high commercial value. Sipaya and his men support the commercialization of nonhuman animals, with elephants and rhinos topping the list as the most valuable items. Because payments for services rendered are based on "the type and number of animals" each individual poacher has killed, the motivation for slaughtering commercially viable species such as elephants and rhinos is high. It is unfortunate that elephant poaching is likely to have a negative impact on the ecological trajectories of some plants from one area to another. Furthermore, there is a commercial relationship between elephants and small birds in the savannah that feed on parasitic organisms that elephants harbor. The extinction of elephants as a result of over-poaching will have a negative ecological impact on the Savannah ecosystem, (Twine & Magome, 2008).

*The Hunter* can also be read as a scathing critique of the re-branding of trophy hunting as the panacea for the savannah's ecological "imbalance" caused by animal overpopulation. Nevertheless, Orth, (2004) argues that Caughlen, the American tourist turned 'environmentalist,' expands on the text's portrayal of trophy hunting as a viable conservation policy. He claims, licenced hunting is a healthy sport with more benefits than drawbacks. The first is cropping. While animals multiply, the land does not expand. As a result, they must be cropped reasonably.

Poaching is something I strongly oppose and would fund any effort to stop it. Poaching is a contagious disease, (p81).

Orth (2004) further demonstrates the usual hypocrisy of Western intervention in developing countries. Often, the west's prescribed conservationist solutions tend to legitimize western cultural values with no regard for indigenous communities' ecological sensibilities. While it is undeniable that poaching is a 'disease' that must be eradicated at all costs, it should be noted that poaching and so-called licenced killing of wild animals are essentially two sides of the same coin. In terms of motivation and disregard for the rights of innocent nonhuman animals, there is no distinction between a trophy hunter and a poacher. In fact, the West could learn a few things from the Maasai's ecological knowledge, which has allowed the community to coexist peacefully with wild animals. Nature has its own mechanism for maintaining ecological equilibrium in the savannah, as Kulet demonstrates in *Vanishing Herds*, to ensure a constant supply of food, lions, hyenas, leopards, wild dogs, and foxes had to adapt to the environment in which their prey lived. As a result, they hunted the sick, the young, the old, and the wounded, ensuring that only the fittest survived. Nature ensured that there was a sustainable number of each species in the savannah and forest by doing so, (p68).

As a result, there has never been a time when the population of wild animals has outgrown its habitat, necessitating the intervention of self-appointed nature prefects like Caughlen to rid the Savannah of 'excess' animal population. In fact, as previously explained in this chapter, the poaching 'disease' that appears to deeply incense Caughlen is a novel phenomenon that was introduced to Africa via Europeans' quest for ivory and other animal products. According to Leseiyo in *The Hunter*, the local Maasai community cannot understand the justification for shooting innocent wild animals for sport: ... He would have asked the hunters how much pleasure they got from shooting an animal. To him, aiming and shooting at an animal was no different than aiming and shooting at the same distance through a tin. The abilities required were the same... Wasn't a sport supposed to be a test for the athlete? ... If the hunter was pitted against an enemy like a lion, wouldn't it be better if the hunter had a spear and sword, like a Maasai moran, so the animal could demonstrate its prowess? Animals could never compete with a hunter's binoculars and riffle. The poor animals had nothing but their noses, ears, and eyes, as well as a profound fear (p85). Geoffrey, (2019) deconstructs the concept of trophy hunting, which is frequently presented by western conservationists as a noble'sport.' According to Leseiyo, there is no nobility in cold-bloodedly murdering innocent animals and then having the moral temerity to whitewash the criminal act as a noble sport. It should be noted that, while British colonialism is historically credited with introducing commercial hunting in Kenya, this does not imply that indigenous communities in pre-colonial Kenya did not engage in hunting. Steinhart, (1989) connote that some communities, including Akamba and Ameru, as well as coastal communities like the Digo and Duruma, are known to have used hunting as an important economic, social, and cultural activity. Nonetheless, Kelly (1978) observes that it is worth noting that hunting in pre-colonial Kenya consisted primarily of killing small game for the pot. More importantly, unlike the White settlers, most indigenous communities had strict taboos against killing wild animals on purpose. Notably, hunting for the pot was distinguished by the use of primitive technology such as spears, traps, and snares. In essence, this means that pot hunting had a negligible ecological impact in the Savannah. The use of automatic firearms and assault rifles by modern poachers and trophy hunters who normally target commercially viable species such as elephants, rhinos, and lions, on the other hand, has a devastating impact on wildlife populations. The text graphically depicts the terrible carnage caused by the use of modern weapons in the Savannah:

It felt like I was watching a movie. The three men had joined a group of at least twenty others. Several dead animals were scattered in the background. The majority of them were zebras, with taut bellies bulging with gas. On an open fire, two men were roasting the meat of an impala. Five rotting rhino carcasses and four elephant carcasses were discovered near a waterhole. It was obvious that the men had killed any creatures that came to the waterhole to drink. The stench from the rotting carcasses turned their stomachs, and they could hear hundreds of flies buzzing around them. The smell, however, did not appear to bother the men. Some were busy skinning dead zebras, while others stretched out other skins to dry (p 86-87).

It is highly unlikely that a large number of zebras, elephants, and rhinos could be slaughtered using primitive weapons such as spears, arrows, and simple snares and traps. Poaching in Africa is now defined by the use of the rifle, just as it was during the days of white hunting under British colonialism. It is also worth noting that the Maasai as a people are culturally known to dislike game meat. They considered game meat consumption to be a taboo because wild animals were culturally valued as second cattle. Thus, the introduction of large-scale poaching completely distorted Maasai cultural sensitivity to game meat consumption, as exemplified by Sipaya's men, who, despite being Maasai, enjoyed 'roasting the meat of an impala on an open fire.'

*The Hunter*, as a postcolonial text, is harshly critical of the exploitative and asymmetrical nature of the global tourism industry. Kulet sees overseas firms, such as Hearhill International, as playing a critical role in

entrenching hegemonic economic and cultural relationships. The local tourism industry is portrayed as completely reliant on the generosity of overseas tour operators for survival. As Sipaya, the CEO of Elube Safaris, admits, he was aware of Caughlen's celebrity, and mishandling him was akin to writing 'Business Closed' on the door. Word would spread like wildfire, all the way to international booking offices, which would refer clients to firms they knew were capable and had the resources to meet their needs. Instead of a surge of rage, Sipaya was overcome by his sense of business and decided to apologize, (p33).

Sipaya's meekness in the face of Caughlen's larger-than-life fame encapsulates local tour operators' marginal status in the global market. The international booking offices are the dominant players in the industry because they control the flow of clients to local firms. Even though Mr. Anderson had previously mocked Sipaya for his firm's inability to handle a guest of Mr. Caughlen's stature, he still had to apologize for good business sense. The dependency syndrome exemplified by Elube Safaris may reinforce unfair business practices skewed in favor of Western economic and political interests. The introduction of the concept of 'all-inclusive tour package' exacerbates the imbalance in the tourism industry. Essentially, prospective tourists destined for third-world destinations make an advance payment to tour operators based in their home countries for flights, hotel accommodations, food and beverages, entertainment, and other amenities (Mutisya 3). This arrangement is economically skewed in favor of rich countries because it ensures that a larger portion of the proceeds generated by tourism is retained in the home countries of the tourists. Furthermore, because all expenses have already been paid for in the tourists' home countries, all-inclusive tourists are less likely to spend extra money in their host countries. Caughlen and his entourage exemplify the economic imbalance caused by the all-inclusive concept in the text. As safari tourists from North America, their entire three-day stay in Kenya is handled by an overseas company called Hearhill International. Local businesses represented by Elube Safaris benefit marginally from ancillary services such as transportation from the airport to the park. More importantly, such tourists, as exemplified by Caughlen and his companions, frequently spent their entire vacation in enclaves located primarily in isolated environments. This effectively reduces their opportunities to interact with locals and spend money in the local economy. This is most likely why only 2% to 5% of Kenya's total tourism receipts trickle down to the grassroots level, primarily in the form of low-paying, servile jobs, souvenir sales, and agricultural produce (Akama, 2004).

It might be inappropriate to conclude our discussion of wildlife tourism representation without questioning the promotional and marketing strategies frequently used by overseas tour operators to brand the country's image. Mulder & Coppolillo (2005), stated that the image of Kenya as an ideal destination for both settlers and tourists seeking a break from their European homelands and other colonies during British colonialism was based on the idea of a sparsely populated pristine environment teeming with a large number of prehistoric animals. As a marketing strategy, contemporary local and international tour operators continue to project the colonial regime's brand image. The Americans, as the narrator of *The Hunter* observes, "were looking for one of the big five: elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion, or leopard." Each of the hunters had a license" (p75). This marketing strategy, according to Elizabeth Garland, is a result of "the dialectical history of European exploration and colonization of the continent" (p 51) She goes on to say that the continent of Africa has long been associated with iconic wild animals in the Euro-American West. China may have pandas, India may have tigers, the Amazon may have jaguars and anacondas, and North America may have bison, wolves, and bears. However, Africa is home to lions and leopards, gorillas and chimps, elephants, rhinos, hippos, ostriches, zebras, giraffes, and much more! Not only does the continent have more large, charismatic species than other parts of the world, but its animals are also well known to Westerners, who are exposed to them through toys, visual media, and the display of live creatures in zoological parks, often from an early age, (p 58).

Images of wild Africa, complete with roaring lions, trumpeting elephants, and half-naked natives, are thus a popular theme in promotional brochures. As previously stated, these images tend to perpetuate one of the most pervasive and seductive myths about the non-European 'other' in relation to the East African landscape. They bolster the colonial narrative of a classic East African tabula rasa in which indigenous communities exist only as part of the region's diverse flora and fauna. It's not surprising, then, that after a minor road mishap on the way back to camp after their first hunting session, Caughlen angrily declares: When such an accident is on the verge of occurring, one should take stock of himself. How would we have gotten to the hospital if the car had actually overturned and we were all spilled out and badly injured? I'd hate to travel all the way from the United States just to die in the jungle. I do not fear death, but I believe that one should die in dignity, (p 78).

Death in the African jungle is an abomination to Caughlen as an American citizen. He looks down on the local landscape as an empty wasteland devoid of any signs of modern civilization other than the wild animals he's come to photograph. Caughlen's mindset is most likely influenced by wildlife safari brochures distributed by overseas marketing firms, which frequently portray the Maa people as primitive, unchanging, and frozen in time and

space. As Tucker and Akama correctly point out, such publications have a penchant for juxtaposing images of Maasai in traditional regalia with their livestock grazing in perfect harmony with other savannah herbivores such as antelopes, zebra, wildebeest, and buffalo, as well as the "Big Five" (102). This romantic depiction is undoubtedly what drew white American hunters to Maasailand.

#### IV. The Land 'Grabbing' Culture

Without a doubt, the most important natural resource is land. It is the medium that supports the majority of life forms. As a result, "the use of land affects the integrity of biological systems on which human life depends" Barbier, (2013). Indeed, anything that affects land is likely to affect the entire spectrum of life, as it provides the habitat for both living and non-living organisms to exist and interact in the ecosystem. As Carson, (2011) rightly points out, soil governs all forms of life on Earth; without soil, terrestrial plants cannot grow, and without plants, no animal can survive. As we discussed in the introduction, indigenous communities' ownership and use of land in pre-colonial Kenya was based on collective communal rules based on cultural norms and practices as elsewhere in Africa.

Cultural norms and practices therefore play an important ecological role in ensuring sustainable land use and conservation for future generations. Land, (2015) argues that colonial land laws, on the other hand, were effectively anchored on an economic impulse informed by the desire to control and exploit indigenous land for the sustenance of metropolis industries. This mechanistic view of land is diametrically opposed to indigenous communities' cultural sensibilities. It should be noted that the Maa people, like other indigenous communities in Africa and around the world, have a strong connection to the landscape. The landscape was primarily revered spiritually as the home of ancestral spirits. Thus, "European concepts on property rights were imported into Africa to foster progress along paths previously taken by most European countries during the industrial revolution" in an attempt to re-order and re-define the ostensibly 'empty' local landscape (Kameri-Mbote & Cullet, 1997). The general belief was that what worked in Europe would undoubtedly work in Africa. In this context, British colonialism superimposed the concept of private property rights on existing indigenous customary laws. The imposition of private property rights shattered the previously mutually beneficial relationship between indigenous communities and the physical environment. It marked the beginning of a new ecological consciousness based on the individualization and commoditization of the physical environment. Kulet is particularly critical of the emergence of this alien ecological sensibility in *Vanishing Herds*, which threatens to erode Maasai spiritual kinship with the physical environment. The text sees crop farmers from neighboring communities 'grabbing' Maasai ancestral land in post-colonial Kenya as a re-enactment of the community's land dispossession by White settlers during British colonialism.

According to the text, the grabbing of Maasailand has not only caused massive ecological problems, but also a profound sense of loss, hopelessness, and despair among the Maa community: Kedoki, Masintet, Lembarta, and Norpisia climbed to a crest and stood in awestruck silence as they looked down on thousands of acres of devastated forest stretching to unimaginable limits. Corrugated iron-sheet roofs glistened in the sunlight and dotted an area dominated by bamboo-fenced shambas, which were now green with waist-high maize plants, purple and white-flowered potato plants, and patches of maturing yellow-green millet. On the other side, cleared lands stretched for miles and disappeared into the distance, a deep green expanse of tea plantations on one side and a tawny undulation of ridges of ripening wheat and barley on the other. While sacks of the black stuff in high demand in towns were visible, vultures perched, staring unblinkingly at nothing in particular, hoping to locate the carcasses of the latest victims of the humans-animals conflict, (p101).

Kedoki and his companions have reached a fork in the road. The desecration of the Mau forest caused by the 'land grabbing' mania, exemplified by the proliferation of 'bamboo-fenced shambas' and the dominant tea plantations, causes the pastoralists despair and misery. The felling of trees for charcoal burning contributes to the massive loss of biodiversity caused by a disregard for nature's sanctity. Unfortunately, as 'civilized' post-colonial subjects, the local settler community exhibits the same disregard for Mother Nature as their colonial forefathers. The shambas and tea plantations are indelible imprints of British colonialism in the country's ecological landscape. It is worth noting that the colonial regime first introduced the shamba system to Kenya in 1910 as an agro-forest strategy (Olughu, 2019). It was intended to increase the supply of raw materials for the colonial timber industry while decreasing pressure on natural forests. Local farmers were encouraged to grow exotic trees and food crops on small plots under the system. Farmers had to shift to a new plot once the trees matured, clearing indigenous trees to make way for the planting of exotic trees, which grew faster than indigenous species. Wangari Maathai, the late Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was a harsh critic of the system. She notes in a keynote address at the 2nd World Congress of Agroforestry in Nairobi, Kenya, that [the system] destroys biodiversity and reduces the capacity of

forests to harvest rain water, retain it, and gradually release it through rivers and streams. As forests are converted into commercial farms and grazing grounds, they lose their ability to control rainfall patterns and climate, (p1).

The loss of biodiversity exacerbated by the shamba system is simply unarguable. As a colonial relic, the system can be seen as a forerunner to the current land 'grabbing' malaise that is responsible for the country's rapid loss of forest cover. It should also be noted that the appropriation of Maasai ancestral land is at the heart of the community's conflict with neighboring crop farmers. As a pastoralist community, the Maasai have optimized their vast land for livestock herding for generations. Encroachment by neighboring communities, on the other hand, has drastically reduced Maasai communal rangeland, forcing them to graze their livestock on a limited space. It eventually leads to overgrazing, which causes ecological disequilibrium and contributes to desertification. Masintet elucidates the animosity between the two communities: The catch is that farmers are usually irritated when pastoralists pass through their land. They warned us to avoid their crops the last time we passed through the settled area with my siblings. When our cattle wandered into one of their farms, they hacked off their tails and severed two of their hind legs, (p.97).

In terms of land, the Maa community is thus doubly marginalized: first by white settlers during British colonialism, and then by black settlers in post-colonial Kenya. The conflict between pastoralist and agriculturalist communities in postcolonial Kenya is arguably a byproduct of modernity. Modern medical services, education, and food security, among other things, have resulted in a massive increase in human population, putting enormous strain on land.

Kulet also questions the ecological viability of the privatization of rights to resources previously owned and managed sustainably by local communities to a few individuals. The author sees community alienation from collective control of primary resources like water as a potential recipe for conflict and a likely source of ecological crisis. The pastoralist community is enraged in the text by one of the local landowners' appropriation of a river. Norpisia is enraged after learning that one of the new landowners diverted a whole river for personal use. She bemoans the fact that no one in their right mind would divert a whole river for their own selfish interests. How could he do so at the expense of the poor herders who had lost the majority of their livestock due to the severe drought? How could he force them to work for two days on his farm in exchange for water for their animals? (p121).

Norpisia's dismay encapsulates the conflict between communal property rights and the colonial private property laws that remain firmly entrenched in the local legal system. Rivers, forests, mountains, and other geographical features represent the essence of Enkai in Maasai cosmology. In his right mind, no mortal being could ever claim ownership of communally owned resources. Furthermore, a river diversion will not only have an impact on the aquatic eco-system, but will also deprive the local pastoralist community of access to water for their livestock.

Thottathil, (2012) discussed that the colonial government is credited with introducing exotic crops such as tea in order to support the country's cash-crop-based economy. Thus, at the dawn of the country's political independence, the extensive white-owned farms were acquired by the local nouveau riche, represented in the text by Olmakarr Lemeessori, who reportedly bought his farm from "the colonial settler, Munroe" (132). Mzee Lemeessori, his son Barnotti, and the unidentified owner of Olkarsiss farm thus represent the new face of internal colonizers. The owner of Olkarsiss farm, in particular, is portrayed as having an ecological sensibility based on extreme materialism, similar to that of white settlers during British colonialism. While Barnoti appeared to have become a coveted environmentalist, his neighbors, including his immediate neighbor, the owner of Olkarsiss farm, continued to destroy the forests and water catchment areas, according to the narrator. The owner of Olkarsiss farm, in particular, was... on a mission of expansion. He was clearing ten thousand acres of forest land to make way for a tea plantation. When Barnoti convinced him not to destroy the forest, he argued that tea bushes were environmentally friendly and that, contrary to what Barnoti and others believed, tea plantations were part of environmental conservation measures. The owner of Olkarsiss farm claimed that rain was brought by the blue-bellied god Empus-oshoke. Armed with that argument, Olkarsiss' expansionist cleared the forest with such zeal that one would think he had a grudge against the trees. Bulldozers roared and boomed in the forest all day and night, (p150).

The owner of Olkarsiss farm is reproducing the ecocide committed by White settlers upon their arrival in Kenya in 1905 to pave the way for plantation farming. He exhibits the same colonial mindset that saw the local landscape as a blank slate in desperate need of reconfiguration to maximize economic returns. His ignorance is revealed by his insistence that trees have nothing to do with rain. As a 'progressive' farmer, he values the exotic 'tea bushes' more than the 'useless' indigenous trees he is destroying.

In his seminal work, Knight & Riedel, (2002) calls for the establishment of a new personal land ethics that recognizes humans as members of a community of interdependent parts that includes "soils, water, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (19). Leopold's land ethics represents a significant departure from the Euro-American mercantile view of land as a resource. It is consistent with the Maasai cultural view of land as the world's

soul. The text sees white settlers' violation of this fundamental ecological principle as the source of the current human/wildlife conflict in postcolonial Kenya. The farming community is outraged by the behavior of nonhuman animals, as the narrator observes: "they were suddenly accosted by a large group of men, young and old, who emerged from the bushes behind them, heavily armed with assorted weapons: spears, bows, arrows, axes, and pangas..." They were on the trail of a herd of elephants that had caused massive devastation the night before and killed a man, (p102).

The text's depiction of animosity toward nonhuman animals conjures up images of the white settlers/wildlife conflict chronicled in Huxley's *The Settlers*. Nonhuman animals are frequently deemed the aggressors in any conflict pitting them against humans. An exasperated Norpisia expresses humans' arrogance and insensitivity to the interests of nonhuman animals, "How daring and arrogant have humans become,... to invade the forest, destroy the animal habitat, strip the river banks of vital undergrowth, and then turn around and accuse the animals of invading their farms!" What a jerk!" (103). The destruction of wildlife habitat has become a defining feature of modern civilization. The construction of mega-infrastructure facilities such as the country's current Standard Gauge Railway, combined with rapid population growth, is threatening the very survival of wild animals. Thus, as long as habitat degradation, which began under British colonialism and has since spread to the modern Kenyan state due to greed and ecological insensitivity, continues, wildlife conservation in the country will remain a fleeting illusion.

## V. Modern Institutional Corruption

*The Hunter* can be read as a substantive critique of institutionalized corruption in the context of environmental devastation. To be sure, corruption "exists in all human societies and is as old as the human species" (Holmes, 2015). Corruption, as a social ill, has gradually infiltrated every nook and cranny of our modern society. Fundamentally, the foundations of the country's current socioeconomic system can be traced back to the start of formal colonial intervention in the late nineteenth century. Notably, British colonialism is credited with creating a disequilibrium social environment that encouraged the emergence of corruption in the colonial state, which eventually spilled over into the post-colonial state (Holmes 2015). The appropriation of the natives' ancestral land was central to corruption in the colonial state. As previously discussed, the annexation of indigenous communities' ancestral land had a disastrous ecological impact, as it was accompanied by unprecedented clearing of indigenous forests and mass slaughter of wild animals to accommodate white settlers. A shocking example of colonial corruption is the case of Lord Delamere, who, as mentioned earlier in this study, was given over 100,000 acres of land for a penny per acre! Kulet is critical of the socioeconomic structures that allow corruption to take root in the country's natural resource management. He longs for a social order founded on sound ecological ethics that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. Setia serves as the author's mouthpiece in his crusade against corruption. Setia, as chief game warden, demonstrates a strong commitment to wildlife conservation. He will not sell his soul to the god of corruption. He tells Sipaya, "I am not the type of man who accepts money corruptly to undo the wrongs of others." I'm sorry, but I don't. If I wanted to be corrupt, I would have done so a long time ago, and I would not be living in a leaking house. I would have built a mansion for myself.

I respect you as a person who has worked very hard to achieve the respectable position you now hold in society. I respect you for what you have accomplished in terms of wealth, but I regret to say that at our age and with all of this modernization swirling around us, many of us have subconsciously assimilated, even if we don't realize it, a notion that with money, you just have to dangle it in front of those without it and they will salivate, dying to have it at any cost. I'm not one of them, (p.131).

The passage summarizes the novel's critique of society's assimilation of a materialistic culture based on individualistic, rationalist, and instrumental impulses. These desires are what have turned Sipaya into a mortal enemy of the physical environment. The novel also criticizes police corruption, as personified by Mr. Mento, the criminal investigation boss. The battle against nonhuman nature abuse can only be won if those tasked with enforcing the law are not tainted by corruption. Mento uses his position to protect Sipaya, the merchant of death, from prosecution. The 350,000/- bribe he seeks from him is a minor prize that Sipaya must pay to clear his name. Sipaya returns to the bush with renewed vigor after settling the bribe. In order to fulfill his part of a lucrative deal involving the delivery of sixty large elephant tusks to an Arab businessman, he throws caution to the wind. "Do you know that I have spent over three hundred and sixty thousand shillings, and that money must somehow find its way back into the bank?" he asks Mirandu. (164). Sipaya's rhetorical question emphasizes the downward spiral of corruption. The desire to reclaim what has been lost through corruption breeds more corruption. Sipaya has no qualms about sacrificing a large number of elephants to balance his books.

Kulet is also concerned about the corrupt use of official quotas stipulated in hunting permits issued by the state to trophy hunters. Ideally, the law requires trophy hunters to strictly follow the provisions of their license, which often

specify the number of animals to be shot, as well as their type, age, and gender. The reality in the bush, however, is quite different, as the text reveals. As Sipaya confessed to Setia, the white hunters frequently violate the quotas imposed by their license in collaboration with local cohorts: . . . .It started like this: the hunters I take on safari would have a permit to kill one or two elephants. They would naturally prefer to kill a large elephant with the largest tusks. However, during the shooting, they would kill the smallest, and then beg us to do it again. They would occasionally shoot a small one inadvertently during the second shoot. A repeat request, and on the third or fourth occasion, they would shoot the elephant of their choice. We'd end up with four or six tusks as a result of the process, (p130).

The passage exposes the negative aspects of trophy hunting. It is unfortunate that Africa as a continent is losing its wildlife heritage at the hands of corrupt local tour operators and trigger-happy foreign trophy hunters who will go to any length to experience the perverse thrill of shooting innocent animals. As a result of this practice, some species, such as the white rhino, are on the verge of extinction. It should be noted that trophy hunting, as a 'conservationist' strategy, is dependent on effective state regulations and extensive scientific monitoring of animal populations. Unfortunately, in most African countries where institutionalized corruption is prevalent, this is not feasible. Thus, corruption in the tourism industry is disrupting the Savannah's ecological balance, as overzealous trophy hunters hiding behind state-issued hunting licenses continue to wreak havoc in the bush.

## VI. In conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze and examine the depictions of indigenous ecological ethics in Henry Ole Kulet's novels, *Vanishing Herds* and *The Hunter*, through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism. According to the study, Kulet's perception and construction of nature are influenced by his community's cultural and socioeconomic realities. The study also claimed that the Maasai view of nature differs from the Euro-American mercantile view, which regards nature as an economic resource. In Maasai cosmology, the natural world is revered as a manifestation of Enkai, the Supreme Being. As a result, the natural environment is viewed as a temple for Enkai, a pharmacy, and a place of refuge for reflection and contemplation. The study also revealed the existence of a strong ecological knowledge system among indigenous communities, which was bolstered by the presence of a sacred grove tradition, which played an important role in biodiversity conservation. The study demonstrated that Mother Nature is supreme and that those who violate her laws will face severe consequences.

We demonstrated that culture is a significant determinant of how people relate to the natural environment by analyzing characters' ecological consciousness. Religion, ethnicity, education, and social background all have an impact on how people experience and perceive nature. We have also demonstrated that the loss of spiritual reverence for the natural environment, a grim manifestation of modernity, is at the heart of the current environmental challenges confronting postcolonial states. More importantly, the chapter emphasizes the importance of reorienting humans' ecological sensibilities as a precondition for reintegrating with the natural world.

## VII. Disclosure statement

*The authors report no potential conflicts of interest.*

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