

**VOICES OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND DONOR AGENTS IN OLE KULET'S THE  
ELEPHANT DANCE**

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## **Declaration**

I confirm that this thesis is my original work. This work has not been presented for award of degree in any other university in Kenya, or in any other country in the world.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to those who would have loved to see me through schooling. Your contributions remain the motivating factor to scale more.

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## Abstract

This study evaluates the conspicuous voices of the civil society and donor agencies in Ole Kulet's *The Elephant Dance*. The objectives of the study were to illustrate how Ole Kulet's has been influenced by the civil society organizations and donor agencies in his writing and the blurred relationship between literature and activism. I applied Feminism, Ecocriticism and Formalism theories of literature. The Formalist theory assisted my analysis of the form and style of the text. Feminism and Ecocriticism were relevant in the analysis of how women have been presented in the text and how the relationship between humans and nature is depicted in *The Elephant Dance*. I did a library research, read scholarly journals, students' dissertations, essays and newspaper articles in the collection of secondary data. However, I was not able to interview the author to assess his stand on my assertions. The results of my study illustrate that Ole Kulet has greatly been influenced by the civil society organizations and that the civil society organizations have influenced fictional writing in Kenya. I recommend that more studies be done to evaluate how civil society organizations have compromised artistic creativity in Kenya.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Background to the Study

#### 1.0 Introduction

Henry Ole Kulet is a Kenyan author and novelist. The outstanding feature of Ole Kulet's novels is the use of the indigenous communities to relay his ideas and messages. This enables him to present his ideological standpoints. Ole Kulet's writings mainly rely on regionalism. Minot Stephan defines regionalism as "the use of direct specific regions the writer is familiar with," (232). Regionalism in Ole Kulet's writing is depicted in *The Elephant Dance* and other texts through the setting, character and characterization, plot, themes and the use of the local dialect. In the *Moran No More*, Ole Kulet employs regionalism to mock the Maasai concept of *Moranism* in an activist language.

Kenya has undergone a remarkable political transformation. Kenya became a multiparty democracy in the early 1990s due to the unwavering support of the civil society organizations. This period of struggle for the multiparty democracy birthed literary works rife with detentions, corruption, exploitation and tribalism as the main themes. This trend points to the influence external occurrences have on the writer(s).

Recently, the civil society organizations have set the agenda in education, human rights, governance, cultural, environmental awareness, poaching and issues of the same sex marriages. This has led to the emergence of literary texts echoing the arguments of the civil society organizations and the donor agents. One such writer that has consistently allowed the voices of the civil society organizations and donor agents to dominate his texts is Ole Kulet. In his texts, Ole Kulet strategically employs a plot, setting, language, characterization and themes that tend to



pander to the whims of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. Such themes include corruption, female circumcision (FGM), poaching and male chauvinism among others.

Literary works written with specific audience in mind and intent tend to deny the readers the opportunity to make their own interpretation. Such texts are deliberately written to advance specific agenda. Reading Ole Kulet's *The Elephant Dance* leaves minimal or no room for the objective interpretation. It is therefore necessary and of academic merit to interrogate how the activists and donor agencies' priorities have influenced Ole Kulet's writings.

### **1.1 Literature and Propaganda**

I believe that a thought system of a people is created by the most powerful, sensitive, and imaginative minds that the society has produced: these are the few men and women, the supreme artists, the imaginative creators of their time, who form the consciousness of their time. (Okot 39)

The above assertion by Okot P'Bitek has been the genesis of what art is. Are artists the greatest and imaginative people to have lived? What are the intentions of the artists? For what purpose do artists perform? Are artists honest? The answers to the above questions are varied depending on an individual's ideological inclination. However, it is vital to note that the artists are not the only source of truth as they sometimes perform, paint or write with ulterior motives. It is such motives other than artistic work that must be highlighted. In this study, I am evaluating how an artist, Ole Kulet, has laced his works with propaganda spread by the civil society organizations and the donor agencies.

The place of propaganda in modern literature has attracted the attention of scholars. Krutch Wood observes that:

Today the question of the relationship between literature and propaganda has come to the front in a new form. A goodly portion of contemporary writing youth has adopted notions more or less colored by communist dogma, and it is busy with the production of novels, plays, and poems deliberately designed for the purpose of expressing political and social convictions. (793)

The dilemma that befalls contemporary writers is on how to comment on the contemporary issues detached from the daily propaganda propelled by the media, governments and the civil rights movements. The word propaganda is defined as “information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view” (www.oed.com, 2019). Literature is “written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit,” (www.oed.com, 2019). From the above definition, it is noticeable that literature is purely a product of imagination artistically presented. So, if literature is a work of imagination, how does propaganda influence it? This is the question that this study evaluates in Ole Kulet’s *The Elephant Dance*.

Human operate within a political, economic, social, religious and cultural sphere. This explains the conflicting ideologies and different opinions we often register on issues. Besides such predisposing factors, we are also born into families with peculiar ideologies that shape how we interact with our immediate surroundings. This understanding of the society is further influenced by other external factors including politics and education. As our understanding of the society advances, we interact with conflicting opinions on how to make the society better, how to alleviate the suffering of the defenseless, the vices perpetrated by those in authority and the fights for the

rights of the minority groups. Such concerns are likely to influence an individual's ideological inclination. Such influence can then be artistically portrayed in painting, poetry, short story, fiction, or even in spoken words intentionally or inadvertently. So, as we evaluate how literature and propaganda interact, it is of value to note that an artist can inadvertently lace his or works with propaganda. This point, however, stands to be disputed since artistic involvement is a conscious undertaking.

Literature and other works of art have been integral part of societies for centuries. The existence of literature amidst us has led to question the role of literature in societies and what influences thematic choices by the writers. Krutch Wood argues that: "The real business of literature, is, therefore, not propaganda at all but the communication of an aesthetic experience, and the most striking characteristic of an aesthetic experience is certain disinterestedness," (799). My core concern of this study is not to discredit the writings of Ole Kulet but to illustrate how his surrounding has influenced him. It is also my opinion that Ole Kulet does not present the authentic human experience in his texts.

There is no known approach to discern literature full of propaganda; however, it is my assertion that any writing that denies the readers the opportunity to decide for themselves has elements of propaganda in it. Literary works that do not propel propaganda allow the readers to make personal objective judgment(s) on the issue(s) in question. In *The Elephant Dance*, the readers are denied the opportunity to make objective conclusions as Ole Kulet narrates the story with minimal disinterestedness. The hunting and the gathering community in the text is presented as the victims of an entrenched land grabbing syndicate. The folly that Ole Kulet suffers with this strategy of

writing is that he fills the text with propaganda of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies.

In evaluating the interaction between literature and propaganda, it is of value to consider the reality that writers present. It is therefore necessary to ask: what kind of reality does the author project? Does the author construct another reality unknown to us? If the author is constructing another reality, for what purpose? How autonomous is literature? The last question is of great value because literature is produced within a political, economic, social, and cultural context. Writing on art and propaganda, Staal Jonas argues that: “The result is that we will approach artworks as implicated in the larger interface between structures of power and the reality these structures and their stakeholders aim to construct,” (138). So, if art mirrors our daily life experiences, how is that considered propaganda? In answering that question, I point that the best way to detect propaganda in art is on how an author mediates between art and propaganda. It is the responsibility of a writer to remain neutral, and above all, not to attempt to decide for the readers. Earlier, I asked why people write books. This is a question that can be answered best by writers. However, as critics, we too can attempt to provide answers to that question.

To effectively pinpoint a writer as a propagandist, it is therefore of value to have a look at his works and the consistent issues associated with such works. A critical evaluation of Ole Kulet’s works reveals consistency in themes, characters and characterization, setting, regionalism (colour writing) and plot. The core themes that Ole Kulet dwells on are poaching, patriarchy, corruption, women education, land problems and issues of the minority rights. These are the same issues that have been raised by the civil society organizations and donor agencies. So, how does delving in such issues make Ole Kulet a spokesperson of the civil society organization and donor agencies?

The civil society organizations have criminalized certain cultural heritage, talking about poaching and unending masked fight for the rights of minority groups. In Ole Kulet's books, such issues are also highlighted and evidently exaggerated.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The intention for writing fictional works lies with the author. However, the critics are at advantaged position in interpreting the writing. In this thesis, I am examining how Ole Kulet panders to the whims of the civil society and donor agencies and how such intentional pandering has affected the literary authenticity of *The Elephant Dance*. This will be realized by analyzing the diction and the structure of *The Elephant Dance*. I am motivated by the desire to examine the consequences of writing with an intended audience in the mind and how such compromises storytelling.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study endeavours to:

1. Interrogate the diction and the structure of *The Elephant Dance* to illustrate how Ole Kulet panders to the whims of the civil society organizations and donor agencies.
2. Investigate how Ole Kulet has been influenced by the civil society organizations and donor agencies in his writing.

## **1.4 Hypotheses**

1. Examining the diction and the structure of the *The Elephant Dance* will reveal the hidden voices of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies in the text.

2. Ole Kulet consciously writes with a target audience in mind to drive his personal ideologies.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

The writings of Ole Kulet correspond with the current global efforts to relook into the issues of poaching, environmental preservation, woman emancipation, cultural heritage and the protection of the minority groups. These concerns have also been voiced by the civil society movements and the donor agencies. Throughout generations, environmental enthusiasts have pointed and condemned instances of environmental exploitation, poaching and trading in wildlife trophies. Gender activists have also consistently pointed out the invisibility of the women and the adherent to cultures that limit women. The same issues have also been raised by the fictional writers in highlighting the plight of the affected groups. However, it is also worth noting that literature has been used for both social and activism purposes for generations. This thus leaves the readers with the problem of the overlapping interaction between literature and activism. This overlapping interaction between literature and the concerns raised by the civil society organizations deserve a critical evaluation. It is therefore the responsibility of scholars to point out literary works propelling propaganda at the expense of honest of artistic creativity.

Literature awash with propaganda lacks authenticity. In this research project, I am evaluating how Ole Kulet panders to the whims of such groups in his writings. Ole Kulet is a seasoned fictional writer. He mainly writes about the Maassi community. This has enabled him to dwell on the issues he is familiar with such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), historical land injustices, the problems of the minority groups, girl child education, the impact of the law on the Maasai traditions and the trade in ivory. In doing so, Ole Kulet tends to use a diction, semantics, syntax

and text structure that in my opinion compromises his writing creativity. It is therefore my interest to look into how Ole Kulet has been influenced by the external factor(s) in his writing.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

### **1.6.1 Introduction**

For the purposes of this study, the literature review is divided into two parts. The first part of the literature review will majorly delve into reviews on the works of Ole Kulet that are beneficial to this study. Such include prior critical works by literary critics, magazine and newspaper commentaries, and postgraduate dissertations. The second part of the literature review will deal with selected prior works of the civil society movements beneficial to my study.

### **1.6.2 Literature review on prior works of Ole Kulet.**

The writings of Ole Kulet are not well studied in Kenya as those of other pioneer fiction writers. Pioneer fictional writers such as Ngugi wa Thiongo criticized government excesses. In this, Ngugi wa Thiongo reaped the necessary audience that propelled him to prominence. The concern that Ole Kulet's works have not been accorded attention in Kenya is buttressed by Kamande Peter in his unpublished MA thesis of 2004: "Despite this broad writing of Ole Kulet that spans for approximately three decades, it remains in the periphery of literary scholarship, his literary accomplishments have received inadequate critical attention," (7).

Ole Kulet's debut novel, *Is it Possible?* has been translated into German in 1981 as *Feurprobe*. Ole Kulet as a writer has won awards for his works. In 1985, his novel *To Become a Man* won Third World Children's Books award. In 2013, *Vanishing Herds* (2011) won the Jomo Kenyatta

prize for Literature. The novel, just as the other Ole Kulet's writings, advocates for environmental restoration for human posterity through the lenses of indigenous communities. In his MA thesis, Samsom Lusinga (2016) examines the *Representation of Ecological Consciousness in Henry Kulet's Vanishing Herds and The Hunter*. In this study, Lusinga argues that his endeavors are to bring a fresh insight into the role of literature in the global campaign against environmental degradation. However, this study does not analyze how Ole Kulet uses a text structure and a style that targets a specific audience in examining the ecological consciousness.

Peter Kamande Mbugua expounds on the issues of identity in Kulet's novels *Is it Possible?* and *To Become a Man*. The study "portrays the contradictions, the crisis, cultural coalition, and the ambivalences that ensue the interaction between the traditional Maasai customary ways and Western lifestyle," (8). In the study, Kamande does not evaluate the diction uses by Ole Kulet in relaying the interaction between Maasai customary ways and the western lifestyle.

Concerned with the destiny of Maasai female, Keton Ann examines mostly the role of the females in this marginalized community. Examining works of Ole Kulet reveals two categories of marginalized groups: the Maasai community as a whole and the marginalization of the Maasai woman by restrictive Maasai culture, mostly perpetrated by the men. Keton asserts that her work "investigates how the position of the Maasai woman is defined and (re)defined in the two novels" (3). However, Keton does not delve into the language and structure employed by Ole Kulet to bring out marginalization and how through this Ole Kulet panders to the whims of the civil society and donor the donor agencies.

Khaemba Wanyonyi analyses *Blossoms of the Savannah* and *Daughter of Maa* to show the reproduction of tension, uncertainties and conflicts among the Maasai community. Wanyonyi's



work is interested in the effects of foreign education and other foreign ways of life on the Maasai culture. This study fails to look at the existence of other voices in the text and how such voices are aimed at specific outcomes and to a specific audience.

Evan Mwangi and Simon Gikandi in *The Columbia Guide to East African Literature in English Since 1945* argue that Kulet's writings combine autobiography with history and politics to represent challenges faced by the Maasai community in post-colonial Kenya. However, Mwangi and Gikandi do not delve on the language and the text structure Ole Kulet uses to present the challenges faced by the Maasai community.

David Dorsey examines the possibility of the integration of the Maasai of Kenya into an organized form of education, economic and political life of modern Kenya. In capturing the challenges of modern Maasai in Kenya Dorsey writes:

The Maasai are an ethnic group with a unique place in the ethos of Kenya. Theirs is the most glorious past, the most troubled present, the most unpredictable future. By the mid-nineteenth century when the European intrusions into East Africa began, these pastoralists who shunned fishing and farming were the super power of East Africa, controlling a vast expansive territory in Kenya and Tanganyika with the most effective military organization and tactics, and the most successfully aggressive posture towards their neighbors. (2)

The observations by David Dorsey on the challenges faced by the Maasia community is well debated in *The Elephant Dance*, as this study illustrates in the following chapters. In Dorsey's analysis, he fails to look at how Ole Kulet presents the Maasai characters in his texts and how the concept of male-female relation in the text is presented with lots of pandering.

### **1.6.3 Literature Review of the Works of the Civil Society Movements**

A comprehensive analysis of the voices of the civil society organizations and donor agencies in *The Elephant Dance* will be aided by relevant works which have been written on the civil society movements by prior scholars. The history of civil society movement, according to Boris De Wiel dates back to Antiquity and Enlightenment. In the recent years, scholars have been interested in the works of the civil society movements and their contributions to better societies. There are two schools of thought in explaining the growth of civil society in recent years:

Contemporary discussions may be broadly categorized into two schools of thought.

The first is the Post-Marxist attempt to find a new foundation for socialist ideals, broadly understood. Within this group, writers like John Keanel seem to be moving towards a more liberal account, emphasizing the distinction between state and society, while others like Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato are more interested in ways to regulate civil society while avoiding the dangers of statism and bureaucracy. A second group of theorists working on the idea of civil society may be categorized as belonging more firmly in the liberal tradition. (De Wiel 2)

In her unpublished MA Thesis, Maingi Mwikali observes that:

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are crucial players in any county's developmental agenda. They play crucial roles socially, economically and politically. For any country to grow economically, it requires large presence of actively involved CSOs most of it sectors if not all. (x)

Mwikali further says that: "Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are key players in the push for Universal values around human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption. They

are agents of development in any given economy as they play a significant role politically, socially and economically,” (1). Mwikali underscores the value of the civil society in the betterment of the lives of the citizens at the expense of the citizens who put in place governments through a constitutional system. It is my observation that Mwikali’s assumption has led to over expectation from the civil societies. It is also of value to point that it is citizens who put governments in place. So, to opine that the civil society organizations are the agents of development is an exaggeration for governments exist before the civil societies. It is this holding that is witnessed throughout *The Elephant Dance* as Ole Kulet employs the voice of an activism in self-narration to highlight the tribulations of a community.

The interaction between the civil society and governments has always appeared blurred. In most political systems, governments refer to the civil society as development partners. This is more so in situations where the governments’ and the civil society pursue the same agenda in terms of racial inclusion, encouraging literacy programmes and capacity building. However, most governments are at ease to resist civil society’s programmes that are considered to “incite the law abiding citizens.” This constant change of tune between the two development partners (Government and Civil Society) has led to transformation of most civil societies as argues Boris De Wiel that:

The idea of civil society has undergone a renaissance in recent years, but missing from this literature is an explanation for its historical transformation in meaning. Originally civil society was synonymous with political society, but the common modern meaning emphasizes autonomy from the state. (1)

The activism movement are based on the assumption of either liberating a subdued group of people or community from the dominant people or community. In employing this tactic is highlighting the suffering of the perceived dominated, writers often employ activism mode of writing. In this Mendible argues that:

Literature and politics have had an uneasy and often controversial relationship... especially ludicrous in societies where creative writers' prominent political roles make them subject to violence, exile and persecution... In this context, creative and political aims reinforce each other, forging a literary tradition. (4)

The concept of activism has for years been differently interpreted. A section of scholars opine that activism should be radical whereas another section consider activism to be an all-inclusive approach. In Africa, the challenges women face have led to conceited efforts to study the struggles African women experience both at work and in their daily lives. Writing on same Anfred Signe *et al* argue that:

Efforts to conceptualize gender need to go beyond showing that gender has not been constructed historically in the same ways in Africa, especially Nigeria, compared to West. Nigerian women's experience are structured by multiple lines of power and division other than gender, such as class, age, ethnicity, religion, region and so on, each of these being foregrounded and changing in differing ways according to time, place and so on. (Signe *et al*. 15)

This struggle has led to the emergence of literary works depicting the struggle of the females. However, a keener reading of such literary texts reveals attempts by the writers to capture the attention of a specific audience.

In Kenya and other regions in Africa, the desire to infuse activism in the academy has been mooted for long. However, this approach has had its challenges as the academy is considered not be a preserve of a certain gender. In this, Gouws opines that:

The relationship between women who are political activists and women in the academy (some who are also activists) has been uncomfortable one, but from perspectives of struggle, a mutually beneficial one. Both sides played an important role in putting gender on the agenda during the transition to democracy in South Africa and keeping it here. (41)

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by the postulations of Ecocriticism, Feminism and Formalism theories of literature. Ecocriticism is a relatively modern theory in literary analysis that interrogates how literature comments on the interaction between humans and nature. Feminism as a theory of literature interrogates how women are represented in literary texts. Formalism theory looks at how the text is structurally organized. The first section on theoretical framework will look into how the concerns of Ecocriticism as an approach to literary analysis are depicted in *The Elephant Dance*.

### **1.7.1 Ecocriticism Approach to Literary Analysis**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century devastating environmental occurrences have arguably led to interdisciplinary approaches in studying the environment. The disciplinary approach thus resulted in Ecocriticism as an attempt to keenly analyze the relationship between literature and the natural environment.

Critics trace the origin of Ecocriticism to the 1990s, and place its origin to Greek terms *Oikos* and *Kritis*: *Oikoso* meaning “household” and “*Kritis*” meaning the “judge”; hence “Ecocriticism is the arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order,” (Howarth 163). Though Ecocriticism appears to be a relatively new term in the academia, writings concerned with the environment can be traced to Gilbert White’s *The Natural History of Melbourne* (1789). This text would later be classified by ecocritics as literature on the environment. However, a concrete definition of Ecocriticism is given by Cheryll Glotfelty as: “Simply put, Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment,” (xviii).

A critical reading of literature with Ecocriticism as a benchmark entails unveiling the writer’s concerns from the standpoint of a nature conservationist. In this regard, a conservationist is considered one who is environmentally conscious, their position in the society notwithstanding. The writings of Ole Kulet portray an environmental consciousness and a desire to demand prudent and responsible exploitation of nature. The environmental plunder demonstrated by Ole Kulet in his writings invite a conscious look into his concerns, characterization and setting. The relationship between literature and the nature is not much on the focus as the relationship between literature and politics, literature and morality, and literature and war. The glaring distinction between Ecocriticism as an approach in literary criticism and other theoretical approaches is that it (Ecocriticism) elongates the understanding of the world to include the all-inclusive ecosphere. Ecocriticism is viewed as an interdisciplinary approach in studying how literary writers depict the relationship between human and nature. This has thus, arguably, invited the conscious use of literature in creating awareness on a future just society.

The concern with Ecocriticism is how to merge the distinct approaches in teaching the natural sciences and the humanities. The key concern of Ecocriticism stems from the argument on how literary texts contribute to our knowledge of culture, and goes beyond to examine the linkages between culture and nature. Ecocriticism stretches further to interrogate cultural ecology as the sphere of human culture, and the relationship between ecological process and natural energy cycles. Critics of nature observe constant change in nature and the need for humans to ensure nature serves and does not destroy mankind:

Literature is thus, on one hand, a sensorium for what goes wrong in a society, for the biophobic, life-paralyzing implications of onesided form of consciousness and uniformity, and as it is, on the other hand, a medium of constant cultural self-renewal, in which the neglected biophilic energies can find a symbolic space of expression and of integration in the longer ecology of cultural discourse. (Hubert 335)

### **1.7.2 The Feminist Approach to Literary Analysis**

Feminist theory of literature has evolved into many phases. The search for a female voice in in either male or female literature originated in America and Britain. The Feminist approach in analyzing literature emerged from a concern that literature perpetuated male dominance. At the onset, proponents of First-Wave Feminist criticism were mostly concerned with universal rights of the woman as an integral part of the society. The First-Wave Feminist criticism thus spread throughout the world demanding that women be allowed to participate in the governance processes by electing their leaders.

In his writings, Ole Kulet has demonstrated the challenges facing the Maasai woman. The Maasai culture that Ole Kulet shares with the readers depicts the subordination the women suffer in this community. The Feminist approach advocates for the elevation of both men and women. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet presents both the admirable and not ambitious female characters. The proponents of the Feminism argue that the females have for long been viewed as subordinates in the male dominated spheres of life, and literary texts have been used to perpetuate it. Pioneer literary writers and philosophers never viewed women as equal to men. Aristotle observed that the “female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities” just as St Thomas Aquinas long held that woman is an “imperfect man.” For generations: “Women’s conscious struggle to resist the patriarchy and has sought to disturb the complacent certainties of such a patriarchal culture, to assert a belief in sexual equality, and to eradicate sexist domination in transforming society,” (Selden *et al.*127).

This theoretical application ensures the characters involved in the text are not viewed from the perspective of either being male or female but in their willingness to be guided by what is morally acceptable (that which is beneficial to humanity, sex not withstanding). In most African literature, the female personality has been treated as a subaltern, and artistically humiliated. A critical review of Ole Kulet’s works presents a writer in mission to present a unique African woman. The understanding of the Feminist theory has morphed over the years with unique and distinct philosophies in analyzing and understanding the literary texts. The development on the understanding and interpretation of the literary texts’ has led to other branches of Feminism as observed by Selden *et al.*:

Over the past twenty-five years or so, feminist critical theory has meant, *par excellence*, contradiction, interchange, debate; indeed it is based on a series of creative oppositions, of



critiques and counter-critiques, and is constantly and innovatively in flux-challenging, subverting and expanding not only other (male) theories but its own positions and agenda. Hence there is no one ‘grand narrative’ but many ‘*petits recits*’, grounded in specific cultural -political needs and arenas—for example, of class, gender and race – and often in some degree of contention with each other. (117)

The different branches of Feminism have evolved over time; and some have remained controversial to date. Simone de Beauvoir demonstrates the significant differences between the interests of women and men, and the existing economic discrimination against women. Simone works illustrate the differences between sex and gender, and how the two (sex and gender) interact in social and natural spheres. Her works have also evolved to what other Feminist critics term Existentialist Feminism. It dissuades women from buying into the already constructed male-female relationship pattern. This school of thought encourages the women to always seek empowerment.

The writings of Ole Kulet are rife with the challenges faced by the present day Maasai women. In *The Elephant Dance*, Napono and Naramat are depicted as victims of a cultural heritage. The struggles of Napono and Naramat features well in Ole Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savannah* as Taiyo and Resian struggle to escape the humiliating tradition of the female genital mutilation. In this community under scrutiny by Ole Kulet, the male-female relationship is defined by men, hence women must accept cultural obligations heaped on them, against the proposals of the existentialist feminism.

### 1.7.3 The Formalism Approach to Literary Analysis

Though the Formalism tradition of the literary analysis evolved in Russia and mainly associated with Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), Formalism can also be construed to mean New Criticism or the American New Criticism. Formalism approach to literary analysis is mainly concerned with the form of the text, and not biographical information about the author. The core concern of formalism is the internal workings of the literary text. However, critics have observed that to concretely understand a text, it is of value to look at the author's biography, the economic, political, cultural circumstances under which the text was written.

In evaluation of the voices of the civil society and donor agencies in *The Elephant Dance*, I will rely on Formalism as an approach to literary analysis. Formalism will assist me in evaluation the general organization of the text in terms of the setting, dialogue, cohesion and point of view. I will also employ Formalism in the evaluation of how the different sections of *The Elephant Dance* relate to one another to convey meaning. Formalism as a literary analysis considers the author not an integral part of literary analysis as observed by Selden *et al.*:

It is not concerned with *context* – historical, biographical, intellectual and so on; it is not interested in the “fallacies” of “intention” or “affect”; it is concerned solely with the “text in itself”, with its language and organization; it does not seek a text’s “meaning”, but how it “speaks itself”... it is concerned to trace how the parts of the text relate, how it achieves its “order” and “harmony”, how it contains and resolves “irony”, “paradox”, “tension”, “ambivalence” and “ambiguity”; and it is concerned essentially with articulating the very “poem-ness” – the formal quintessence – of the poem itself. (19)

Employing Formalism to understand and evaluate the voices of the civil society and the donor agencies in *The Elephant Dance* will be of value in avoiding the fallacies associated with the literary analysis. Since Formalism pay lesser attention to the intentional and affective fallacies, it enables an objective evaluation on how the text communicates and its literary merit. Formalism will also be of help in identifying the reliable and unreliable characterless in *The Elephant Dance*. It is such unreliable characters in *The Elephant Dance* that propel the voices of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. Arguing on the reliable and unreliable narration from a Formalist perspective, Selden *et al* observe that "...separating out of "reliable" and "unreliable" narrators – the former, usually in the third person, coming close to the values of the "implied author"; the latter, often a character within the story, a deviant from them," (23).

In Formalism literary analysis, the core concern is on the closeness of the text to the human experience and reality. Formalism literary analysis explores how the text proves its moral force upon close evaluation. I will use Formalism literary analysis to evaluate whether *The Elephant Dance* depicts human experience or panders to the whims of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. The Formalism literary analysis considers literature as a special use of language. It is this specialty of literature in language use that makes literature distinct from the other forms of writing. The language use in literature must serve the purposes for which it is meant. However, the purposes for writing as intended by the author might differ with the interpretation of the readers. This observation of the literature as a special use of language is also pointed out by other critics that: "Poetry exercises a controlled violence upon practical language, which is thereby deformed in order to compel our attention to its constructed nature," (Selden *et al.* 32).

It is this deliberate contravention of the known language rules that makes literature unique and enables the writers to convey their message. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet contravenes known language conventions by fusing local dialect in his narration. The value of plot as integral component of literature is much appreciated than the story itself. The plot, The Formalists observe, interrupts and lengthens the narration. In *The Elephant Dance*, the story is “poachers have been arrested”. The plot in the story is an intricate narration that depicts the source of conflict, planning by the arresting bodies and the final arrest of the suspects. In analyzing the arrangement of the events in *The Elephant Dance*, this study will in the following chapters show how Ole Kulet has employed a plot that buttresses the concerns of civil society and donor agencies in Kenya.

### **1.8 Methodology**

The study is based on a close analytical reading of Ole Kulet’s novel, *The Elephant Dance* to realize the objectives of the study. To understand Ole Kulet’s concerns as illustrated in *The Elephant Dance*, I have read his other works expounding on the challenges presented in the text. Further readings involved journals concerned with creating environmental awareness and newspaper articles relevant to the study.

### **1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the study is to point at how Ole Kulet deviates from creative work to pander to the whims and wishes of the civil society groups and the donor agencies. The study have been made possible by referring to other works on the relationship between literature, environment and humanity. The study scrutinizes Ole Kulet’s *The Elephant Dance* to form a basis on the evident

pandering demonstrated by the setting, the characterization and carefully selected issues that tingle the ears of the civil society and donor agencies.

### **1.10 Chapter Outline**

This research project is organized into four chapters.

Chapter One introduces the study and the guiding approaches.

Chapter Two gives a preview to the study.

Chapter Three looks at the diction used in the text.

Chapter four looks at the structure of the text.

The Conclusions summarizes the study.

### **1.11 Definition of terms**

This study defines the key terms used in this thesis as illustrated below.

**Analysis:** To separate work of fiction into parts and give rigorous, organized, logical, detailed scrutiny resulting in a consistent and complete understanding of a literary text.

**Author:** An individual who intellectually or imaginatively creates literary work which is distinctively their work with specific unique characteristics.

**Character:** A person in works of fiction who typifies some definite quality as an example of vice of virtue. They are reported as having identifiable moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities.

**Characterization:** Fictionally created personages in literate texts that seem lifelike.

**Text:** A book prescribed as part of course of study.

- Indigenous:** Originating or concurring naturally in specific geographical location either fictionally or factual.
- Community:** The people living in one locality as represented in a work of fiction. This representation can be in reality or fictitious as in the works of literature.
- Native:** Born in a specified place. This specified place in fiction is mostly made-up.
- Literary:** The scholarly study and appreciation of literature.
- Criticism:** The evaluation of a work of literature for purposes of judging its worth.
- Technique:** Skills applied in writing works of fiction. Artistic rendition of works of fiction.
- Plot:** Plan of a novel or the connected series of events that make a story.
- Conflict:** State of opposition between ideas, interests as represented in a novel.
- Environment:** The external surrounding in which a plant or animal lives, which tend to influence its development and behavior.
- Academia:** The academic world.
- Fiction:** Literary works invented by the imagination, such as novels or short stories.
- Audience:** The people reached by a book or the targeted readers of a book.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Overview of the Voices of the Civil Society and Donor Agencies

#### 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the dominant presence of the civil society and donor agencies voices in *The Elephant Dance*. Those voices advocate for the preservation of the environment and gender equality. The analysis will be supported by the Ecocriticism and the Feminism theories. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet uses specially picked and molded characters to advance the civil society and donor agencies concerns. The problem of land ownership, poaching, women invisibility and patriarchy are still rife in Kenya as debated by Ole Kulet in the text. Kenya's economy is driven by Agriculture, tourism, transport among others. Agriculture is the main economic activity supported by tourism and hospitality. The tourism sector in Kenya is vibrant accounting for 3.7% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017. It is thus vital note the value of the tourism sector in the Kenyan economy and the need to protect Kenya's beautiful and wonderful heritage from poachers as the livelihoods of those supported by the tourism sector is likely to be negatively impacted.

On the other hand, the desire to see girls attain quality education and the women accorded equal opportunities as men in the post-colonial Kenya has been overemphasized by successive regimes. However, due to the restrictive cultural observation among the different tribes in Kenya, it is vital to note that the government initiatives to encourage women education have been resisted in certain quarters. The same challenges are also experienced in other parts across Africa. The challenges facing and limiting girls' education in Kenya can be traced to the restrictive cultures in post-independence Kenya and ignorance. This social and cultural holding has led to the young girls getting married off to older men. This routine has repeated itself over generations, leading to the

formation of The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) to streamline gender challenges and equality in Kenya.

## **2.1 Agitation for Wildlife Conservation and Land Rights for the Minority/Marginalized Groups in *The Elephant Dance***

### **2.1.1 Introduction**

*The Elephant Dance* is expertly crafted as a cry for environmental preservation and protection against an invisible land grabbers through the perspective of a hunting and gathering community occupying a fictional Konini locality. However, a closer reading of the text reveals that it is set in Kenya among a pastoralist community. To effectively comment on the exploitation of the wildlife and land grabbing, Ole Kulet uses characters native to the Maasai. As fictionalized by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance*, land issues in Kenya are very emotive. To solve this problem and respond to historical land squabbles in Kenya, The Commission of Inquiry into the Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land was established in 2003 to look into the historical land injustices.

### **2.1.2 Agitation for Land Rights in *The Elephant Dance***

*The Elephant Dance* commences with an impending displacement of the fictional Konini residents. The piece of land their have known as theirs has been leased to large scale farmers and investors in tourism and hospitality as narrated in the tesxt:

At first, they refused to believe what the letter was telling them: that a hundred and fifty thousand acres of land that included the entire Konini forest in which they lived, had been leased out for ninety-nine years to a white man called Dick Jones. Henceforth, the letter told them, all the trees in that forest, all the elephants, all the rhinos, buffaloes and all other



animals that they believed were given to them by God at the beginning of time, now belonged to Dick Jones. (Kulet 4)

The above narration is rife with the challenges facing the community land ownership in Kenya. It also corroborates the civil society organizations and the donor agencies arguments that since independence, large swaths of community owned lands have been grabbed or irregularly leased to investors. This also captures the concerns of the International Land Coalition. The International Land Coalition (ILC) is a global alliance of the civil society and intergovernmental organizations working together to put people at the centre of land governance. The International Land Coalition in partnership with Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP) sought the intervention of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to compel the Government of the Republic of Kenya to address the challenges the Ogiek community has faced since 1930. To ensure the protection of their rights, the Ogieks in 1999 formed the Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP) to liberate the Ogiek Community from subjugation and suppression imposed by the past and the present regimes in Kenya. The concerns pursued by the Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP) and the International Land Coalition (ILC) are the same issues raised in *The Elephant Dance*: “ For many months, elders of the community that lived in Konini forest, waited in eager anticipation for the arrival of good news. Discussions after discussions had been held for many years regarding their permanent settlement,” (Kulet 1).

In illustrating the challenges faced by the indigenous communities in securing their ancestral lands from land grabbers, Ole Kulet introduces the readers to a dialogue involving the supposed investors. This dialogue hints to the readers that the land in contention has been irregularly acquired:

“Could there be an unresolved dispute over the land?” asked Dick Jones. “In Zimbabwe, disputes hold up land development for a very long time as parties haggle in courts.”

“There is no dispute over this land,” Abednego declared indignantly as he chewed his lips in repressed anger. “I pity them who think there is one, for they do not know who they are dealing with...those are ignorant people. Next time they come, let us tell them we are friends who have come to help them out of their perennial problems. Let us tell them we are we shall build cattle dips, construct water troughs and build and equip dispensaries for them.” (Kulet 21-22)

It is my opinion therefore that Ole Kulet uses the fictional characters to highlight the shoddy deals that has left many local communities landless. The problem of land grabbing in Kenya dates back to colonial period. However, in the recent past, legal tussles over land ownership in Kenya have spiraled. Transparency International –Kenya (TI-K) report in the issue 152 of June/July 2015 read as follows:

The lands sector has consistently ranked as one of the most bribe prone sectors in Kenya coming in at number two in the East African Bribery Index 2014 with a score of 55 on an aggregate index of 0 to 100, with a score of 100 being the worst. Kenya has been plagued by frequent problems concerning land. These problems range from huge tracks of land held by foreigners on land that local communities lay a claim to as ancestral or communal land or absentee landlords, numerous squatters , unregistered land and land grabbing cases. (TI-K 1-2)

The challenges facing the indigenous land ownership in post-independence Kenya as highlighted by Transparency International (Kenya) are also highlighted by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance*.

Transparency International was founded in Kenya in 1999. In advancing the concerns of the civil society and donor agencies, it is my opinion that Ole Kulet abdicates on his duty as a creative writer to present societal challenges from a creative perspective. In the text, Ole Kulet blows out of proportion the problems of land grabbing with the intention of appealing to the donor agencies and the civil society movements as he writes: “Half of the land that had rich forest soil that was ideal for the establishment of a vast tea plantation was covered with dense forests that needed to be cleared. It was also occupied by a community of hunters and gatherers that must be evicted,” (28).

The issues raised above by Ole Kulet are also debated by the Africa Centre for Open Governance (africog). To understand Ole Kulet’s intention(s) in *The Elephant Dance*, I consider it worthwhile to place the text in its historical context. Booth *et al.* observe that: “Placing a text in its historical and social context can be a rewarding critical method....” (9). Placing the issues raised by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* in their historical context points to the intentional appealing to the civil society movements and the donor agencies not to abandon a community considered a victim of the successive regimes in land grabbing and historical injustices. Africa Centre for Open Governance is an independent, non-profit organisation that provides cutting-edge research and monitoring on governance and public ethics issues in both the public and private sectors.

The delegation of the elders sent to seek audience with the purported land grabbers in *The Elephant Dance* never bother to seek any legal intervention nor use any legally provided means to address the dispute. In this, I argue that Ole Kulet’s intention is to paint the picture of an ignorant people. He is therefore silently saying that the community presented in *The Elephant Dance* has been taken advantage of by other communities because of their imagined primitiveness, ignorance and

disregard for the constitutional order. This is well illustrated by the discussion between Sulenya and his team:

“Can you imagine being told this land where you have lived since you were born does not belong to you?” Sulenya asked as he shook his head, a sardonic grin brightening his face.

“It is pure madness!”

“Let them say what the like,” his friend said angrily. “All I can say is that they will have to carry my body out of Konini forest.”

“I tell you what,” Sulenya said seriously, “once we have told the white man that this is our land and that we are going no-where, we must come back and hunt warthogs as we did then.” (Kulet 10)

Of interest is why Ole Kulet brings such a discussion half a century after independence. The ownership of community land in post-independence Kenya has been challenging, and as a result, Community Land Act, 2016 was passed.

### **2.1.3 Agitation for Wildlife Conservation in *The Elephant Dance***

On July 18, 1989 the Government of Kenya declared it will no longer trade in the ivory owing to the difficulties of distinguishing poached ivory from legal ivory. In efforts to discourage trade in ivory within its borders, the Government of Kenya has repeatedly burned confiscated elephant tusks with the intention of stopping or limiting trade in elephant and rhino tusks. In 2018, in a ceremony held in Kasene, Bostwana, Kenya signed a petition inviting European Nations to ban trade in elephant tusks. This has been considered a milestone in combating trade in ivory and other wildlife products. Though necessary efforts have been put in place to end the poaching menace,

studies indicate that the vice is still rife within the Kenyan conservancies, game reserves and game parks.

To propel the desires of the civil society and the donor agencies concerns, Ole Kulet expertly narrates a complex poaching matrix in *The Elephant Dance* fueled by the security agencies. In the text, Ole Kulet creates an arrogant poaching team determined to harvest as many elephant tusks as possible. Studies in the causes of poaching indicate a collusion between the poachers and the security agencies. This collusion results in the creation of poachers as witnessed in Meshach, Simon Labuto, Abednego and Shadrach in *The Elephanat Dance*. The nature of the discussions between the poachers in *The Elephant Dance* points to Ole Kulet's determination and intent to craft a fictional narration that suits the message of the civil society organizations.

Politically unstable neighbouring nations have immensely contributed to the vice. This is a reality that Ole Kulet ignores in *The Elephant Dance* as he places the blame at the doorstep of the security agencies without considering other direct or indirect factors that might be fueling poaching. In Kenya, security officers are considered less educated. This is due to their service entry grade. It has thus been associated with a career for "those who have failed in examinations and life in general" hence cannot participate in any "meaningful" activity requiring an intellectual input. Ole Kulet also tends to argue so in *The Elephant Dance* by presenting comprised security officers and their inability to detect the masking that has been employed for years to evade arrests by Meshach, Shadrach, Abednego and their business partners. Though *The Elephant Dance* is fictional and the actions of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are exaggerated, I consider the novel a commentary on the poaching menace in Kenya.

The collision between the security agencies and the poachers is further illustrated by Ole Kulet in other chapters of the text. The civil society organizations and donor agencies have held that poaching is abetted and facilitated by the security agencies. However, they have failed to acknowledge the concept of individual responsibility. In situations where the specific government officials act contrary to the law, the civil society organizations tend to blame the government as an entity rather than single out the responsible officer(s). In the text, we encounter Sergeant Madeso as he arrests Dick Jones. We are not informed whether he is an employee of the government or not. Since he has been identified as Sergeant Madeso, I am convinced that he is a security officer working under the instructions of Abednego. The role of security agencies in abetting poaching has been questioned by other scholars, with more studies pointing at rogue officers as responsible. In the text, Ole Kulet does not in a convincing narration rebuke poaching. The text is full of activism narration and approaches to solving very complex societal problems. Poaching problems in Africa can be traced to pre-independence through to the slave trade era. It is a vice against wildlife that needs a sober discussion to correctly diagnose.

#### **2.1.4 Agitation for Gender Equity in *The Elephant Dance***

*The Elephant Dance* traces the life patterns of an indigenous people and their interaction with an elite poaching syndicate. In this encounter, it is necessary to point how the gender related issues are presented in the text. Though *The Elephant Dance* traces the daily activities of the poaching elite and how they have perfected their act, a critical look into the text reveals a saddening gender imbalance. The majority of the female characters in the novel are not assertive, and have thus inadvertently got used to male domination. They have accepted to abide to the strict social stratification placed on them. The subjugation of women in the text starts in the earlier pages. As

the men ponder over the next move upon receipt of the “news” from the white investor, the women are not involved. The delegation dispatched to confront the white man has no woman as narrated in the text: “A delegation of thirty elders was formed and dispatched to meet the white man with instructions to tell him in no uncertain terms that Konini forest was not only their home, but their inalienable birthright and heritage for which they would rather die than forfeit,” (Kulet 8).

I consider this a deliberate cultural exclusion of the women in a matter affecting all. In my opinion, the author has used it to demonstrate to the intended audience how the women are never involved in finding solutions to the issues affecting all in the society. The civil society organizations and donor agencies have constantly argued that the women should be included in finding solutions to the social problems. Studies on the persistence subjugation of women in African societies have many contributing factors. Such factors include poverty and restrictive cultural heritage. This continued neglect ensures that the women eventually lead a low quality life and hardly contribute to the well of being of their families. This observation partly explains Ole Kulet decision to settle on “a delegation of thirty elders” to seek audience with the white man.

The civil societies in Africa have concentrated their efforts in girl child education and women emancipation at the expense of the men and young boys. I take cognizant of the fact that the restrictive cultural practices in many parts of Africa have restrained girl-child education. However, my analysis of Ole Kulet’s rendition proves otherwise. Currently, Kenya has numerous civil society organizations championing for the girl child education and emancipation. A significant number of these organizations are within the Maasai community. It is therefore of value to point that Ole Kulet delves on the invisibility of the females in the text to advance the concerns of the

civil society and donor agencies instead of a critical analysis of the causes of the inequality between men and women in the fictional Konini society.

In *The Elephant Dance*, the relationship between the males and the females is presented as an imbalance. The Konini society is stratified and each gender is required to perform certain specific tasks. The men are mainly hunters, gatherers and protectors. The stratification and definition of the roles as illustrated in the Konini has been a concern for the civil societies and donor agencies in Africa. The civil society organization argue that such strict definition of the female and the male roles is a contributing factor to the violence against the women, denial of education opportunities for the females and exposure of females to “retrogressive” cultural formalities. I have bracketed “retrogressive” bearing in mind that no culture is superior to the other. In *The Elephant Dance*, the females are socialized to limit their aspirations. This explains the behavior of Naponono and Naramat.

I am conscious of the patriarchal nature of most of the African societies and Maasai in specific. However, I am of the opinion that the civil society organizations and the donor agencies have not accordingly formulated the best approach to tackle the problem. The confrontational approaches adopted by the civil society and the donor agencies have not yielded the best outcomes. Cultural heritage are prone to changes hence no need for the civil societies and donor agencies to dictate on which cultural practices be abolished. The Kenya Constitution (2010) outlaws retrogressive cultures. However, it has not expressly defined what “retrogressive means”. On the other hand, The Kenya Constitution (2010) recognizes culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation.



In the recent past, African fictional writers have been portraying a different kind of the female character(s) in texts. However, literary critics have debated what should be considered as authentic feminists' texts. The other concern has been whether such writers are honest about their works highlighting the struggles the women undergo both at work and at home. I am concerned whether Ole Kulet is authentic in *The Elephant Dance* or writing with a specific audience in mind. Since Ole Kulet is writing with an intended audience in mind, I argue that he is spreading an ideology he does not believe in. This therefore gives room for the civil society and donor agencies' organizations voices to dominate a significance portion of the text. The civil society organizations argue that early marriage is a form of child abuse, defilement and exploitation since children are compelled to participate in acts they cannot comprehend and are at a disadvantaged position to make informed consent. This is a concern that the civil society and donor groups have battled in the rural parts of Kenya. In Naramat, we are presented with a woman that according to Ole Kulet needs to be rescued by the civil society since her community is determined to marry her off. The same tribulation that befalls Naramat also befalls Napono as narrated in the text:

“Yeiyoy,” Naramat who was picking her vegetables nearby, called her mother, “I have had similar promotion myself about my Sena’s safety ever since the day they departed from the village.”

“Sena is not yours and you know it!” Snapped Napono standing close by, her basket on her hip. “If you say he is yours, I can also claim him.”

“You should be ashamed of yourself,” said Naramat sharply. “Just because you pushed and pushed your food-gift to him the other day until he was forced to pick it and pass it on to Reson, you think he accepted you? What a pathetic fallacy!”

“Why didn’t he refuse to accept it?” Napono taunted Naramat sneeringly. “The fact that he picked mine also tells you something!”

“It can only tell me how much you can pester!” declared Naramat as she glared at her rival.

“But the fact remains that he left the village with my food-gift, not yours.”

“Would you stop bickering, you girls!” Commanded Mapoon’s mother angrily. Napono, there is an end to all this!”

“But she is the one...,” began Naramat.

“Naramat!” Ngoto-Naramat silenced her daughter with a shout. “Enough of all this nonsense. I will hear no more argument from you or anyone else.” (Kulet 166)

Like other people, the Konini community members value certain aspects of their heritage and encourage the young and the old to excel in them as presented in the above dialogue between Naramat and Napono. The above dialogue also tells more on the courtship process. It is my opinion that Ole Kulet is deliberately seeking the sympathy of the civil society and the donor agencies through fictional exaggerations. It is undisputed fact that Kenya has made commendable efforts to free the girl-child from retrogressive cultures. However, Ole Kulet ignores such facts as he creates characters in the text who are not aware of the legal consequences of underage marriage.

In the above dialogue Ole Kulet tends to argue that cultural demands and obligations have firmly stood on Napono and Naramat’s way. The dialogues above corroborates Kipury Naomi’s observation on political and social organization of the Maasai. In this strict organization, Kipury writes that: “Women are not grouped into corporate age sets like men are. They, however, tend to

be identified, in status, with the male age-set with which they had danced as young unmarried girls,” (8). Through the above dialogue, it is my opinion that Ole Kulet advances the interests of the Maasai Girls Education Fund, an organization founded in 2000 to increase the literacy, health, and economic well-being of the Maasai women in Kenya. Maasai Girls Education Fund recognizes lack of education among the Maasai girls as the main challenges they are dealing with.

It is my opinion that Ole Kulet fails to recognize the interaction point between the Africa traditional societies (specifically the Maasai that Kulet writes about) and the western education. It should be noted that the western education condemned almost everything that was African. This debate has been silently propelled by the civil society organizations by condemning most African cultural heritage as retrogressive and unnecessary. Though Ole Kulet does not directly condemn the Maasai cultural heritage, his characters and the issues raised in the text do. In this regard, he creates Regina Naitore and Leah Naipande. The two ladies are presented as dedicated career women. The civil society organizations working to encourage girl child education in marginalized areas have always portrayed successful women from such areas as “success” stories. Such women dot the websites of the civil society organizations such as the Maasai Girls Education Fund. This interaction between modern school education and traditional ways of doing things has been debated by other scholars as:

It has been said that there is estrangement between modern school education and traditional life and that such education is not relevant to the needs of the traditional society. For example, nomadic people move around, with children missing the opportunity of attending school. Moreover, it may be argued that parents and elders fear school education for it threatens their traditional values and culture. But these arguments seem to be based on a

large number of anecdotal evidence and on the misunderstanding that people do not like to change their lifestyle. (Sawamura *et al.* 2)

Ole Kulet expertly avoids to interrogate “the fears among societies” to embrace education and modern ways of doing things. The other question that Ole Kulet fails to probe is the perceived advantages men accrue from patriarchal societies. Critical reading of *The Elephant Dance* reveals that men are as poor as the women.

It is contradictory that Sena and Resin, presented in the text as boys, are willing to work closely with Regina Naitore and Leah Naipande. At the onset of the text, the adult men are presented as not willing to liaise with the women in finding solutions to the societal problems. At this juncture, I note that Ole Kulet, just like the civil society organizations is engaged in inconsistent illustration of realities. In the text, Ole Kulet presents us with two generations of men. Earlier, I observed that each generation interprets culture uniquely. Sena and Resin demonstrate willingness to cooperate with females (Regina Naitore and Leah Naipande) as opposed to their parents who do not incorporate women in their mission. This observation leaves us with one major question: From whom did Sena and Resin learn that it is necessary for men and women to cooperate?

Upon her transfer to Konini station, Leah Naipande interacts with SMA through Simon Labuto who deposits huge sums of money in her bank account. This money is meant to recruit Leah Naipande and use her privileged position to facilitate poaching: “To give her a head start, Simon Labuto had deposited a large sum of money in her bank account,” (Kulet 150). The SMA also approaches Regina Naitore with gifts: “When they opened their treasures and presented her with gifts of gold, of incense and of myrrh, they were shocked when she declined to accept them,” (Kulet 156). At this stage, Ole Kulet mimics assertions by the civil society entities that men

employ their economic prowess to demean women and fail to recognize capabilities of women in position. In asserting this old holding that women can be bought with gifts, Ole Kulet creates an alternative image of a woman in Regina Naitore that appeals to the civil society. This is evident when Regina Naitore explains the consequences of receiving gifts from strangers to her deputy, Leah Naipande:

“I have just now kicked out of my office three men who brought me gifts – as if I am the Queen of Sheba – just because I have been here as the officer in-charge of the station. It is only a stupid person who would not know those are bribes camouflaged as gifts. When are we going to see the end of this corruption? Let me warn you, young lady, for soon you will also be approached and given gifts: Accept those gifts at your own peril!” (Kulet 159)

The presentation of the self-aware woman by Ole Kulet in Regina Naitore advances the interests of the civil society movements and donor agencies. Critically looking at this discussion, Ole Kulet propels the voices of the civil society organizations in vouching for more women to be considered for posts that have long been considered a preserve for the men as he argues through Regina Naitore that:

“Corrupt men have found us women easy target for their corrupt deals because of our love for money we have not worked for. And it is women like those who denigrate the position that some of us hold and make it difficult for those of us who want to work hard and with honesty to prove our worth as leaders. I hope you are not among those who money would sway their conscience.” (Kulet 161)

“In this station where I have learned everybody ingratiates with the most corrupt elements in town in order to receive bribes to allow poaching of wildlife,” Regina Naitore snarled, her face ashen with combat, “you will be harassed and intimidated to coerce you to join them. If you don’t intend to join them, then you must learn to fight your own battles unassisted. But if you intend to join them, you can as well begin to pack your belongings, for I will drive all corrupt elements out of his station unceremoniously. And now you can go.” (Kulet 162)

Regina Naitore’s speech is crafted and delivered in the language of the civil society organizations and donor agencies. To buttress the language of civil society on women emancipation, Ole Kulet creates alternative Leah Naipande by writing: “The following week, she gave instructions to her bank that the money she had received corruptly be returned to the sender,” (163). In illustrating the challenges women face at work, Ole Kulet creates Officer Oseuri as in the following dialogue:

“I have been sent by the others to enquire from you how you managed to have yourself promoted to the position of deputy officer in-charge of the station at your tender age.”

“It is none of your business,” Leah Naipande answered angrily. “But if you must know, you can approach those who promoted me and ask them.”

“How would you expect them to accept that they promoted you, not because of your performance in the office, but on account of your performance elsewhere?”

“What are you trying to insinuate?” Leah Naipande asked as she lifted her eyes and glared into his as she trembled with anger. “If you think being woman is the easiest way of earning a promotion, trans-gender surgery is available!”

“Since some of us cannot go down that winding route”, he sneeringly said with e intention to hurt her “we shall continue to mark-time as we get ordered about by lassies whose source of their power is not domiciled in the grey matter between their ears, but elsewhere.” (157-158)

This dialogue above mirrors the concerns of the civil and the problems affecting women at work place. It is my opinion that an officer lowly ranked cannot rudely interrupt and wildly accuse an officer of a higher ranking. However, it is fictionally plausible because Ole Kulet is writing with an intended audience mind. Though it is undisputed fact that such challenges exist at workplace, the involvement of the civil society groups in highlighting such challenges have not effectively yielded desirable results. Writing on this, Eagleton Mary argues that:

The arrival of men on the feminist scene has not been without problem. Heath identifies the relationship between men and feminism as ‘an impossible one’; no matter how sympathetic or, indeed, knowledgeable about feminism the male critic maybe, he always brings to his criticism ‘all the implications of domination and appropriation’; however sincerely he tries to find the answer, he still remains part of the problem. (19)

As argued by Eagleton, it is vital to point out that the civil society organization concerned with women affairs are mostly dominated by the men. This problem has spread far in literary writing where men make the loudest noise in highlighting the challenges faced by career women without realizing that indeed they are part of the problem they so condemn. I question Ole Kulet’s sincerity in highlighting the nature of on job molestation women undergo. A lot has been done to improve working conditions for both men and women. In the recent past, studies have been done on the causes of Gender Based Violence (GBV) at work. The capability of the women to excel

professionally has been debated in Kenya and in other parts of the world. It is my consideration that Ole Kulet surrenders his responsibility as a creative writer to the whims of civil society movements. As noted in earlier pages, I still argue that Ole Kulet has given more room to the civil society voices in the text

### **2.1.5 Conclusion**

Published in 2016, *The Elephant Dance* comments on the criminal activities in contemporary Kenya. Such activities include poaching, contraband business and land grabbing. Land grabbing is endemic problem in Kenya. Any writer who ventures into it is likely to be rewarded with readers hence returns in the book purchase. It is worth noting that *The Elephant Dance* falls into category of what critics term formula writing. “Formula writing serves a wide market and often earns top dollars, but it usually sacrifices subtlety and insight,” (Minot 155). I note that Ole Kulet crafts a topic that the civil society and the donor agencies have dwelled on for decades to attract his intended audience. In his hurry to pick a topic that is both recent but also old in some perspective, Ole Kulet falls to the limitations of The Adolescent Tragedy in writing: “The Adolescent Tragedy period is an excellent one for sophisticated fiction as long as you keep your material genuine and fresh in details. But there are three pitfalls: lack of perspective, sentimentality, and melodrama,” (Minot 156).

*The Elephant Dance* was published when there was a heated debate on community land ownership, poaching problem and intensive effort to preserve the Kenya water catchment areas. In 2016, The Endangered Species Coalition, a non-governmental organization that work to safeguard and strengthen the Endangered Species Act observes that there was an increased poaching or attempted incidences of poaching in Kenya game parks and protected areas. It is my opinion therefore that



Ole Kulet got emotionally entangled in the text making him to lose the necessary objectivity to weave an attractive story. Getting emotional with ethnic challenges, I argue, denies Ole Kulet the opportunity to share his ideologies with the readers

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Ole Kulet's Diction**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I will analyze the choice of words as preferred by the author. Diction analysis in this chapter will include how Ole Kulet uses language for specific purposes and effects. I consider the choice of vocabulary used by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* to be suited for his intended audience and impact.

#### **3.1 The Voices of the Civil Society and Donor Agencies through Diction**

Writers of fiction and nonfiction have (a) writing pattern(s) considered sufficient and effective in sharing their thoughts and knowledge. Scholars in various disciplines have for years mastered writing styles particular to their professions. This is also true for the fiction writers. Of interest is that fiction writing keeps on evolving from generation to generation. This evolution is well captured in special usage of the language to effectively pass the intended message. This is what literary scholars term “diction” or “choice of words”. Literature has genres including poetry, fiction and drama. *The Elephant Dance* is a fictional text. It was published in 2016 as a commentary on the historical land problem among the pastoralists’ communities in Kenya, poaching and corruption among the government officials. However, a keener reading of the text illustrates lack of literary authenticity as the issues illuminated have been the core concerns of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies.

### 3.1.1 Figures of Speech

An element of diction employed by Ole Kulet in pandering to the whims of the civil society organizations and donor agencies is by the use of figures of speech. Such figures of speech are vital in foregrounding and presenting the familiar in an unfamiliar way. The figures of speech deployed by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* are vital for they convey the meaning with rhetorical effects. Rhetorical features employed in *The Elephant Dance* serve best by imploring the readers to view situations from the writer's perspective.

The one figure of speech employed by Ole Kulet is hyperbole and understatement. Abrams M.H. defines hyperbole as "a bold overstatement or extravagant exaggeration of fact or possibility, while understatement as a deliberate representation of something as very much less in magnitude or importance than it really is, or is ordinarily considered to be," (120). This bold overstatement in my opinion is intended to appeal to the civil society organizations and donor agencies. In the text, there are outright overstated actions of the characters by Ole Kulet as illustrated below:

When Shadrach and his men converged at the killing site, they counted eighty-five buffaloes that they had killed. They set up a butchering camp and for hours all the one hundred and fifty men worked together tirelessly, butchering, skinning and extracting sinew from flesh and marrow from bones. The whole escarpment turned red with blood. Vultures, hawks and other predator birds as well as hyenas, foxes, wild dogs and other carnivores had a field day and the woods and trees around were alive with their calls and howls. (121)

It is my conviction that the above narration is an extravagant exaggeration of a possibility. The next question worth asking is: for what purpose is Ole Kulet overstating such a possibility? The role of hyperbole is to stir up emotions and rally people to a cause. So, whose emotions are Ole Kulet stirring and for what purpose? I stated earlier that poaching is an emotive topic and whenever it is mentioned civil society organizations tend to get interested. In his desire to attract the attention of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies, I note that Ole Kulet employs stylistic devices that stirs his targets emotionally. Instances of hyperbole in the above excerpt include “butchering”, “for hours”, “tirelessly”, “whole escarpment turned red with blood,” “...vultures, hawks and other predator birds as well as hyenas, foxes, wild dogs and other carnivores had a field day and the woods and trees around were alive with their calls and howls.” I consider this exaggeration to depict the status of poaching in Kenya. In expressing his anti-poaching activism, Ole Kulet further writes:

By the time the hackers completed hacking off tusks from the elephants’ heads, Shadrach counted them and found that they had accumulated three hundred and twenty-six pairs of huge tusks. And the biggest pair of them all was that which was hacked off the old bull that Shadrach personally killed.

When the one hundred and fifty hunters gathered around the heap of over six hundred pieces of tusks, they heaped praises on Shadrach and his two look-alike men for their leadership and boldness that they said enabled them achieve the unprecedented success that lay before them. Never before, they said, had a hunting expedition been that successful.

(126)

Though poaching is a problem in Kenya as in most parts of Africa, I would argue that Ole Kulet is employing hyperbole to present a common occurrence in an intense manner that evokes actions from interested parties and stakeholders. To kill that large number of elephants and buffaloes as narrated by Ole Kulet in a hunting mission is likely to attract the attention of law enforcement agencies. It is my opinion that this is not a possibility. However, Ole Kulet presents this to the readers as something that has occurred. *The Elephant Dance* is a fictional text. The characters too are fictional. However, fictional texts should represent possibilities. This is so because fiction mirrors our daily lives. The other instance of use of hyperbole by Ole Kulet is the encounter between Regina Naitore and Tetema the poacher:

Six months after the incident in the office, Leah Naipande's intelligence team sent words to Regina Naitore that they had received information telling them Tetema, the notorious poacher, had been spotted with others, carrying elephants' tusks in gunny bags atop a motorbike that he rode.

"Would you climb down immediately," Regina Naitore ordered him authoritatively, adding, "and raise up your hands!"...

...Regina Naitore flipped her whip into the air as she gathered her reins tightly in her left hand ....she cracked the whip and got him across the shoulder...The tip of the whip cut through the fabric of his trousers and sliced into his flesh. Tetema screamed as his legs folded under him, and dropped the tusk as he fell to the ground....snapping the whip back and forth again...The tip of the whip cut into the back of his other hand. He hauled with pain...

...“Please I beg of you, don’t hit me again,” Tetema cried out in fearful trembling voice.  
“I surrender now and I’ll cause no more trouble, Madam!” (238-243)

The above narration and exchanges between Tetema and officer Regina Naitore in my opinion is overstated. It is a known fact in Kenya that the security officers are not permitted to use excess force in arresting unarmed suspects or harming suspects who have surrendered. However, it appears that Ole Kulet is enjoying the humiliation that Tetema undergoes. It is also important to point out that Ole Kulet is not condemning the action but somehow celebrating the illegal whipping of Tetema by officer Regina Naitore. Through this melodramatic incident, Ole Kulet is attempting to demonstrate the capabilities of females, an approach that tends to appeal to the civil society movements.

In other cases Ole Kulet understates certain occasions that require highlighting and serious attention. One of the happenings that Ole Kulet seems to brush aside is pastoralism and its unsustainability. Pastoralism is unsustainable; it is associated with low income and is expensive. In the text, Ole Kulet does not offer a critical evaluation of the practice. He tends to approve of it as he praises Sena in an instance of human-wildlife conflict (35). Human-wildlife conflict occurs when humans and wildlife interact resulting in negative impacts including deaths or destruction of human resources. The Konini people represented in *The Elephant Dance* are pastoralists. They rear livestock and are in constant move in search of pasture and water for their livestock. This pattern of living predisposes them to human-wildlife conflict.

The question I raise is why Ole Kulet is understating such realities. Pastoralism, hunting for wild game and gathering of wild fruits for food are unsustainable modes of farming. However, Ole Kulet portrays them as satisfactory farming practices through fictional character Sulenya: “I tell

you what?” Sulenya said seriously, “Once we have told the white man that this is our land and that we are going no-where, we must come back here and hunt warthogs as we did then,” (10). Through Sulenya, Ole Kulet presents the readers with a community that depends on wild meat and gathering of wild fruits for subsistence. The questions that ring in the minds of keener readers is: why does Ole Kulet write about hunting and gathering in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Does he approve of this living pattern? Literature should depict reality; however, it is my opinion that Ole Kulet does not present reality as it should be through Sulenya. This is so because there is no community in contemporary Kenya that sustainably depends on hunting and gathering for subsistence. This understated economic activity is meant to depict the Konini as the inferior and potential victims of land grabbing.

Underage marriage is a problem in most parts of the rural Kenya. However, Ole Kulet deliberately understates and never condemns this problem that has left most families destitute. Underage marriage is associated with low income, poor parenting and a low quality of life. However, as presented in *The Elephant Dance*, it seems that Ole Kulet has no problem with it and simply mentions it as in the below argument between Napono and Naramat:

“Sena is not yours and you know it!” Snapped Napono standing close by, her basket on her hip. “If you say he is yours, I can also claim him.”

“You should be ashamed of yourself,” said Naramat sharply. “Just because you pushed and pushed your food-gift to him the other day until he was forced to pick it and pass it on to Reson, you think he accepted you? What a pathetic fallacy!”

“Why didn’t he refuse to accept it?” Napono taunted Naramat sneeringly. “The fact that he picked mine also tells you something!”

“It can only tell me how much you can pester!” declared Naramat as she glared at her rival.

“But the fact remains that he left the village with my food-gift, not yours.”

“Would you stop bickering, you girls!” Commanded Naponono’s mother angrily. Naponono, there is an end to all this!”

“But she is the one...,” began Naramat.

“Naramat!” Ngoto-Naramat silenced her daughter with a shout. “Enough of all this nonsense. I will hear no more argument from you or anyone else.” (166-167)

The above conversation has been given a casual treatment by Ole Kulet. In the first excerpt, Ole Kulet fails to delve more on the causes of human wildlife conflict. In the second excerpt he understates the dangers of hunting wildlife for meat and in the last dialogue he does not advocate for education of the girl child and appears not to condemn early marriages. Though in *The Blossoms of the Savannah* Ole Kulet creates female characters pursuing education, he fails to do in *The Elephant Dance*. The most important concern here therefore is why he does so. It is my opinion that Ole Kulet understates these issues to the benefit of his intended audience. The civil society organizations have failed to point to the pastoral communities that keeping large stocks of cattle is not only unsustainable but also detrimental to the environment. The hunting of wild animals for meat too is an unsustainable practice that the civil society organizations have failed to condemn. To the civil society organizations, indigenous communities should be encouraged to retain their ways of life without considering the prevailing realities and the need to adopt to the new approaches that ease life. It is my stand therefore that by understating such facts, Ole Kulet is intentionally pandering to the whims and the desires of civil society organizations and donor agencies.



The other figure of speech that Ole Kulet uses in *The Elephant Dance* is paradox. Paradox is a statement that is self-contradictory. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet seems to be condemning poaching and activities associated with environmental degradation. However, a keener reading of the text reveals instances of self-contradictory narration. We are told in the Dedication that, *The Elephant Dance* is “dedicated to all wildlife conservationists and the youth of this nation, whose hands the future of the endangered wildlife rests. Live and let wildlife live,” (iii). This declaration fails to hold upon a keener reading of the text. In the entire text, Ole Kulet presents the youthful characters with a limited understanding of the environment. In other instances, the youthful females are being married off at tender ages. Ole Kulet’s narration of the exploits of Sena and Pesi on the surface appears plausible and convincing. Their determination to unearth the poaching syndicate is not in doubt. However, I note that this narration appears logically unacceptable and contains contradictory features. Poachers in Kenya and Africa have employed the use of sophisticated technology and easily evade the well trained game wardens. I am not convinced that Pesi and Reson can successfully track seasoned poachers and hunters by relying on outdated tracking techniques as presented by Ole Kulet in the text: “Look!” Reson said again pointing to the foot prints on the ground. “These are the foot prints of the men I saw yesterday,” (140).

In Chapter One, Ole Kulet writes: “Since they did not grow crops or keep livestock, those who despised that community of hunters and gatherers that lived on honey and meat of wild animals, argued that they did not need any land,” (1). This is a self-contradictory narration by an author who is advocating for environmental conservation. This is because of the unsustainable “dependency on the meat of the wild animals.” As much as Ole Kulet narrates the authenticity of the fictional Konini community, I consider it an unsustainable life pattern. For how long will the Konini members continue gathering wild fruits and spear wild animals for meat? At this level, I

argue that Ole Kulet contradicts himself in his attempts to relay his story. Throughout, *The Elephant Dance* fails to offer new insights in solving social challenges. It only glorifies old practices.

*The Elephant Dance* narrates the tribulations of a fictional hunting and gathering community. The community is presented as a victim of land grabbing syndicate. It is my expectation therefore that this community should encourage their children to embrace education to enable them respond to their challenges effectively. However, I find it contradictory for the author to present us with a community that does not appreciate education as a response to social challenges. Through Pesi, Reson, Naramat, Napono, we learn that education is not given the attention it deserves as a means of seeking new understandings and insights. When Reson drops out of school, his next desire is to become the finest hunter his village has ever produced, a contradiction presented by Ole Kulet in the text.

Though Ole Kulet advocates for equality among the rich and the poor, males and females, it is my opinion that in *The Elephant Dance* he contradicts himself by glorying hunting among the boys and early marriages among the girls. It appears in the text that Ole Kulet is glorifying hunting at the expense of education among the young boys: “Hunting being the mainstay of the Okiek people who inhabited the forest, the day the young hunters and their coaches left for the hunting expeditions was regarded as exceptionally important. Dancing and merry-making preceded the day,” (131). Instead of encouraging their young boys to embrace education as an alternative means of self-actualization, the Konini elders are imploring the young men be the finest hunters. Written in 2016, it is the expectation of the readers that the competition that should be witnessed

among the young men of Konini is in education. However, Ole Kulet defies this by giving us another form of competition:

The life of the community of hunters and gatherers that lived in the Konini forest was always competitive. The competition started early in life so that at twelve, boys were competing as to who made the best traps to catch porcupines, hares and giunea-fowls. At fifteen, they were already showing signs as to who among them was likely to become the future finest hunter. (77)

It is my conviction that in the above excerpt, Ole Kulet is creating a non-existent Kenya. To support his case, he writes that Reson dropped out of school for lack of school fees. This in my opinion is a hypocritical narration as he states of Reson: “He vowed that when he grew up he would be a game warden. However, that was not to be, for when he dropped out of school for lack of school fees, that ambition faded into obscurity,” (76). Such self-contradictory narration in my opinion suggests that Ole Kulet’s has an intended audience. In Leah Naipande and Regina Naitore Ole Kulet creates dependable officers. Through the two Ole Kulet is advocating for career progression of women through education. However, this is thwarted by the creation of Narmat and Naponono. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet vouches for the emancipation of women. However, this is contradicted by the creation of Narmat and Naponono who are staring at a bleak future.

The other significant self-contradictory narration is seen as Ole Kulet writes:

With a great roar, its fangs bared in an ugly snarl, the powerful beast leapt toward him with its paws outstretched to pounce its prey. Just then, Sena hurled his spear that hurtled in the air in a hissing deadly sound. It met its target squarely and the lion was almost dead before

it hit the ground. As he stepped forward to examine where his spear pierced into the lion's body, the rest of the men arrived and showered him with praises for his valour. He smiled and his blood warmed up with satisfaction when he found out that his spear pierced directly into the lion's heart. (35)

A reading of *The Elephant Dance* illustrates that Ole Kulet is condemning unnecessary killing of wild animals. However, when Sena kills a lion, Ole Kulet praises his action. This concern brings us to the elements of paradox in the text. To Ole Kulet, a lion killed by a young moran is not considered cruelty against the animals as opposed to animals slaughtered by the poachers. The civil society and donor agencies have always pointed fingers at poachers, large scale farmers and lumbers for facilitating environmental degradation. However, just like the civil society organizations and the donor agencies, Ole Kulet does not condemn the activities of the pastoral communities that always predispose them to attack by the wild animals. The above excerpt is too melodramatic as Ole Kulet celebrates the "spear piercing directly into the lion's heart."

The other figures of speech heavily employed by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* are simile and metaphor. Kovecses Zoltan defines metaphor as "a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another by saying that the one is the other," (vii). Metaphors are sourced from our daily experiences in life and used to comment on morality, thought, emotion, desires, life and death, society, human relations among others. Metaphors are classified depending on their degree of conventionality, cognitive function, nature and generality. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet uses metaphors to comment on the poaching problem witnessed in the fictional Konini Society.

The kinds of the metaphors employed by Ole Kulet in the text fall under the cognitive variety for they have purposefully been used to target a concept. The cognitive metaphors used in *The*

*Elephant Dance* can be categorized into: structural, ontological and orientational. When introducing Abednego, the head of SMA syndicate, and his capabilities, Ole Kulet writes: “His talk also revolved around wealth and more wealth. Except for the appearance of wrinkles around his eyes, he was a master of perennial youth,” (19). The metaphor here is: *he was a master of perennial youth*. Structural metaphors are used to provide more information on the targeted concept. This enables the readers to understand Abednego so well. The targeted concept in *The Elephant Dance* is unending poaching and land grabbing. Young people are associated with lots of risks, search for wealth and unwise decisions. So in saying that Abednego is a master of perennial youth, Ole Kulet confirms that Abednego’s deeds should not be a surprise. This description concurs with the civil society organization and the donor agencies concern that conservation should be encouraged among the youths. So, in saying that Abednego is a master of perennial youth, Ole Kulet means that he (Abednego) should be implored upon to appreciate conservation rather than killing of elephants, rhinos and buffaloes.

In narrating the tribulations facing Dick Jones, Ole Kulet writes:

He considered the threatening gang that surrounded him as a mighty lion. Yes, he saw in his mind all those hostile young men calling themselves *Ilmirisho lo Supuko*, and who were out to kill him, merging into one willful mighty lion.....However, the lion and the white man were remarkably different.. The lion was huge, much heavier and ferocious. (57)

The metaphor here is *a mighty lion* or *the lion*. This is conventional type of metaphor. It is a conventional way of thinking about challenges we face in our daily lives. At this stage, Dick Jones is confronted by a challenge in *Ilmisisho lo Supuku*, a gang that Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego use to deal with their enemies. This metaphor portrays the challenge facing Dick Jones and his

intended investment. A lion is ferocious animal with determination to achieve its target. So, linking the *Ilmisisho lo Supuku* to a lion suggests that he (Dick Jones) has a real challenge to overcome. However, a reading of the text reveals otherwise as it is determined that *Ilmisisho lo Supuku* are the poachers. This metaphor also foregrounds Dick Jones future tribulations as it suggests that he has no clue on the intentions of his co-directors. This is further illustrated when *Ilmisisho lo Supuku* meets Sulenya and his team in the wilderness as Ole Kulet through Sulenya writes, "...Now I know. Please come closer and let us exchange greetings like people who once fought together and defeated a dragon which was out to devour us and our children," (168). The metaphor here is *a dragon*. This metaphor refers to Dick Jones and has been used by Sulenya in remembrance of a confrontation with Dick Jones. This metaphor refers to Dick Jones' behavior as that of a dragon. A dragon is a serpent-like legendary creature found in folklores of different cultural narratives. It is also associated with harming the innocent and causing loss and grief. To compare Dick Jones to a dragon, Ole Kulet is metaphorically relaying to the readers the behaviors of the land grabbers, poachers and their inhumane way in ensuring that their interests are catered for. Anti-poaching organizations have always argued that poaching and land grabbing cause environmental degradation and anguish to the victims comparable to actions of the imaginary serpent-like dragon.

In registering his hatred for the poachers and their activities, Ole Kulet through Raymond Ironside writes: "...My heart tells me this is one place that poaching of elephants in yet to be heard. Poachers are hyenas and I wish they could be kept away forever," (190). In a rejoinder, Dick Jones responds: "I agree with you that poachers are hyenas," (190). The metaphor here is *poachers are hyenas*. Hyenas are associated with scavenging and consumption of rotten carcasses. They are also considered greedy animals with minimal intelligence. They also eat a lot. In equating poachers to the hyenas, Ole Kulet is building in the minds of his readers the traits associated with poaching.

He considers them an irrational group driven by greed and self-enrichment. This metaphor serves cognitive purposes. It gives the readers knowledge on the behaviors of the described. This is further illustrated on as Ole Kulet writes: "...Sulanya, the father of Sena and Reson had said trembling as he scrutinized the faces of the dead men, "to learn that these seemingly good men were monsters!" (297). The metaphor here is: *good men were monsters!* Nobody knows how exactly a monster looks like. However, it is understood to mean a frightening imaginary creature. This creature is also understood to be capable of inflicting pain to its victim(s). So when Ole Kulet compares the four killed *Ilmisisho lo Supuku* gang members to monsters, the readers have been convinced not to pity them nor consider them innocent. This metaphor highlights the cruelty of the *Ilmisisho lo Supuku* gang, and why they should not be sympathized with.

In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet has depicted the poachers as inhuman, greedy and willing to do anything to sustain the poaching. In confirming this description, he writes: "... So that is him? The Beast! And he had the audacity to introduce himself to me? I have marked him," (343). The metaphor here is *the Beast*. Metaphors act as a set of mapping through the conceptual correspondence associated with them. When Regina Naitore refers to Simol Labuto as a beast, we are in a position to understand what she means, for we all know what a beast is. We understand beast to mean a creature in the likeness of an animal. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet tends to be communicating to a target audience. To effectively relate with this audience, Ole Kulet opts for metaphors that easily carries his message home. Through employment of metaphors therefore, Ole Kulet conveys effectively his message.

Ole Kulet also uses similes to compare and sometimes contrast situations. Similes are used to compare unrelated things by use of "like" or "as". Similes make writing appear artistic, descriptive

and also enjoyable to read. This enables emphasis on certain characteristics of the described characters or events in the text and stir up the readers to create imaginary connections in the mind. Ole Kulet uses sympathetic and emotional similes to pander to the whims of the civil society and the donor agencies in the text. Ole Kulet is criticizing unnecessary poaching of the rhinos, elephants and other animals for personal gains. To enable his arguments stand out, he uses simile to emotionally relate events and capture the imagination of the readers. While commenting on the challenges of the fictional Konini community upon realizing that they are required to vacate the land, Ole Kulet uses sympathetic simile as he writes: “As the anxiety they had suffered over the years of waiting faded, their collective minds closed against the world of uncertainty they were leaving behind like the folding wings of a giant butterfly,” (3). The simile here is “...*like the folding wings of a giant butterfly.*” This simile adds the necessary strength to the tribulations of the Konini members. It highlights the dilemma these people are in, their vulnerability and the lack of direction. This sense of loss of direction is highlighted by Ole Kulet in the subsequent sentences: “Shockingly, the words that came out of the man’s lips were as unbelievable as they were stunning. They were like a sudden swig of bitter bile, and as unexpected as bolt of lightning at noon on a day the sun was shining,” (4). This figure of speech has been effectively used to link the challenges facing the Sulenya led delegation and the realities they encounter. To be told to leave their habitat to them is like witnessing a lightning on a sunny day. Ordinarily, lightening is associated with rains, in my understanding therefore, Ole Kulet argues that the “words out of the man’s lips” are untrue and not convincing. He thus justifies their anger by writing: “When they eventually came to their senses and understood the enormity of the problem thrust onto their laps, the elders indignation erupted like a lava-spewing volcano,” (5). This simile depicts the anger registered by the locals, and tends to validate it.



Simile inviting sympathy is used by Ole Kulet as he writes: “Abednego had said he had a trick up his sleeve which, when unleashed, would see them flee the land like terrified gazelles running away from hungry predators,” (29). At this level, the anticipated behavior of the villagers is compared to that of gazelles fleeing away from the predators. Prey are considered the less powerful, the most vulnerable and killed in the most brutal manner by the predators. So, by comparing the ill-informed villagers to the gazelles paint the picture of a people who are vulnerable to abuse by those in authority.

*The Elephant Dance* narrates a clash between people with conflicting priorities. The villagers consider the contested piece of land an inheritance bequeathed to them by their forefathers. Dick Jones and his fellow directors consider the land fallow and suitable for tourism and farming activities. This has led to ownership wrangles between the locals and the investors. It is a clash that finally leaves behind casualties as seen in later chapters. However, Dick Jones considers the primitive members of the community part of his daily challenges as narrated in his prior encounter with a beast: “...The lion was huge, much heavier and ferocious. His bones were strong while the powerful wiry sinews on his limbs stood out like knotted strings...” (58). Dick Jones determination to establish the Konini Tourist Lodge and the upcoming venture at the expense of inhabitants ensures that he (Dick Jones) likens his struggles to a fight against a determined lion. This mindset is captured by Ole Kulet as he writes: “...Even after the violent men had gone, he still felt he was not yet out of the woods. But the threat that he imagined still hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, was no longer that of physical harm,” (63).

The other category of simile that has been exploited by Ole Kulet is the illustrative and anticipative similes. Illustrative similes tend to explain a concept and justify a behavior while anticipative

similes foretell something. To Meshach, Shadrach, Simon Labuto and Abednego, killing of more elephants for their tusks and rhinos for their horns is associated with accumulation of more wealth.

This is captured by Ole Kulet as he describes Dick Jones state of mind:

...Except for a few scattered temporary shelters for the nomadic pastoralists, he saw no works of man; no homesteads, no towns or any kind of infrastructure save for a narrow track that seen from the air looked like a thin thread stitched across a broad tawny cloth...  
(20)

The simile used in the above sentence serves illustrative and anticipative purposes. It illustrates Dick Jones' lack of information on the life pattern of the pastoralists and their cultural heritage. This leads to his anticipation of getting huge chunks of land for his projected investment(s). This simile also depicts the view that majority have on pastoralists, for example, lack of towns and homesteads as observed by Dick Jones. It is my opinion that the simile serves Ole Kulet intention of portraying pastoralists as victims of their cultural heritage amidst a rapidly changing society.

Ole Kulet also deploys similes to embellish the text in form of decorative. These similes decorate the text to bring elements of authenticity. They are mostly used to celebrate actions of specific characters and to affirm their behaviour. In the text, these similes tend to buttress the actions of the loved characters as Ole Kulet writes of Sena: "... hut and took up his spear. Grasping it in his right hand, he shot out as fast as a warthog smoked out of his its hole..." (33). This simile compares Sena speed to that of a warthog running for dear life hence pointing to the urgency of the action. This behavior is further approved by villagers as Ole Kulet writes: "Since then, lyrics, and accolades never ceased to be showered on him like rain from the pregnant skies," (35). Decorative similes tend to amplify and glorify the actions of the author preferred characters in a

literary text. This explains why Ole Kulet glamorizes the resistance of the villagers to takeover of their ancestral land by the purported white investor as he writes: "...But when they began frothing in the mouth as they yelled and bellowed like irate bulls, he knew instantly that they had come to murder him," (56).

### 3.1.2 Lexical/Vocabulary Analysis

Lexical analysis will involve the evaluation of the vocabulary used in the text. The vocabulary used in *The Elephant Dance* can be analyzed in terms of complexity, simplicity, formality, descriptiveness, dialect choices, specific and general commentaries, use of emotive and related words, and any other related feature of vocabulary worth examining. The vocabulary used in *The Elephant Dance* is dotted with innuendos supporting the concerns of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. The text is introduced with lots of suspense on the impending settlement of fictional Konini inhabitants. The introductory vocabulary can be said to be simple, considering the choice of words as illustrated, "The order was *short, terse* and to the point," (1).

The italicized words "short" and 'terse' serve specific functions. They foreground the entire concern of the text, and specifically advance the interest of the civil society organizations. When "short" and "terse" are combined, I can argue that the two words further serve both connotative and denotative purposes. So, what do they connote and denote? *The Elephant Dance* is presented as a duel between an elite poaching syndicate and the security agencies. The "field" of the duel is the Konini locality, and the order is meant for them. They are being ordered to leave their ancestral land without any convincing reason as narrated by the author. The words thus signal and suggest to the readers the character of the purported investors. We can thus construe them to be strict men

willing to have their way at all costs. This therefore serves the intended purpose of the text as the Konini locals are presented as staring at imminent eviction.

On the other hand, the choice of the word “*terse*” also points to selection of vocabulary to appeal to a selected audience. “*Terse*” can also mean “*concise*”. The order can be thus be said to have given no room for negotiations to the intended recipients. Such orders are always given to squatters requiring them to give way for the developers. Such orders have for years been fought by the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. In the world of the civil society organizations, situations are exaggerated to appeal to pity and the vulnerable are depicted to be at the mercy of their tormentors. This continuous exaggeration has been exploited for years by the civil society organizations and donor agencies to justify their continued “empowerment programmes”.

My core concern in evaluating the vocabulary used in the text is to determine the reasons for use of specific words at the expense of others and what they point at. In the text, Ole Kulet writes, “those who despised that community of hunters and gatherers,” (1). Hunting and gathering is equated to an economic activity that seems extinct and non-sustainable in the current economic reality. This takes us to look at referential meaning of what Ole Kulet refers to as “the community of hunters and gatherers”. By describing the economic activity of the Konini people as “hunting and gathering”, I am convinced that Ole Kulet is drawing the attention of readers to this unique community. Hunting and gathering is associated with illiteracy and the absence of order. It is my argument therefore that Ole Kulet picks such words to invite readers to his reasoning. He tends to argue that the Konini people are being deprived of their inheritance solely because they are illiterate and legally unaware of their rights. “The hunting and gathering community” is assumed to be averse to the concept of legal land ownership through title deeds or allotment letters. It is for

this reason that Ole Kulet uses “community of hunters and gatherers,” to invite the civil society and the donor agencies to his side of the argument. This description by Ole Kulet tallies with the concerns of Minority Rights Group International (MRG) that sued the Kenya Government at the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights in Arusha. The African Court of Human and Peoples Rights ruled in favour of the plaintiff, the Ogieks. Though Ole Kulet does not expressly mention the Ogieks, it is vital to point out that his vocabulary indicates his concerns with the rights of minority groups as he writes”

The Konini forest inhabitants argued back saying the trees on which they hung the beehives grew on land and the waterbucks and wild pigs they hunted for meat roamed the forest. Their argument had carried the day, and they had since then been waiting for the promised documents of land ownership. (1-2)

The above statement in my opinion serves two major functions, foregrounding and whipping up of emotion. In foregrounding it shifts our attention from what is written to how it has been written, for example, “inhabitants argued back...their argument had carried the day.” This is a strategy that has been employed by the civil society organizations and the donor agencies in their activism endeavours. The “argument” Ole Kulet is talking about is not illustrated, neither the arguments of the defendant. However, according to Ole Kulet, “...their argument had carried the day...” In other words, Ole Kulet is saying they had won and the ruling must be in their favour. Mostly, the civil society organizations present their arguments to the public with choice words like “the evident is there for the willing to see”, “perpetual scandals”, “human rights violations”, “extra judicial means”, “unprivileged communities” among other vocabulary choices. In the above extracts, Ole Kulet fails to point out one thing. Since the Konini community members are hunters and gatherers,

how is that sustainable? This is also the problem with the civil society and the donor organizations. They have always initiated projects and actions with no sustainability framework(s).

In the entire text, Ole Kulet fails to condemn spearing of wild animals for meat as he writes in the exchange between Sulenya and his delegation: “I tell you what,” Sulenya said seriously, once we have told the white man that this is our land and that we are going no-where, we must come back here and hunt warthogs as we did then,” (10).

In Chapter Two, Ole Kulet continues with emotive vocabulary in describing the fate of Konini inhabitants as he writes:

The three *shadowy* men who acquired the vast Konini land were not only *shrewd* businessmen but very *ambitious* and were known to do anything to get what they wanted. They were *regarded as powerful* men of the land. *So powerful* were they that it was said they easily secured a ninety-nine year lease of that land comprising one hundred and fifty acres without paying a single cent. *A few protesters opposed* to the acquisition, and who termed it a *shameless* land-grab, were quickly silenced by *powerful* voices that defended the trio, calling them *selfless*... (12)

The above statement has lots of words worth paying attention to. I have thus italicized certain words to illustrate my point. They point to Ole Kulet’s intent in the text. As said before, an author’s style gives a hint to his or her thought patterns. So, in the above quoted paragraph, what is the hint? How does the paragraph point to Ole Kulet’s thought pattern? When colonizers came, they introduced with them the concept of land leasing, a phenomenon that to date baffles many. It is the same pattern that has been used in post-independence Kenya to perpetuate the concept. This

has thus led to community lands being arbitrarily leased to rich and corrupt investors. In 2017, Del Monte had challenges on renewing its lease in Kiambu County, Kenya. The concerned citizens argued that the lease had to be scrutinized and be beneficial to them. So, in the above extract, Ole Kulet is silently repeating challenges associated with land leasing and how communities have for years been duped into signing agreements they have no clue on. In capturing this Ole Kulet expertly uses words like, “shadowy”, “shrewd businessmen”, “regarded”, “powerful”, “land-grab” among others. The vocabulary panders to the concerns of civil society organizations in agitation for land rights of minority groups/communities. These minority groups/communities are sub-tribe in a country/county with minimal native language speakers.

The excerpt also contains adjectives. The adjectives selected by Ole Kulet in the above excerpt describes the personality of the poachers: “*shadowy men*”, “*were not only shrewd*”, “*regarded as powerful*”, “*So powerful*”. The selected adjectives describes the faceless investors/businessmen that the Konini community had to confront to retain their ancestral land. Through such adjectives, it is evident that Ole Kulet has already condemned these “men”. By describing them as “*shadowy*” and “*shrewd*” I think that Ole Kulet is intentionally denying the readers the opportunity to decide on the characters of these “men”. I construe this as intentional writing to present the Konini community members as victims of “*shadowy*” and “*shrewd*” land grabbers. Ole Kulet further writes “*They were regarded as powerful men of the land. So powerful ...*” By describing SMA as a very powerful entity, Ole Kulet is depicting members of the society as being at the mercy of seasoned land grabbers. For years, it has been argued by the civil society organizations and the donor agencies that corrupt government officers have always facilitated the grabbing of community lands. And in situations where resistance is registered, forced disappearances occur. This is the rumour that Ole Kulet is spreading in the text. To buttress assertions of the civil society

organizations, Ole Kulet writes: “*A few protesters opposed to the acquisition, and who termed it a shameless land-grab, were quickly silenced...*,” (12). I consider this vocabulary meant to incite the readers against SMA and invite the civil society organization to support the Konini members in guarding their land.

In exploiting the use of adjectives to enable him reach his target audience, Ole Kulet describes Dick Jones as:

Dick Jones was never a coward. In his life he had many dangerous encounters. He had fought armed robbers, wrestled and subdued a leopard and shot and killed a lion that mauled his bull. All those past dangers seemed child play in comparisons what was now before him. It was more that he had bargained for. He had never been so fearful in all his life. (30)

In the above extract, I argue that Ole Kulet is painting a picture of a man who is willing to go the extra mile to ensure that he succeeds. By writing that, “Dick Jones was never a coward,” Ole Kulet is giving the readers a picture of an investor willing to have his way. I find the above extract unique as Ole Kulet describes the challenges Dick Jones has overcome. According to Ole Kulet, in his life Dick Jones “had many dangerous encounters” but he still managed to achieve his goals. By creating a daring fictional character, Ole Kulet targets a specific audience. This is an audience that has always challenged such investors on behalf of the underprivileged members of the society.

I am not on a mission to discredit Ole Kulet’s writing but to point at how his pattern of writing points to his thought patterns. It is this thought pattern that mirrors that of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. Language is the tool at the disposal of the writers. However,



different writers have unique strategies of writing that runs through their texts. In the same spirit, Ole Kulet has a writing pattern that serves as his “fictional signature”. This signature is well illustrated in Ole Kulet’s texts. It is this signature that I evaluate and compare to the signature of the civil society organizations. The issues raised by Ole Kulet in the text should not be casually wished away. However, the thought pattern adopted in the text suggests that Ole Kulet is targeting a specific audience as he writes:

...while in Zimbabwe, he saw an advertisement regarding Konini land, and was extremely excited. He knew the *supply of empty and undeveloped lands was becoming short indeed*. Konini was probably among the very last that was available. He immediately showed his interest by responding to the advertisement. (15)

The excerpt is full of verbs performing specific functions. Ole Kulet argues that “while in Zimbabwe, he saw...” To see in my understanding does not mean to interrogate. Through this, it can be argued that Ole Kulet is presenting Dick Jones as an individual who acts without interrogation. He further argues that Dick Jones “...was extremely excited ...” It is my opinion, the use of active verbs by Ole Kulet in describing Dick Jones reaction upon seeing an advertisement for an idle land points to Ole Kulet’s willingness to weave a story full of propaganda to influence action from civil society organizations. This is illustrated by Ole Kulet further writing that: “He knew the *supply of empty and undeveloped lands was becoming short indeed*.”

The above quoted paragraph tends to point to the origin of land ownership tussle in Kenya. In the eyes of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies, foreigners are the red-herrings in the murky field of land ownership. The semantics of the above paragraph confirm the assertions of the civil society organizations. Selected words including “advertisement”, “extremely excited”,

“probably”, “immediately” and “responding” at their lexical levels show elements of pandering. At the lexical level, adverbs and adjectives play an integral part in showing a writer’s thought process. The usage of “immediately”, “probably”, and “underdeveloped” show Ole Kulet’s view of the elites. To say a place is underdeveloped is to whip up the emotions of the readers. Ole Kulet fails to acknowledge in the text that Kenya, where the text is set, is a developing country.

Ole Kulet employs the use of emotive words to incite the readers. Such words tend to have greater emotional impact on the audience. Though such words are sometimes necessary to rally people for a course, it is my concern that such words have been used in *The Elephant Dance* to serve specific purposes. Use of emotive language unnecessarily limits objectivity as Ole Kulet writes:

“How lucky this Elephant is!” Simon Labuto commented softly, his eyes on the bull’s tusks. “Had we been with Abednego, it would have been shot dead by now and his men would have been trooping down here with their razor-sharp machetes to hack off its tusks.”  
(24)

Poaching is an emotive topic in Kenya and the world. To create a character that considers living elephants as “lucky” is to invoke an emotive topic. From the above, one is left wondering why Abednego does not want to save the elephants. The words “How lucky this Elephant,” “it would have been shot dead,” and “razor-sharp machetes to hack off its tusks,” present the poachers as anti-conservation. It is my concern that such emotive language is not used to present facts but to create an emotional response. This has the likelihood of making the readers to react in a specific way owing to the manipulation associated with such words. In describing how dedicated the poachers are, Ole Kulet emotively writes about their poaching missions. This through a telephone conversation between the poachers:

But Shadrach's exhilarating moment came when he called his two co-directors, Meshach and Abednego on phone to disclose to them the success he had had in the hunting expedition.

"That is unbelievable," quipped Abednego rapturously on hearing the number of tusks netted. My dear brother, if that is true, it is beyond anybody's expectation. Over six hundred pieces, did you say?"

"Yes, six hundred and fifty-two to be exact." (127)

I consider the above dialogue between Abednego and his colleagues as an unfortunate. It is my argument that though emotional appeal in itself a fallacy, Ole Kulet is presenting poaching as cruelty against the animals. By opting for an emotional reaction from readers to directly hate poachers, I consider it an affective approach in reaching out to his audience.

*The Elephant Dance* is a third person narrative. The third person is also known as the omniscient narrator. The striking feature of this narration is that the narrator is part of the action(s) in the text and also explains to the readers what other characters think and how they act. In describing the encounter between the game wardens and the poachers, Ole Kulet narrates the fate that befalls one of the poachers as:

And as Simon Labuto walked under the tree, his arm dripping with blood, the animal suddenly jumped down. Within a split second, there was a flash of black and yellow, and a ripple of muscle in one forceful movement, and a leopard caught Simon Labuto's throat and ripped it open. He died without a cry. It dragged the body into the bush. (357)

The above extract illustrates Ole Kulet's hatred towards the poachers. It is my understanding that he is celebrating Simon Labuto's death. Throughout the text, Ole Kulet has successfully presented the poachers as evil men and women who deserve the most painful death. I consider such emotional narration to appeal to the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. It is also my stand that Ole Kulet is "fictionally killing Simon Labuto" cruelly for emotional gains among the readers. This is as opposed to the treatment he accords the anti-poaching characters. He finally summarizes the incident through an emotional narration to appeal to his audience by writing:

...she mused, that a man as rich as Abednego, would want to kill all the elephants, destroy all forests and cause the environmental degradation that would destroy mankind, kill innocent villagers, like that of Metian village, destroy lives of young men like Reson and his brother Sena and take away their land, all in the name of amassing more wealth, while it would only take one bullet to bring his life to a halt! (361)

In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet uses Maa (Maasai language). The use of local language places a literary text in a specific setting. However, there is also more to the use of local language that this study evaluates. Maasai is a community that occupies an integral position in Kenya history and tourism. They have for years maintained their cultural heritage amidst mockery among "elite" Kenyans. In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet uses a Maa dialect to describe a shadowy group facilitating land grabbing in the fictional Konini community. He calls them "*Ilmirisho lo Supuko*." "We are *Ilmirisho lo Sopuko*," declared their leader, a man in a distinctively decorated robe of hyrax skins," (40). "*Ilmirisho lo Supuko*" translated into English means "visitors of the highlands". My concern is to interrogate why Ole Kulet opts to using a local language when writing a literary text that tackles modern day poaching and exploitation of the nature. The simple reasoning could

be that Ole Kulet never had an equivalent word(s) in English. However a keener reading and analysis points to another argument that might have compelled Ole Kulet to opt to use the Maa. My reasoning is that Ole Kulet opts to use local lingo as a register. This is in my opinion enables Ole Kulet to directly connect with his Maa readers. By using a local slang Maa readers can easily relate with, it is my argument that Ole Kulet is pointing to the local readers that poaching is facilitated by people within. This argument is confirmed in later chapters when the real intention of the visitors of the “*Imirisho lo Supuko*” is realized as “to lull the elders minds and deceive them to believe that they still owned that land while it was long gone” (270).

The other local words used by Ole Kulet include *Oloingoni* (The Lion Eater) (35), *Oltasat* (an elder) (44), *Oleleshua* (shrubs) (65), *Eero* (Young man) (79), *Olmoruo /Olodo-ala* (husband) (81), *elangata* (footbridge)(103), *Empus Oshoke* (God) (106), *Ijo mekumok* (why are they not many) (107), *Olmomoi* (wild edible vegetables) (167), *Lakira le Kakeny* (The Morning Star) (169), *Lakira le Dama* (The Day Star) (169), *Lakira le Teipa* (The Evening Star) (169) and *Lakira le Miso* (The Night Star) (169), *enkila-oo-ndeerri* (hyrax skin) (172), *Olgigirri, Ilkinye, Ilmisigiyo, Ilelehuani, Ilamuriak, Ilkujuk, Iloirraga, Olosiro* (variety of indigenous tree species) (266), *Etuata pookin!* (They are all dead!) (283) and *Olmagutian* (species of grass) (319).

The author strategically used a local song in *The Elephant Dance* is on page 276:

*Oi, Oi Oi apa  
 Oi apa ara oti;  
 Leleiyo laleiyo  
 Laleiyo laleiyo  
 Naa kalo Entim*

Those days when I  
 Was young  
 I used  
 To go the forest.

The above song is remembered by Reson when he visits Konini Post to report the actions of *Iimirisho lo Supuko*. Through the song, we learn that at his seminal years, Reson used “to go the forest.” However, this is uncertain today or in the future. The above song in my opinion is aimed at rallying the community to embrace the fight against poachers. It is my conviction that the song is used to rally support against destruction of the nature.

### **3.1.3 Conclusion**

The purposes for writing a fictional text are diverse. However, I am convinced that writers do so share their ideologies, perspectives on life, to arouse readers, share experience and sometimes challenge the status quo. For one to grasp the intent of the writer, a closer reading of the text is thus necessary. This closer reading of the text affords the critic the necessary opportunity to point at clues that other readers are not likely to pay attention to. I have therefore paid the necessary attention to the contents of *The Elephant Dance* and noticed how Ole Kulet uses diction to interact with his intended audience.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The structure of *The Elephant Dance*

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will analyze the setting, dialogue, point of view, plot and cohesion to illustrate how Ole Kulet writes with an intended audience in mind. I consider writing with a preconceived audience in mind undermines a writer's creativity and artistic freedom. This is so for the writer must employ a narrative strategy and a plot that suits the intended purpose.

#### 4.1 Setting

Fictional action takes place within a specific locality and a historical time. It is this that I consider as the setting. The setting can be either in a house, on a ship, in the air or in any other place decided by the author within a historical time. A reading and analysis of fictional works confirm that most authors go for the setting they are familiar with. Such writers with their stories set in the environment they are familiar with include Margaret Ogola, Grace Ogot, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ole Kulet. Ole Kulet's books are set within his Maasai locality. According to Minot Stephen: "Setting or orientation, is what fixes a work of fiction not only in place but in time as well. Time as aspect of setting include space, the time of occurrences of the carted story, the season and most importantly the historical perspective of the story," (266).

*The Elephant Dance* is set in a fictional Konini locality. The actions take place both during the day and at night. Setting not only buttresses authenticity of a society but also enables the readers to imagine reality. It is for this reason that the setting must tally with the reality on the ground. For example, it is illogical to set a pork eating frenzy in a hotel in a Muslim city. The advantages of

using a familiar setting are enormous. Familiarity with setting makes it easier for the writer to present a cultural, religious and economic situation of an area in a plausible manner. This enables the writer to present his or her text as an insider and not as an outsider. By setting *The Elephant Dance* in an environment he is familiar with, Ole Kulet leverages on his cultural knowledge of the environment. The historical setting of the text also provides Ole Kulet with necessary ammunition to advance his claims. Large tracks of lands once held by communities have ended up in private ownership. This led to civil society organizations and donor agencies spearheading activities and campaigns to assist minorities to retain their ancestral lands. This is evident as reported by eKLR Constitutional Petition 6 & 5 of 2017 (Consolidated). In supporting this assertion, Ole Kulet writes in *The Elephant Dance* that:

She thought if the man before her knew the content of the report, he would probably go berserk, for even their Konini Tourist's Lodge was now sitting on land that no longer belonged to them. She recalled reading the conclusion of the enquiry that stated: "The allocation of the land to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went against public interest for it allowed unlawful disposal of community land to individuals without redress to the communities that lived on the land and denying them the benefit of eking out a living from the land." In addition, those who allowed the allocation of the one hundred and fifty thousand acres of land to the three individuals never gave consideration to thousands upon thousands of wild animals that also lived on that land. (312)

The above fictional rendition by Ole Kulet has been made possible by the setting. This is so because Ole Kulet purposely utilizes the historical elements of the setting to comment on the land crisis in fictional Konini society. Minot Stephen argues on the value of setting that: "Invented



place-names liberate the imagination in the same way that inventing the names of the characters does. It gives the author flexibility while still preserving the sense of authenticity that one can achieve with details from an actual place,” (231).

In his attempts to write fictionally about the tribulations of his Maasai kinsmen, Ole Kulet opts to regionalize his stories. Regionalism, or local colour writing is “the use of direct specific regions the writer is familiar with,” (Minot 232). Regionalism also enables Ole Kulet to employ without dispute the Maasai language, otherwise called Maa, local character and characterization, local attitudes, local values and local cultures. By this, Ole Kulet amplifies the civil society’s consistent argument that a community’s cultural heritage should be respected, and must be protected by the law. Ole Kulet personal familiarity with his setting plays a significant role in his activism through literature. By writing about the Maasai culture, a heritage he is so familiar with, he leaves a significant mark on the minds of the readers.

It is my opinion that setting sets the mood and sometimes the tone of a text. The text is set in the present day Kenya, over fifty years since the attainment of independence. In the recent past, concerns on land grabbing and poaching have been topics of interest. Black rhinos and elephants are considered endangered animal species because of their highly priced horns and tusks. On the other hand, the security of community owned lands have also emerged as a topic of interest. Civil society organizations and donor agencies have consequently committed resources to support conservancies involved in the protection of the endangered wildlife and have also committed legal fees to advance the rights of the ignored minority groups. It is my opinion therefore that Ole Kulet sets the text among the minority group at a time when such concerns (rights of minority groups

and poaching) are prevalent. This is to exploit the prevailing mood. This also explains the tone witnessed in the text as the poachers are loathed and their deaths celebrated.

In exploiting history to appeal to his intended audience, Ole Kulet employs a historical perspective to his narration. Though he does not mention it, it is right to infer that Ole Kulet is linking the poverty and illiteracy level in the fictional Konini to the neglect by the government and its selective development priorities. Since the author is a product of historical experience, Ole Kulet opts to set his story in the present day Kenya (Konini locality) with historical undertones. Written in 2016, it is unbelievable that there exists a group of people who still cherish hunting for meat and under age marriage. The concerns that Ole Kulet raises through this narration are troubling. However, I consider it alarmist just as the reports by the civil society organizations and donor agencies on the state of illiteracy in selected geographical locations in Kenya.

## **4.2 Dialogue**

Dialogue is an exchange between two or more people in a day to day conversation. In fictional writing, dialogue is an exchange between two or more characters. This exchange must not be necessarily between parties pursuing the same interest(s). Such exchange can occur between allies or adversaries in a fictional text. Ole Kulet allows direct exchanges between characters to enable him depict the conflict and support his plot. I consider dialogue as part of the text structure because it interrupts the narration and highlights more on the conflict hence advancing the plot. At this level, I will interrogate how through the use of dialogue Ole Kulet successfully panders to the whims of the civil society organizations and donor agencies. It is also vital to note that not all conversations qualify as dialogue. I say so because for dialogue to be considered successful, the involved parties must depict a shared common knowledge in the language and topic. In literature,

for a dialogue to succeed, the involved parties must have a shared common knowledge. This shared common knowledge results in conflict as opinions differ.

The shared knowledge in the text is poaching, land and cultural affiliation. However, different parties have conflicting ideologies on poaching, land and cultural affiliation. To the poachers in the text, poaching is associated with economic prosperity. To the Konini community members and the game wardens, poaching is an inhumane act against the wild animals. However, not only exchanges between characters in fictional text constitute a dialogue. The author can also engage the readers by creating a situation that demands for a dialogue between the two as the readers' ideological inclinations are questioned and put under scrutiny. However, I will not dwell on this nature of dialogue in this sub-section. The verbal exchanges in the text reveal a poaching syndicate that controls the security apparatus, a community attached to their ancestral land, young girls in competition for the suitors and the security officers (game wardens) in a mission to combat unnecessary poaching. Dialogue has been used in the text to evoke emotions and attract attention of interested parties as witnessed between Shadrach, Simon Labuto, Abednego and Dick Jones in the text:

“Don’t worry about them,” Shadrach responded, waving his hands dismissively. “They will soon know who we are and why we are here.”

As a matter of fact,” Meshach added mischievously, “it is us who will soon be wondering what they are doing on our land.”

“Could there be unresolved dispute over the land? asked Dick Jones. “In Zimbabwe, disputes hold up land development for a very long time as parties haggle in courts.”

“The people I saw this morning,” Simon Labuto said with concern evident in his voice, “can easily disrupt the intended development. To speak the truth, I was absolutely appalled by their aggressive behaviour.”

“There is no dispute over this land,” Abednego declared indignantly as he chewed his lips in repressed anger. “I pity them who think there is one, for they do not know who they are dealing with.” (21-22).

In the above dialogue, Ole Kulet interrupts the narration of the text to give room for the land grabbers and poachers to engage in a talk with one another. The above dialogue provides a preview on the underworld of the illicit dealings in land grabbing. It also hints to the readers at the mode employed by the poaching elites to bulldoze their way through. From the dialogue, we get the hint that the land has been grabbed from a people or a community considered less privileged as Abednego puts it, “I pity them who think there is one, for they do not know who they are dealing with.”

Successful writing activity invites the readers and makes them consider what the writer highlights. This unconscious invitation to willing respondents can be made entertaining by the use of the dialogue. As the characters engage in exchanges, the ideological inclination of the author and his intentions are revealed. I argue so because the characters in verbal exchange in literary texts are a creation of the author tasked with passing a specific message. Such a message is thus delivered in form of a dialogue as witnessed between Dick Jones and Simon Labuto below:

“How lucky this elephant is!” Simon Labuto commented softly, his eyes on the bull’s tusks. “Had we been with Abednego, it would have been shot dead by now and his men would have been trooping down here with their razor-sharp machetes to hack off its tusks.”

“What! A shocked Dick Jones exclaimed, his eyes popping out of his head. “You mean to say Mr Abednego is a poacher?”

“Certainly not!” Simon Labuto answered empathically. “To the contrary Mr. Abednego is a respected animal conservationist.”

“But surely, shooting dead an elephant such as this bull and hacking off its tusks flies in the face of a respected conservationist!” Dick Jones said in an exasperation and then, as if to clear some clout in his mind, he asked, “In any case, what does Mr Abednego do with the tusks?”

“That you will have to ask him if you have the temerity,” Simon Labuto answered candidly. “What I do know, as a conservationist, Mr Abednego and his team carry out systematic culling in all animal species, including elephants, eliminating the old, the sick and weak animals so that the rest can survive and thrive.” (23-24)

The conversation between Simon Labuto and Dick Jones introduces the concept of “systematic culling” that has been for years argued against by pro-life conservationists. By addressing the readers directly by the use of characters through dialogue, the readers are introduced into the fictional reality rife with undertones. As Simon Labuta and Dick Jones argue whether Mr Abednego is a poacher or a conservationist, the readers are introduced to the concerns of the civil society organizations argument that poaching is sometimes masked as culling. The above dialogue is rife with concerns of the civil society and ethical considerations. Dick Jones’ sole reason for relocating is investment in large scale farming. However, he has been introduced to “systematic culling” in the wild to ensure that stronger and healthier animals survive and thrive.

At the onset of writing, the author is an outsider who sees events unfold and by use of words builds a story. In deciding the plot, the author dialogues with what he sees and knows. This is so because he may be writing from a point of privilege (fictionalizing known reality). To limit direct threat, the author involves his or her characters in a dialogue to depict the known reality. In the above discussion between Dick Jones and Simon Labuto, it is evident that Ole Kulet is writing from a point of privilege. This enables him to question the concept of culling. To realize the dialogue, the writer delegates this to characters who appear as antagonists. In essence, each party carries the writer's thought throughout the story. This is realized in Simon Labuto's argument that Mr Abednego is a respected conservationist who only assists in culling as necessary.

As the readers listen to the fictional characters exchange barbs, they involve their own knowledge to make sense of the argument(s). This is supported by the prevailing economic, social and political conditions the readers operate in. Since we operate in a unique social settings, we tend to align ourselves with the fictional characters advancing a social course we are familiar with and resisting unnecessary oppression and greed. Though the text has other issues discussed by the characters through dialogue, I will dwell on those discussions that attract the attention of Ole Kulet's intended audience. In the text, Ole Kulet places a heavy responsibility on the illiterate villagers to fight poaching. As these villagers discuss this issue, the voices of the civil society and the donor agencies are felt throughout as in the discussion dialogue below:

“When the last elephants is gone,” Pesi said sorrowfully, “we shall be done, for the blue-bellied being, had intended that we live side by side with them forever.”

“What can we do to avert this disaster?” Reson asked resignedly, desperation evident in his voice, “I hope the brutes have not killed any of the old bulls.”

“We shall know tomorrow,” the old man said as he pulled his blanket around his narrow shoulders. “Since we are going to the bush to hunt bushbucks, I am going to ask Sena that we follow the footsteps of those people back to where they had come from, and hopefully, we shall find out what they are carrying.” (111)

In the above dialogue, it is worth noting that the speaking subjects are an integral point of meaning realization. The speakers above see actions they do not agree with, making them to voice their concerns. However, I can argue that Reson, Pesi and Sena are the voices of civil society organization disguised as primitive inhabitants of the Konini. This is realized in the following chapter as the trio discovers the damage that has been done by the group:

No, no, no, it cannot be!” Screamed Reson despondently. My eyes are cheating me!”

“Oh, Pus Oshoke, giver of life!” Wailed Pesi prayerfully. “You gave us these animals at the beginning of time. Would you allow them to die like this?” (145)

The concern of the civil society and the donor agencies that poaching is facilitated by the harassment and intimidation is well captured through the dialogue between Dick Jones and Simon Labuto as Ole Kulet writes:

“What can I do for you?” Simon Labuto had asked guardedly.

“I am in need of your help,” Dick Jones answered as if it were an ordinary everyday request he was making. “I hope you will be in a position to help.”

“Well....er....” Said Simon Labuto. What sort of help are you asking for?”

“I can’t explain to you on phone,” said Dick Jones in a heavy gloomy tone, “but I will explain it to you in detail when we meet at eight o’clock at the club. Do you think you can make it? It is urgent and rather serious.”

“All right,” said Simon Labuto, sounding concerned. “I’ll be there at eight o’clock sharp.”

(218)

The genesis of the above dialogue is revealed later as Ole Kulet writes:

“The old gazer hopefully learnt a lesson never to try his antics on us again,” Abednego said, still in stitches. “I will never get over that day’s fun as the *mzungu*’s eyes darted from side to side like a cornered antelope! I feared that he might wet his pants!”

“How did he behave when he eventually you promised to rescue him from the lion’s jaws?”

Shadrach asked Abednego, obviously wanting to prolong the laughter. “I guess he behaved like the proverbial man who was given a glimpse of hell.”

“Let Simon Labuto tell you that,” Abednego said as he wiped tears from his eyes. “He was simply lost as to whether cry or laugh!”

“He actually seemed to have lost all hope,” Simon Labuto said in a reasonably sober manner. “When he received the reprieve, he was stunned. At first he did not believe he had heard it right. When at last he understood that you were saying that you would pay the ten million shillings on his behalf, he was so happy and thankful the he instantly became tongue-tied. I saw him gaze at you in rapture like a man who was dead and had resurrected.”

(258)



The above dialogue illustrates the alleged harassment and intimidation that drives poaching and land grabbing. Upon realizing that Dick Jones does not support poaching and concentrates in running his business, he is fixed and humiliated. The intimidation does not only end by the arrest and humiliation of Dick Jones. Officer Regina Naitore and Leah Naipande also find themselves in such a situation as they often face harassment from the poachers led by Tetema. In advancing the concerns of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies, Ole Kulet employs the use of dialogue to allow the readers to access the thought patterns of poachers and their associates.

### **4.3 Cohesion**

At this level, I will look at how meaning in *The Elephant Dance* is defined by the relations of the meanings within the text itself. I will interrogate how different parts of the text merge to give a meaning. Leech Geoffrey defines cohesion as: “The way in which independent choices at different points of a text correspond with or presuppose one another, forming a network of sequential relations,” (29). In analyzing cohesion, I will point at how the different parts of the text “talk” to each other to ensure that intended message as imagined by the author is realized. Analysis of cohesion ensures that that the words used in the text constitute sentences that make sense and link to each other to provide a quality of unity. The sentences are thus purposely put together to communicate and provoke the reader. This ensures that the interdependence between the sentences in the text is seen and felt by the readers.

Literary texts can be segmented into three main parts: the introduction, the body and the conclusion. Cohesion ensures that the three parts of the text logically link to each other and can be easily understood by the readers. Cohesion further ensures that the introduction is appropriately linked to the body and the conclusion. The text is introduced as a land tussle and poaching in a

fictional Konini Community. It is therefore the expectation of the readers to see how the introduced conflict is illustrated in the subsequent chapters. This enables the readers to understand the source of conflict, the parties involved, who is right, who is wrong according to the writer and the likely outcome(s) of the text. This leads to a unity of meaning in the entire text as the readers' interpretation is dependent on the prior knowledge.

Ole Kulet integrates poaching and land grabbing as the main issues in the text. He makes the antagonists to refer back to the ownership of the land; and register their opinions concerning poaching. To realize cohesion, each party continually reiterates its stand as they pursue their interests. This constant tiff witnessed among the antagonists ensure the text cohesively progresses from one level to another. This helps in linking the body of the text with the introduction. As the text winds, Ole Kulet summarizes the conflict introduced in chapter one in the last chapter:

“What a paradox, she mused, that a man as rich as Abednego, would want to kill all the elephants, destroy all forests and cause the environment degradation that would destroy mankind, kill innocent villagers, like those of Metian Village, destroy lives of young men like Reson and his brother Sena and take away their land, all in the name of amassing more wealth, while it would only take one bullet to bring his life to a halt!” (316)

The above quotation links well with introduction of the text. Chapter one of the text introduces the land as the main source of the conflict as Ole Kulet writes; “For many months, elders of the community that lived in forest, waited in eager anticipation for the arrival of good news. Discussion after discussion had been held for many years regarding their permanent settlement,” (1) The sentence in chapter one introduces the problem being faced by the “community that lived in Konini forest” and the sentence in the last chapter explains the source of the problem. The

linking of the introduction of the text to the conclusion enables informed interpretation by the readers.

#### **4. 4 Point of View**

I consider point of view as the perspective in which a fictional work is rendered to the readers. Point of view can also mean the dominant voice heard while reading a literary text. *The Elephant Dance* is narrated by a third person narrator, better known as the omniscient narrator. The third person narrator is present in every setting, at any given time revealing to the readers what has happened, what is happening and what will happen. This narration in my assessment suits Ole Kulet's intention in *The Elephant Dance*.

In *The Elephant Dance*, Ole Kulet uses the omniscient narrator to tell the readers how land grabbing, poaching and destruction of nature is happening in the fictional Konini community. The text commences with a narrator telling the readers that Konini inhabitants have been served with a terse order requiring them to vacate their ancestral land (1). By exploiting the benefits of third person narrative strategy, Ole Kulet's voice is masked as that of a narrator telling the readers of what is happening. This revelation by the narrator who is everywhere selectively paints some characters as victims while others as villains. This presence of a narrator who is everywhere is witnessed in the subsequent chapters of the text.

Through the use of third narrative person, Ole Kulet describes his characters in *The Elephant Dance* with the intention of persuading the readers to hate some and like others. This explains why Ole Kulet describes the SMA syndicate as corrupt and not mindful of the need to conserve the nature. This point of view also enables Ole Kulet to sanitize the actions of his beloved characters.

I consider this as an intentional move to present us with a story belonging to the omniscient model of truth. This leads to selective revelation and withholding of information from the audience. By having control of what to tell the readers, we are forced to perceive the reality as perceived by this narrator. By the use of an omniscient character rather than allow the characters to tell us what they are doing and why they are doing it, Ole Kulet acts as a biased reporter hence revealing what he considers relevant to his interests.

The core concern of the text is poaching and its effects on nature. Poaching in the text occurs at commercial and domestic level. However, the narrative voice in the text prefers domestic to commercial poaching. In effectively condemning poaching through third narration techniques, this narrator exaggerates the actions of the poachers, their daring nature, rudeness and even the willingness to kill to ensure their mission is accomplished. This revelation of the actions of SMA is described in derogatory and inciting terms by the author:

Over the years, the owners had invested heavily in the development of the machine to enhance its performance. They also put a lot of resources in a acquiring and training the right people to undertake tasks that required highly skilled performers. The efficiency and reliability of the machine and its operators had repeatedly been tested and approved. (55)

The above excerpt presents the readers with the reality as conceived by the narrator. The narrator tells us the investment that has been put in by the owners to enhance the machine's performance. However, the owners of the machine have been denied the opportunity to explain their investment, the source of the investment and the purpose of the investment. Since the investors' voices have been limited in the above excerpt, the readers are left to accept the narrator's speculations on the investment.

#### 4.5 Plot

In literature, plot is the flow of events that result into a story. There are other definitions of what plot is. The defining feature of a plot is the arrangement of the events. The plot is realized through an intrigue instigated by a character in a literary text. This in effect arouses the expectations among the readers as the challenged characters react, hence the realization of the plot. One story can contain several plots within it. In *The Elephant Dance*, I can identify more than one plot. The main plot of *The Elephant Dance* undergoes the rising action phase, climax, falling action and resolution. The plot starts with a scheme plotted by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to grab a huge portion of the Konini forest for large scale farming, tourism and hospitality business. This move is opposed by the Konini residents who maintain that the land in contention is ancestral. They petition the government to declare the land a community property. The petition failed as the land is leased out to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for ninety nine years. In concealing their intended reason for acquiring the land, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego place an advertisement inviting interested persons for partnership in large scale farming. Through the advertisement, Dick Jones, a white farmer from Zimbabwe, joins the trio as a co-director.

Unknown to Dick Jones, his fellow directors acquired the land to hunt the elephants and rhinos. As Dick Jones dedication to the tourism results into more income, his co-directors frame him leading to a humiliating arrest. He is eventually released after paying a hefty bribe. As the villagers and the investors explore ways of working together, doubts and skepticism surface. In their attempts to win the confidence of the villagers, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego through *Imiirisho lo Supuko* present the villagers with *shukas*, *lesos* and other goodies. This strategy is

doubted by a section of the villagers, prompting Reson and Sena to spy on them, unearthing their intention. This revelation forces Sena and Reson to seek audience with Regina Naitore.

Besides the challenges associated with the poaching, Leah Naipande's bosses have also been compromised by the poachers, making it challenging for her to effectively combat the menace. She has been instructed by her bosses to attend a function organized by the poachers. A function in which her elimination is on the agenda. Upon his visit Reson shares with Regina Naitore his investigations concerning the dealings of the *Ilmiirisho lo Spuko*. In the process of the revelations, Sena storms Konini station to persuade Reson not to divulge the dealings of *Ilmiirisho lo Spuko*. Sena's concern is that Merian, who had earlier reported to Regina Naitore the dealings of *Ilmiirisho lo Spuko* had his village torched and people killed. To protect Reson, his family and the villagers, Regina Naitore dispatches a heavily armed contingent of security officers to secure the village.

Aware that her life is in danger, Regina Naitore attends the function at organized by the poachers at the Konini Tourists' Lodge. Among the dignitaries at the function are two billionaires from unnamed Asian country. Their main mission is to collect a consignment of ivory. As the celebration at the Konini Tourists's Logde continues, Simon Labuto and his team attempt to abduct Regina Naitore is met with fierce resistance. A confusion ensues, leading to Simon Labuto being snatched away by a leopard, shooting of the *Ilmirisho lo Supuku* gang dead, an injury to Leah Naipande and arrest of Abednego.

Of interest to my study is how Ole Kulet uses the plot in *The Elephant Dance* to advance his agenda. It is through the plot that the actions of the characters are judged as either well intentioned or not. Characters advance the plot by attempting to achieve specific objectives as intended by the author. The plot of *The Elephant Dance* revolves around the actions of the poaching trio of

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The poachers are also entangled in a land dispute with the locals. It is this dispute that is supported by other sub-plots that advances Ole Kulet's agenda.

The main plot of *The Elephant Dance* mirrors the arguments of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. It narrates a conflict between a minority community against rich poachers and land grabbers. By linking the poaching syndicate to the government operatives, Ole Kulet intentionally highlights the arguments that have always been fronted by the civil society organizations and the donor agencies. The civil society movements have always linked land grabbing and poaching activities to senior government officials. Though the civil society organizations have always failed to prove this assertion beyond doubts, they have maintained that poaching in most parts of Africa is facilitated by the senior government officers. Kenya has a lot of animal conservancies. These conservancies are funded by the donor agencies and are involved in activities to raise awareness on the dangers of poaching and other activities facilitating environmental degradation. A keener look at their location indicates a strategic choice to present themselves as pro-animal conservationist. They are operated in areas dominated by the local inhabitants. This observation is supported by the plot presented by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* as he narrates of the large- scale poaching around Konini. It is therefore my stand that through the text, Ole Kulet is supporting the assertion of such conservancies that poaching is rampant in Kenya and a lot of benevolent work is needed to support the activities of these conservancies.

I recognize the fact that poaching should not be tolerated and needs to be condemned. However, it is also necessary to point out that the approaches employed by the civil society organizations have not been impactful for generations. In most cases, minority groups are considered the victims by

the civil society organizations yet their actions too are detrimental to the conservation and prudent use of the natural resources. By doing so Ole Kulet abdicates his duty as an artist to wonder in the field of activism. He fails to develop a plot with insightful arguments on the challenges associated with early childhood marriage, poaching of wild animals for meat, pastoralism, overgrazing and unwillingness to embrace education.

*The Elephant Dance* is made up of other sub-plots that feed in the main plot. The significance sub-plots in *The Elephant Dance* are those on the fate of Dick Jones, the conflict between Naramat and Napono over Sena and the engagements of the *Ilimirisho lo Supuku*. Dick Jones comes to Konini because of the advertisement he has seen in a newspaper inviting willing investors. Convinced that the offer is lucrative, he sells everything in Zimbabwe to join Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in large scale farming, tourism and hospitality. Upon joining the trio, Dick Jones is introduced to other team members in an invite only function. He is then taken to a tour of the farm for familiarization. He is further informed of the discovery of sandalwood in the forest and his role to ensure that the crates of the sandalwood are safely kept for onward transmission to Nakuru. Unknown to Dick Jones, it turns out that the crates of sandalwood are full of elephant tusks. He is finally arrested by Sergeant Mandong and released after paying a hefty bribe. Dick Jones humiliation leads him to Regina Naitore where he warns her to ensure that her security is considered as she plans to attend the function at the Konini Tourists' Lodge.

The other sub-plot involving Naramat and Napono is not finalized in the text. It starts with Sena subduing a lion that invaded the village at night. As per the norm, he is bequeathed the most beautiful lady in the village, Naramat. However, Naramat opts to test Sena's patient, making him (Sena) opt to pursue Napono, another lady in the village with bigger buttocks, a development that



creates a rift between the two young ladies. However, the author decides not to bring this plot to its logical conclusion as the two ladies are never mentioned in the subsequent chapters of the text. The other sub-plot involves the dealings of the *Ilmirisho lo Supuko*. Though the story of the *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* gangs runs throughout the text, it also stands out as a story of its own. The *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* are introduced in their encounter with the delegation sent by the Konini people to seek audience with the white investor. They are presented as victims of land grabbing. They are visibly agitated and threatening to harm Mr. Dick Jones. As the narration progresses, the *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* again encounters Sulenya and his team in the forest. At this stage, they again introduce themselves as fellow victims of land grabbing. However, through this encounter we are introduced to the true dealings of the gang. Together with Sulenya and his team, they are introduced to other villagers as comrades united against land grabbing and poaching in the forest by the white man, Dick Jones. The gang also presents to the villagers gifts of *shukas* and *lessos* to win their trust. To enable the villagers to fend off poachers, they Konini men on the use new spears for guarding the forest. As their interactions intensify, the villagers through Reson after days of spying realize their other motives. This leads to the arrest of the gang members and killing some of them.

The analysis of the sub-plot involving the actions of the *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* points to a text structure crafted to appeal to the civil society organizations and donor agencies. “We are *Ilmirisho lo Supuko*,” declared their leader, a man in a distinctively decorated robe of hyrax skins,” (40.) At this level, the *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* is introduced as victims of land grabbing. “If you think you can just leisurely walk in here and grab our land as we watch, you and your ilk will learn the hard way!” (40). At this level, the readers are dubbed to consider *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* to be staring at an imminent loss of their land. As the text unfolds, the true mission of *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* is revealed as an extension of the SMA syndicate used to mislead the war on poaching. “Little did

they know that *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* men were puppets of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who played by rules of the puppeteers,” (270). These are the same arguments that have for years been fronted by the civil society organizations. The civil society organizations and donor agencies have always argued that the middlemen often found in possession of the poached animal parts are acting on orders from big men operating the poaching syndicate.

In the text, *Ilmirisho lo Supuko* fronts itself as a charity organization. At the same time, it uses brutal force to coerce suspicious individuals to submission. “If you have not,” he yelled hysterically, “don’t do it my dear brother. A young man who was here last week and told her everything has had his village torched and all the people, men, woman and children all killed. Massacred!” (283). The civil society has always argued that whistle blowers on poaching are always threatened and suffer forced disappearances. I note that poaching is a menace that needs condemnation by sane individuals. However, it is my concern that in fighting poaching, Ole Kulet allows arguments of the civil society organizations to permeate his text.

Ole Kulet introduces the readers to another sub-plot. This sub-plot involves Naramat, Sena and Napono. It revolves around underage marriage, an occurrence that for years the civil society organizations have condemned; and have even supported the enactment of laws to punish men and women forcing underage girls and boys into marriage. However, Ole Kulet terminates this sub-plot resulting in suspense. I consider this unresolved sub-plot as a strategy to invoke the concerns of the civil society organizations and donor agencies. The presence of the civil society organizations and donor agencies in certain regions including Coast, parts of Nyanza and parts of the Rift Valley for “empowerment purposes” is buttressed by Ole Kulet through this sub-plot. In

these regions, initiatives by the civil society organizations to keep the girl child in school is rife. These include provision of free school uniforms, free meals and sanitary pads.

In ensuring that his story appears authentic and plausible, Ole Kulet uses a flashback and backstory. In order to show that the Konini community are being evicted from their ancestral land, Ole Kulet brings an old narrative to support his argument. This story tells of the origin of Okiek and their relationship with the wild animals (105). The story illustrates the Okieks attachment to their ancestral land and ways of life. It enables the readers to link the ongoing conflict in the text. This backstory also convinces the readers that the Konini people are the legitimate owners of the peace of land in contention. It is also evident that Ole Kulet has “refused” to enable SMA to explain how they acquired the land. I consider this unbalanced narration as one side is given undue advantage over the others. What if SMA are innocent buyers?

Flashbacks are utilized effectively by Ole Kulet in *The Elephant Dance* to justify his condemnation of poaching. Ole Kulet uses a flashback associated with SMA team include poaching expedition as seen here:

My man, yesterday you stepped into the path of the buffalo,” Said Shadrach in a trembling emotion-filled voice, “and risked your life in order to release the shot that killed the beast and in doing so you saved my life.”

You need not to feel any obligation to me,” the man said with humility, his spirit soaring with delight. “You would certainly have done the same for me had you seen me in such a dangerous position you had been.” (127)

I consider the use of above flashback intentional. Through this flashback, Ole Kulet is illustrating to us what drives the poachers and their desire.

*The Elephant Dance* is chronologically arranged. The events narrated happen after each other except in instances where flashback and backstory are involved. To come out of the flashbacks and the backstory, Ole Kulet directly introduces the readers to the transition. The flashbacks and the backstories insert occurrences necessary in understanding the text. At the exposition stage, Ole Kulet introduces the conflict in the text. At this stage, the readers are introduced to the varying opinions held by the character. In *The Elephant Dance*, the conflict is on the land ownership and poaching. The Konini community members contest the leasing of their ancestral land to faceless individuals with interest in large scale farming. The faceless farmers are represented by a white man, Dick Jones and the master of odd jobs, Simon Labuto. As the text advances, the tension rises as the conflicting characters plot against each other. Determined to ensure that their plans are not curtailed by the villagers, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego employ tricks to hoodwink the villagers by showering them with gifts, attempt to bribe the officers heading the Konini Post and the use of propaganda. In their attempt to outwit the poachers, the villagers through Pesi, Reson and Sena monitor the actions of the *Ilimirisho lo Supuko* both at day and in the night. The story at this point is complicated as the conflicting parties work hard to achieve their mission. *The Elephant Dance* reaches a climax when Pesi and Reson unmask the true mission of the *Ilimirisho lo Supuko*, report their actions to Regina Naitore at the Konini Station. In their attempts to outwit the security agencies, the poachers invite the head of Konini station to a function at Konini Tourists' Lodge with the intention of abducting and later killing her. This leads to the climax of the story as the poachers and the security agents clash at the function resulting into deaths and injuries. The stories

reaches a falling action as the poachers are outwitted, some killed and others arrested. The conflict is resolved as the land is reverted back to the villagers.

#### **4. 6 Conclusion**

The sequence of the ideas in the text are arranged with an intended audience in mind. The plot of the text revolves around the struggles of a hunting and gathering community against a rich poaching syndicate with interests in tourism and hospitality industry. This plot captures the arguments of the civil society organizations and donor agencies on the fate of unprivileged members of the society. The text is narrated through an omniscient point of view. This gives the author the leeway to use a narrative strategy that gives no room for other characters to defend their actions. The text is also set in within a community that has suffered historical injustices. This in my opinion allows the author to use his knowledge of the setting and history to pander to the whims of the civil society organizations.

## CONCLUSION

It is my observation in this research project that Ole Kulet has been influenced by the activities of the civil society organizations and donor agencies. The issues raised in the text mirror the daily concerns of the activists. In the text, Ole Kulet uses a diction, plot, point of view, setting and dialogue that mirrors activism. The diction used by Ole Kulet in the text in my finding mainly evokes emotions and incites the readers against a section of a community in the text. It is also my finding that that the plot of the text follows that of the civil society organizations as the poor are pitied against the rich, cultural restrictions against the girl child are highlighted and poaching by the societies' elites. The point of view in the text in my finding appeared biased against certain fictional characters in the text. The general tone of the text towards a section of characters conforms to that of the civil society organizations and donor agencies.

This research project concludes that the influence of the civil society organizations and the donor agencies on Kenyan literature should not be under estimated. This influence can be attributed to ideological indoctrination most Kenyans received from the Western European nations, notably the British and the USA. In the early 1990s, there was pressure on the Government of Kenya to open the democratic space and allow registration of alternative political formations. The majority of those who advocated for democratic space were either Western educated or those who received an education rife with Western ideologies. To express themselves, they opted for literature whose main style was satire and sarcasm.

Upon opening up of the democratic space, civil society organizations swang into action to supplement government interventions in the eradication of poverty, support for the girl child education, anti-poaching campaigns and fight against disease. To realize such initiatives, the civil

society organizations and donor organized seminars and conferences involving the academia and case studies. As the activities intensified, the civil society organizations sponsored literary works with specific topics supporting the girl child education and shattering of the restrictive cultural heritage that discriminated against the girl child. Texts borne out of such initiatives include *Aminata* by Francis Imbuga, *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogolla, *The Blossoms of the Savannah* by Ole Kulet, *Kitumbua Kimeingia Mchanga* by Said Mohamed and *Kilio Cha Haki* by Alamin Mazrui among others. The defining features of the above texts and plays is that they employ a confrontational approach in fight against cultural heritage.

*The Elephant Dance* is a fictional text published in 2016. The novel illustrates misuse of the youth for personal gains by the societies' elite from an activist's perspective. The novel further mocks the elites for pursuing financial gains at the expense of the environment, resulting in catastrophic events. It is therefore my recommendation that more studies should be undertaken to assess how the civil societies and donor agencies have influenced literary creativity in Kenya and in the region.

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