
Representation of Animals in African Literature of Alain Mabanckou's Novel Memories de porc-épic

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Abstract

African societies, it is believed that animals being the part of the physical environment play an important role in the consideration of spirituality and belief systems. In narrative fiction they are depicted in such a manner which reflects the attitude of a people about animals illustrated in their religion, culture and life philosophies. The present study is focused in exploring the representation of animals in African prose fiction of Alain Mabanckou's novel *Mémoires de porc-épic*. In the novel the vision of readers is redirected towards nature, some types of animals and culture especially as it refers to the spiritual. It influences the earlier view of animals as indication of evil by considering them as being under the total control of man executing his nefarious desires. It was also examined that the philosophical views that influenced Mabanckou's manner of animal presentation. Methodologically, In this research the literary theory of zoo criticism being aptly applied, The aspect of literary criticism is basically concerned with animal representation, animal subjectivity and animal rights. The present analysis revealed Mabanckou an ecocritical novelist who put to use his narrative skills to present support for the preservation and protection of interconnected affiliations of all creatures and the earth.

Keywords- *Animals, Zoo Criticism, Affiliations, Humans, Earth, Mémoires de porc-Épic*

“Animals should not require our permission to live on earth. Animals were given the right to be here long before we arrived.” **Anthony Douglas Williams**

Introduction

From the very past all through the centuries, animals have been placed prominently in oral and written literatures of all human cultures. They have been sketched as being apprehensive of their situation within human cultural structures. They have been employed to impart religious and ethical lessons in the various genera of narrative prose fiction, into which they have been embodied in various human and godly qualities. The manner in which the real animals are perceived within a cultural community is being reflected through animal representation in literature. As Wendy Woodward (2003) oppositely advocate, animal depiction in texts effects directly or obliquely on animals themselves and resonates ethically. With her continuous appreciation of the ethical reverberation of literary representation within a culture, Woodward (2008) later insists that “The way that an animal is represented and constructed discursively has [...] an interrelationship with the way that culture responds to the real animal”. For as animal studies become a promising force of refinement and change in public demeanor and behaviors toward animals, which results into an increasing number of animal characters enter into African prose narrative.

In age past, the popularity of animals in African oral traditions has been an aid of expression – continuing in songs, proverbs, riddles, saying and folktales. They have long being famous components of moral tales – acting as an ideal for humans to draw “moral lessons from the observation of animals” (Doudoroff). In fantasy, they have been represented as examples of moral standards of behavior for humans to imitate or eschew. In satire, they have been utilized to echo human bizarreness, destructiveness and political in predilection with the aim to ridicule. Specifically, as scholars and transcribers affirm, the animal trickster combatant as an essential part of African oral custom and tradition, is an often humorous figure of mischievous disruption, who through cunning makes many characteristics of the natural world such as the moon and stars, hills and rivers as well as physical traits of animals (the craggy nature of the tortoise’ shell, the size of the elephant’s tusks, the length of the giraffe’s neck, the blackness of the dog’s nose, etc.).

In today’s era within the newly expansion of disciplines of Eco criticism and Zoo criticism, animals have performed as belligerent agents debating the specifications of the human category and the association between humans and animals (Finnegan, Courlander, Shueib, Hamilton). The present study would be theoretically dependent on the context of zoocriticism especially as defined by Huggan and

Tiffin (18), to be related to the practice of animal studies in literary works which concentrates on animal description, animal subjectivity, and animal rights. Animal studies analyze how the differences of human lives, character and histories are jointly tied to other sentient, intellectual, communicative and cultured beings. It means turning the animal long back unto the humans. Animal studies also questions man's occupation, subjection and exploitation of animals – underlining some philosophers' affirmation that animals exist for the sake of humans; for their use as food and "other accessories of life" (Peter Singer). Zoo critics oppose this dominative view of nature or "specialism" (Singer) which reveals the supremacy of man over nature and his right to exploit it for his own sake.

Thus, within the present context of zoo criticism, this paper seeks to produce analysis and criticism of the various ways in which animals are depicted in Alain Mabanckou's animal novel *Mémoires de porc-épic* through which animals life forms are valorized in the author's view of his society prominently and the black African ecological structure and configuration in general. I would further explore the writer's attitude towards animals, such as it evolves through the various expressions of nature in the narrative, thereby focusing our thinking of the human category.

Among African societies, various traditional concepts and beliefs of spirituality involving animal life forms and figures are very similar. African peoples have firm belief that their lives and health are directly connected to and narrowly reliant on the blessings and fortunes of animal and vegetation. They also believe that a shared consecration associates animals and humans. The common cultural information of African spirituality, is the interpretation of some animals as the mediator of humans use to carry out their evil deeds while some other creatures are trusted as to be embodiment of humans. Some others still such as the owl and the cat are also believed to be trustee of malignant deeds and indicator of evil events. . The belief in the presence of a "double" or an alter-ego believed to be exists in most traditional cultures of Africa. In Nigeria and some other parts of West Africa, the term explains one's spiritual double. To this double is attributed the control of one's fortune and imbibing of unnamable protruded evil.

It should also be considered that in other cultural systems of the world, similar beliefs are executed. According to Gossen, Mesoamericans also believe in a "private spiritual world of self that is expressed through the idea of animal souls or other extra actual causal forces that effect their destiny" (1994). Gossen (1996) further explained that this belief is emphasized by "the predestination and life history of the self that lies outside the self and is thus not subject to individual control" (83). Mabanckou's play on this individual capability for restraint would be analyzed later.

At this point, one should make mention to the Congolese cultural conclusions which aid as the blueprint of the narration of *Mémoires de porc-épic* and being the ethnical origin of Alain Mabanckou. At the center of the Congolese native belief system, there exists a restraint of animal life forms which constructs the embodiment of the metaphysical ties between humans and animals and also between both of them and nature. It is believed in the Congolese spiritual idea of souls that a person is particularly connected to an external animal counterpart or co-essence. They also equally believe that their ancestors “could gather the power of animals into their hands ... whenever they needed...” (Janzen and MacGaffey).

In *Mémoires de porc-épic*, the Congolese author Alain Mabanckou utilizes an animal narrator-protagonist to make statements about human-animal categorisation and essence. Consequently, from his study of human behavior, the porcupine passes laid-back subjective comments on people, which reminds the people of their follies and infirmity as a human being. Through narrative imagery, the author retrovert the normative human features and humanize animals. *Mémoires de porc-épic* is about the literary journey occupied by animals, humans, plants, words and images. The novel reveals the ideals and faiths of African people which is pervasive their everyday life. Specifically, it is the idea of a non- human i.e. animal “double” self that is reflected into play.

In *Mémoires de porc-épic* a definite knowledge of animal life-forms infused the narration. The author employs the porcupine not only in a naturalistic mode but in a very fairly straightforward way and configure as part of the narrative setting and environment” (Soper), but also in a sympathetic mode, to effect the reader’s empathy with the animal narrator.

Human and Animal Spiritual Connectedness

The narration of Mabanckou’s novel *Mémoires de porc-épic* is concerned upon the belief that a shared piousness connects animal life-forms to human life. It also confirms to a type of love and interdependence between humans and non- humans i.e. animals, and between nature and other creatures. It first draws attention to the spiritual set- ups pervasive in the culture escape of a traditional Congolese village, where animals are believed to have mystical and spiritual bonds with humans. An acknowledgement of the centrality of animals exists in human life, which is a potent life-force without which the humans could not exist. In the novel, their exist an association of animals with sorcery and witch craft. In African primitive and ancient religions, witches are persons who possess inclinations to harm through supernatural powers.

Mabanckoure tells the dominance of human fatality to that of animals advancing that Kibandi the central character of *Mémoires de porc-épic* is nothing without his animal double and the porcupine outstay him adverse to popular cultural expectation of the simultaneous downfall of both connected beings. The narrator's satiric accord expresses its contempt as it elaborates this interdependence:

il aura cru sa vie entière que je lui devais quelque chose, que je n'étais qu'un pauvre figurant, qu'il pouvait décider de mon destin comme bon lui semblait, eh bien, sans vouloir tirer la couverture de mon côté, je peux aussi dire la même chose à son égard puisque sans moi il n'aurait été qu'un misérable légume, il n'aurait même pas valu trois gouttelettes de pipi du vieux porc-épic qui nous gouvernait à l'époque où je faisais encore partie du monde animal (12).

[he would have accepted throughout his life that I unpaid him something, that I was nothing but a poor creature, that it's so pleasant to him to decide my destiny, and wanting to pull the blanket to my side I can say the same thing about him, that without me he is nothing more than a mere vegetable, he would not even be worth the urine droplets of the old porcupine who governed us at the time when I was still part of the non-human world ...] [Translations of quotes from *Mémoires de porc-épic*]

The other portions of *Mémoires de porc-épic* also reflects the author's empathy with animals, through a reverse portrait of the animal as an evil being. Here the responsibility of evil thoughts and deeds are placed on the humans. The animal double is stripped of its freewill. The rest part of the story narrates animal point of view and interprets the anthropocentric view of nature in favour of the animal species. It establishes that the evil in animals is due to the instance of man who employs them to do his bidding. Therefore, the narrator's character is quite pity instead of disdain or hatred. It is the mercy of its master's occult passions and appetites, forced to remain at the animal "double" lives to gratify the needs of its human self. The narrator states: *je lui obéissais sans broncher... je vais pourtant lui obéir, j'assumais ma condition de double comme une tortue qui coltinaît sa carapace*" (15) ["I obeyed him without wincing ... I will however follow, I acquiescence to my condition of a double as a tortoise lugs its shell"]. It asserts later that the wicked animal double "*remplira sans protester les missions que celui-ci lui confiera*" ["execute without opposing the missions that the latter bids him"], inferring with a question to which it gives a negative response: "*depuis quand a-t-on vu d'ailleurs un double nuisible dédire l'homme de qui il tient son existence, hein*" (17-18) ["moreover, it has been seen that the man to whom he owes its

existence is a wicked double contradict’]. The story attempts to improve the old belief that familiars of witches are themselves likewise evil creatures. It indicates that animals are forced to be bad by the humans. It suggests that whenever animals interact with humans they are always at the losing end. The Aristotelian philosophy that animals shared with humans such capacities as consciousness, desire, pain and imagination is attempted to validate by the porcupine protagonist. It challenges the Cartesian viewpoint that disclaimed for animals rationality, consciousness, language and sentience. Descartes considered animals who “cannot be said to have a mind or soul” and has mere “thoughtless” automata or machines which (Regan, *Introduction* 4). Mabankou successfully instill life-force and souls into his non-human fictional creatures, bringing them at par with, and at times exceed humans. The superiority of human intelligence is questioned over that of animals. In *Mémoires de porc-épic*, the categorical statement of the narrator affirm to the lack of innate intelligence in humans: “*les hommes ont tort de se vanter là-dessus, je suis vaincu qu’ils ne naissent pas avec leur intelligence*” (25) [“men are wrong to be pompous about that, I also believed that they are not born with their intelligence”]. At a point, the narrator openly employs self-praise and have faith that its animal companions will recognize its numerous virtues: “*ma lucidité, mon flair, mon intelligence, ma vitesse, ma ruse...*” (68) [“my clear-headedness, my flair, my intelligence, my swiftness, my wiliness”].

In contrast, several nicknames has been employed to describe stupidity to humans, calling them “*ces imbéciles*” (142), “*des fous du village*” (149) [“village fools”]; and goes to uncomplimentary address them as “*les pauvres*” (39) [“poor things”] for it acknowledge them of inferior circumstance, conditions and intelligence. The ultimate denigration and belittlement is to classify them as creatures to be pitied by animals: “*il leur arrivait alors de se tordre de rire, de plaindre les humains*” (69), [“it would then become crooked up in laughter, pitying the humans] .It is the ability of humans to write which make their concession of achievement (to commit their thoughts to paper) : “*j’étais arrivé à la conclusion que les hommes avaient pour une fois une longueur d’avance sur nous autres les animaux puisqu’ils pouvaient consigner leurs pensées, leur imagination sur du papier* » (122). [“It can be concluded that the men had a lead over animals because they could commit their thoughts, feelings and their imagination to paper”].

Animal Integrity and Virtue

The whole narration of *Mémoires de porc-épic* can be pervaded through premise– it is that fundamentally all life forms are equal and interdependent: human, animal, earth. It reveals that all creatures possess souls and traits that should be respected. However, it is portrayed in the story that the

animals are dominated, abused and exploited for man's own selfish evil ends because of its greed, bloodthirstiness and quest for power, he has. Mabanckou thus attempts to reveal the anthropocentric viewpoint according to which animals and vegetation both have intelligence and life-force.

A deep respect for animal integrity permeates the story. Mabanckou acknowledges with the 16th century French philosophers Montaigne and Pierre Charon who believed, not only that animals had intelligence, but that they surpassed man in virtue and nobility. Mabanckou is able to think the human self and his way of life into the way of life of the animal narrator, positively imbuing it with humaneness through the means of "sympathetic imagination" (J. M. Coetze). The social structure and territorial organization effect the animal world.

"je sais d'expérience que les animaux aussi sont organisés, ils ont leur territoire, leur gouverneur, leurs rivières, leurs arbres, leurs sentes, il n'y a pas que les éléphants qui possèdent un cimetière, tous les animaux tiennent à leur univers..." (127).

["Through the experience it is known that animals are also organised, they have their own territory, governor, rivers, trees, ways, it is not only elephants who have a cemetery, all animals hold on to their world"]. The author propagates that the harmony, equilibrium and balance in that animal world must not be disturbed by man.

To construct the image further of animal integrity, Mabanckou has underscores in the character of the animal narrator, attributes such as kindness, politeness, companionship, humaneness and unselfishness. The experience is ruefully narrated by the porcupine about these feelings after each murderous mission. The reticence underlines the compassionate nature against the killings, its master forces him to do: *"aussitôt que je me suis approché du nourrisson, j'ai eu un pincement au cœur j'ai voulu rebrousser chemin"* (178). ["as soon as the little baby is approached, my heart flipped over, I wanted to backtrack my steps"]. But it was compelled to kill a hapless baby to continue and accomplish its master's bidding because of Kibandi's anger against his parents. The suffering and loneliness of the narrator are baldly stated (186-188).

While making the reference to his human side, it should be stressed that porcupine always describes about its weakness not its strength. For example, as now when he digresses in his narration or when it is very frightened, denigrating humans as prevaricators: *"c'est encore ma part humaine qui s'est exprimée, en effet j'ai appris de l'homme le sens de la digression, ils ne vont jamais droit au but, ouvrent des parenthèses qu'ils oublient de refermer"* (151). ["it is still my human side which has articulate itself,

in fact I learnt from man the significance of deviation, they never go straight to the point, [they] open brackets which they don't remember to close''].

Animal Victimhood

The victimhood and harmlessness which are the condition of porcupine is also highlighted. Another character is Kibandi and it is portrayed as a hapless victim of the whims of its human master Kibandi – it is a creature, who is constantly involved in the existential struggle of resistance and antipathy to human ethos. It is depicted as a supernatural agent of evil and an unselfish character that is totally under the spell of its human double acting against its will: “*je n'ai été que la victime des moeurs des gens de ce pays*” (217). [“it is said, I was nothing but the victim of the customs of the people of this region”]. The porcupine was hapless and incapable to oppose its master, pointing out the author's view of human domination.

Si j'avais eu le courage, j'aurais dit à mon maître que nous avons atteint la limite de nos activités ... je ne voudrais pas que tu me juges sans tenir compte du fait que je n'étais qu'un subalterne, une ombre dans la vie de Kibandi, je n'ai jamais appris à désobéir (188).

“if I had the courage and guts I would have told and express my master that we had approached the limit of our activities ... I was just a stooge, a shadow in Kibandi's life, this is the fact which should be considered before judging me, that's why I never learnt to disobey”.

Human Barbarity

Mémoires de porc-épic involves a on-going zoo critical debate of who possesses barbarity – animals or humans. L' Escargot Entêtea a character from Mabanckou's previous novel *Verre Cassé*, is announced in the annex of this novel, through intertextual characterization, from where he interrogates: “*D'ailleurs, qui de l'Homme ou de l'animalest vraiment une bête? Vaste question!*” (229). [“Moreover, man or animal, who is really a beast? A big question!”]. The novel has the assumption that man's original state is animal, and that man can be very easily return to barbarity if he accedes to his base instincts. The blood-thirsty characters of the protagonist Kibandi and Papa Kibandi very much portray this in the literature. The A total of 99 people in the village of Mossaka, including his own brother Matapari, sister Maniongui and niece Niangui-Boussina were devoured through his wizardry in the later part of the Novel. There is a pithily declaration of his degeneracy into animalistic state:

tout se passait comme si, en vieillissant, Papa Kibandi retournait à l'état animal, il ne coupait plus ses ongles, il avait les tics d'un vrai rat lorsqu'il fallait manger, il grattait le corps à l'aide de ses orteils ... le vieil homme était désormais pourvu de longues dents acérées, en particulier celles de devant, des poils gris et durs prenaient racine dans ses oreilles, arrivaient jusqu'à la naissance de ses mâchoires... (87)

Papa Kibandi returned to the animal state, and it all happened with aging, his nails were too long, he used to eat with the twitch of a real rat, he scratched his body with his toes ... now the old man had animated body structure and has been thence equipped with long pointed teeth, particularly the front ones, tough grey hairs took root in his ears, reaching down to the edge of his jaws].

Mabanckou's elaborated the barbarity of humans by applying contrast highlights. While the porcupine narrator denigrates man's vices and vaunts its own virtues. The protagonist Kibandi's physical trait popularly associated with witches having extreme skinniness and unprepossessing features constitute the physical ugliness and further suggest ugliness of behaviour. Kibandi is dehumanizes through the character Papa Louboto by the narrator, and ascribe to the protagonist the ugliness of a cockroach and the skinniness of a photo-frame nail: "*Kibanditait laid comme un epunaise, maigre comme un clou de cadre de photo*" (128). Humans are insultingly designated repeatedly with the epithet, in the narration, "*les cousins germains du singe*" (68, 127, 150). ["the monkey's first cousins"]

The mental prowess (or lack thereof) of humans generally, are downright unflattered through the other references in the story to. The superiority of non-animal species is acclaimed by the narrator who jeers right from its incipit.

donc, je ne suis qu'un animal, un animal de rien du tout, les hommes diraient une bête sauvage comme si on ne compte pas de plus bêtes et de plus sauvages que nous dans leur espèce... à vrai dire, je n'ai rien à envier aux hommes, je me moque de leur prétendue intelligence. (11)

[so, I am animal just an animal, an animal of no significance and connotation, men would say a barbaric creature as if the more beastly and more barbaric than us are not found amongst their specie ... actually, I have nothing so that I could envy men, I laugh at their purported intelligence and perception].

This questioning and interrogation of human intelligence persists as the porcupine's animal companions marvelling "*s'ils se rendaient compte de leur arrogance, de leur supériorité auto*

proclamée...” (69). [“if they were knowledgeable of their arrogance and exaggerated self- opinion, of their self-advertised and proclaimed superiority”]. Here the porcupine narrator perforated the bubble of human ego and demolishes his sense of superiority over other animals, debasing him through an amplification of his negative attributes and features – features usually related with animals. In Kibandi’s character, these include inhumanity and malevolence against his own kind.

Human barbarity is also depicted through the disclosure of Kibandi’s overdone thirst for blood. He is cannibalistic i.e. man eater – feeding on his fellow humans. He is so avid that as at the time of his death, he has “eaten” (“*a mangé*”) 99 people in his village of Séképembé, and is preparing to kill a set of twin children. The porcupine narrators ironically defends this contemptible practice.

je dois le préciser, mon cher Baobab, pour qu’un être humain en mange un autre il faut des raisons concrètes, la jalousie, la colère, l’envie, l’humiliation, le manque de respect, je te jure que nous n’avons en aucun cas mangé quelqu’un juste pour le plaisir de le manger...(Mémoires de porc-épic, 138-139).

The cynicism makes it clear that the propounded reasons are not sufficient enough for man’s bloodthirstiness. The story convicts the dreadful values of humans and their morally anomalous behaviours connected to witchcraft. Human barbarism is shown even in the way doubted witches are tried – by revealing their hands up to the elbow into a pot of boiling oil to pick a silver bracelet without getting burnt (99). Then the young suitor incorrectly showed (through a bogus investigative-carcass ritual [140-141]) of killing the girl Kiminou with sorcery, is buried alive with the deceased “*sans autre forme de procès, parceque c’était l’usage*” (140) [“without any other form of trial, because it was the usual procedure”].

Apart from man’s barbarity to man, the brutality of humans to animal-kind is also portrayed. According to the narrator, the animal companions always wanted to know if man were conscious of the harm as man’s savagery was so great that he inflicted on animals since they appeared deaf to all appeal for peaceful harmony: “*ils avaient toujours voulu savoir si les hommes étaient conscients du mal qu’ils infligeaient aux animaux... puisque les humains nous mènent la vie dure, puisqu’ils sont hostiles et sourds à notre appel à la co-existence pacifique*” (68-69). Oratorical questions by the narrator condemn barbarity to animals and animal slavery for man’s pleasure:

mais quel intérêt de passer sa vie en réclusion tel un esclave, quel intérêt d’imaginer la liberté derrière des fils barbelés, ...moi je préfère les aléas de la vie en brousse aux

cages dans lesquelles plusieurs de mes compères sont séquestrés pour terminer un jour ou l'autre dans les marmites des humains (13-14).

[‘but of what interest is it to live one’s life in seclusion like a captive, of what interest is it to predict freedom behind bared wires, as for me, I prefer the caprice of life in the backwoods to the cages within which several of my companions were confined to end one day or another in the cooking vessels of humans].

The narrator makes it evident that the degradation of the environment is also extended by the human bestiality :

il y a eu des fous du village qui ont essayé de mettre fin à tes jours , et dans leur folie destructrice, nom d’un porc-épic, ils ont voulu te réduire en bois de chauffe, ils ont cru que tu bouchais l’horizon, que tu cachais la lumière du jour (149).

[there were some village foolish people who tried to put an end to your days, and in their fetal madness ... they wanted to decrease you to firewood, they have faith that you were blocking the horizon, that you were creating obstruction to the daylight...]

Man is thus condemned and revealed as destroyer of nature for unreasonable purposes.

Human and Animal Forms with the Earth

Expanding our criticism to nature, it becomes relevant to point out that in *Mémoires de porc-épic*, Mabanckou is well-known to his environment and still argues for the interdependence of all factors within the ecosystem – human, animal and plant. As his narrator is a rodent, his addressee and inhabitant is a tree. When the porcupine experiences agony, dejection and terrible at the demise of its human double, interaction with nature becomes authoritative. It commune with the Baobab tree, relaxing anxiety by narrating to it all its grief. The porcupine finds consolation in nature not with humanity.

An eco critical view point is maintained by Mabanckou by virtue of the fact that he makes a lot of reference to African flora and fauna in his narration. In his description about the beauty of the rural landscapes of Séképembé and Mossaka, detailing the forests, trees, animals, birds, hills, rivers and the elements. Mabanckou echoes the ecologists’ appeal for peaceful co-existence amongst all of nature’s creatures in his novel,. Mabanckou’s moral message to his readers is about the relationship between humans and animals, and between humans and the earth and an appreciation of the environment and the redirection of our thinking. In the Novel while using animal characters, Mabanckou’s concern is focused

on the exposure of human injustice against fellow humans and against animals as well as against other non-human life forms.

The nature as a life-force that should not be tampered with, is placed on substantial importance in *Mémoires de porc-épic*. Baobab is addressed as a protagonist, by the narrator porcupine in the story is also albeit a silent and stationary one. A message to humans to respect the nature's vegetation is conveyed by the author using the character of the tree, eco critically. The Baobab is called by the narrator as "*le gardien de la forêt*" (149) is used to represent the totality of plant life which humans must safeguard from harm; thus the salutation: "*tugouvernes du regard la florentière* (148). ["you govern the entire flora with your look"]. The majestic tree possesses a soul is believed by the porcupine, serves as a medium to communicate with the ancestors and protects the region. The conviction is declared in the powers of speech and movement attributed to the Baobab in a bygone era. is by The narrator underlines the ecological message while directing reference to green and describing the habitat of Baobab: "*tu as de la chance de vivre dans un lieu paradisiaque, tout est vertici*" (148). ["you are lucky to live in a heavenly place, here, all is green"].

The interconnectedness between animals and vegetation is equally highlighted through Mabanckou's fable, which demonstrate their mutual need of each other – the Baobab provides food, shelter, medicine and even physical and mystical protection from danger for all creatures. They in turn just like the porcupine, the tree is nourished with their faeces and urine as organic fertilizer, though the narrator is quite quick to apologise for any perceived desecration. It is believed that the majestic tree possesses a soul, serves as a medium to communicate with the ancestors and protects the region. With aphorism, the sacred uses of its sap and bark for medicinal and spiritual purposes it also extolled. It is then concluded by sounding an alarm at the devastation that will occur at the destruction of Baobab: "*que ta disparition serait préjudiciable, fatale pour la contrée*" (149) ["that your destruction shall be inimical, fatal for the whole region].

Conclusion

Alain Mabanckou's *Mémoires de porc-épic* has attempted to redefine in a holistic way, the relationship of humans and animals life-forms within their environment. Both human and animal life forms are portrayed in the narration, as equal and interdependent. Mabanckou's porcupine protagonist is a projector of morality. He has presented good and evil as life's choices but the responsibility of choice is put squarely on humans. Through *Mémoires de porc-épic* humans are shown responsible for their

spoliation of the world's natural vegetation instead of its conservation. An appeal is done through the novel to the human heart to open up to animals and our natural environment. As an advocacy of justice, it is a clarion and clear call for the dis-continuation of barbarity to animals, violence to humans and environmental distortion and moderation and fairness to include nature. It argues for the preservation and rescue all life forms .It is hoped and dreamt that the influence of Mabanckou's novel on the reader, will cause her/him to echo L' Escargot Entêté's concluding remark: "*Et depuis, je ne regarde plus les animaux avec les mêmes yeux*" (229).["Since then I no longer look at animals with the same eyes"]. Mabanckou solicits for the reader's understanding of the interconnectedness of all things – appealing for the respect of the integrity of human and animal minds and the life of the earth.

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