

## ENVIRONMENTAL TERRORISM IN PETER WUTEH VAKUNTA’S *GREEN RAPE*

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### **Abstract**

This article deals with the issue of environmental terrorism in Peter Wuteh Vakunta’s *Green Rape: Poetry for the Environment*. Vakunta uses his poetic practice to engage with the interdisciplinary issues related to the intersection of poetry, culture, environmental studies and poetics, and environmental activism. The article begins with tracing the ramifications of the terminology of terrorism related to the environment. Then it shows how Vakunta views environmental terrorism from a somewhat different perspective. He devotes many poems in this collection to this issue and shows how it is not limited to the acts of direct violence but pervades numerous activities when we get in contact with the environment or go on with our daily routines. This terrorism ranges from war and oil spills to littering and over-consumption.

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**Keywords:** Peter Wuteh Vakunta, environmental terrorism, ecotage, ecoterrorism, genocide, ecosabotage, Green Rape, African poetry, Cameroonian poetry

### **Introduction**

Because of his *Green Rape: Poetry for the Environment* (2008), the Madison-based Cameroonian poet and critic Peter Wuteh Vakunta can be described as an “environmentally conscious and ecologically aware” poet (Love 227). He gets in direct poetic contact with many of the issues and questions raised by ecocriticism and environmental advocacy. The title of the collection itself raises the ethical questions involved in humans’ exploitation and abusive manipulation of the biodiversity and ecosystems around them. The dangers of such abuse lie heavily upon Vakunta and urge him to devote a complete book of poems to what he highlights in the titles of some poems such as “Ecotage” (*Green Rape* 5), “Eco-Terrorism” (9), and “Genocide” (17). This titular practice implies that the issue of terrorism and violence is

not a byproduct of the thematic aspects of textual composition because the title of such a collection of poems crystalizes what persistently occupies the poet, highlighting the poet's authorial intention and encapsulating "the most important features of the text" (Elgezeery 3). The notions of encapsulation, crystallization and intentionality that are embodied in titular practice indicate, in the context of Vakunta's poetic practice, that the idea of terrorism with reference to nature and the environment is a persistent nightmare that preoccupies his creative mind. The issue of environmental terrorism is not limited to the titles of poems as it recurs throughout the collection as a whole; he uses "Environmental terrorism" (5) and "carnage" (43) in the same meaning of the titular designations referred to above. Vakunta uses his poetic practice to engage with the interdisciplinary issues of the environment, cultural practice, and poetic representation.

Vakunta's poetic practice in *Green Rape* and his synonymous use of terms such as "eco-terrorism," "environmental terrorism," "ecotage," "carnage," and "genocide" urge me first to review the literature related to terrorism and its terminological paraphernalia with reference to nature and the environment. After that I will study Vakunta's *Green Rape* to see how he sees this environmental terrorism. The reasons why I opt for "environmental terrorism" as a title for this study are stated later on in this article after surveying and critiquing the confusion and misuse of the terminological paraphernalia of terrorism with regard to the environment.

### **Environmental Terrorism and Its Related Terms**

The terms employed with reference to violence and damage when talking about the environment can be divided into two categories. The first category is used by those who are sympathetic with, or involved in, environmental issues, and those who have an external, un-politicized, or neutral perspective upon the language used to describe the issue in question. This category includes terms such as environmental terrorism, ecological terrorism, and sometimes ecoterrorism on the one hand, and monkeywrenching, ecotage, ecosabotage, and sabotage on the other. The second category is used by those who are not sympathetic with environmental issues and see the supporters of these issues as enemies and terrorists. This second category includes terms such as monkeywrenching, ecotage, and ecoterrorism.

The concept(s) of environmental terrorism and ecoterrorism are heavily entangled in the murky discourse on terrorism in general. Michael Gold-Biss comments that the "concept of terrorism" is "ready-to-abuse" and "value-laden" because "the discourse on terrorism is usually neither elaborate nor nuanced" (7). This term is manipulated "in order to effectuate a

certain political agenda” and “is so commonly used and so frequently abused” (Lovitz 88, 89).

Studies and publications before Bush administration’s “War on Terror” tended to use the terms “ecoterrorism”, “environmental terrorism”, and “ecological terrorism” interchangeably to describe the damages and violence committed against the environment. For example, Susan L. Cutter describes “ecoterrorism” as a “weapon in the world’s military arsenal” (27). George A. Alexander defines it “as the use of force or threat directed at the environment or ecosystem to terrorize or frighten people” (2). This term was also used to describe the aftereffects of ecotourism on the environment such as “the growth of high-impact tourism in natural areas” (Buckley 438) and the “ecotourism projects” that are developed by “many governments” and “are coming at a great expense to the environment” (McLaren 115).

As for “environmental terrorism”, Timothy Schofield associates it with “the utilization of the forces of nature for hostile purposes” (620). It was used excessively to describe the environmental impact of Iraq’s Gulf wars of 1983 and 1991 (e. g. Winnefeld and Morris 44; Begley and Manegold 36; Seacor 522n218). The term “ecological terrorism” was also used to describe “Iraq’s oil spills” (Popkin 23).

This partial survey shows that the mainstream usage of the terms “ecoterrorism”, “environmental terrorism”, and “ecological terrorism”, before 9/11 and the subsequent “war on terror”, refers to the destruction of the environment in a direct way as in war or in an indirect way as in the negative impact of excessive ecotourism, and by extension similar practices, on the environment.

The events of 9/11 “broadened the definition of terrorism” (Wagner 35), and Bush administration “legally lowered the threshold of terrorism to such an extent that it might even include ... mainstream, democratic forms of political expression” (Amster 294). This broadening of the concept is not limited to the US context. It also applies to the UK, for instance, which redefined “terrorism to include key elements of peaceful protest, including non-violent direct action” (Young 224).

Alpas, Berkowicz, and Ermakova divide ecoterrorism into three subcategories: the first relates to the environmental activists who target “industries, companies or even governments that they believe are harming the environment”. In the second subcategory “the environment is used as a weapon to harm an opponent” (v). As for the third subcategory, it concerns the “harm caused by companies, industry, or governments through negligence” (vi). This multiple and confusing usage leads Simon Berkowicz to differentiate between “eco-terrorism” and “environmental terrorism.” Eco-terrorism targets “property” and its scale is “localized” (15, 16), while “environmental terrorism” targets “environmental resources and property”,

its scale is far-reaching, and its goals are either “political or ideological.” They mostly relate to using nature as a weapon in warfare (16). This usage of “environmental terrorism” shows that it is always intentional. Peter Gleick adopts the same classification. The target of environmental terrorism is “natural resources,” while its objective may be “political, social or economic,” whereas the target of ecoterrorism is “social, political or economic resources,” while its objective is “environmental” (484). Gleick finds his distinction on an earlier distinction made by Elizabeth Chalecki who distinguishes between ecoterrorism and environmental terrorism according to the target of each. For Chalecki, the latter targets “natural resources,” while the former targets “built environment such as roads, buildings and trucks” (49). The same argument is adopted by Shannon O’Lear, but he excludes “destruction of forests for economic consumption” and “illegal dumping of toxic wastes” (136) from this kind of terrorism. As for ecoterrorism, O’Lear identifies its target in “the built environment as it encroaches on natural environments” (139).

Ganna Kharlamova uses the term “ecoterrorism” in its original meaning as equivalent to the current usage of “environmental terrorism” as manifested in Berkowicz’s and Gleick’s above. But she does not limit it to intentionality. She maintains that human lifestyles and actions are “positioned in opposition to natural systems maintenance through practices such as littering and even intentional destruction” (31). She correlates “ecoterrorism” with “ecological pollution” (32). Also, Daniel Schwartz does not restrict “environmental terrorism” to intentionality because the destruction of the environment can happen “through premeditated or inadvertent action.” Moreover, “the environment as a target has significant implications for the well-being of the ecology” (485).

The term “ecotage” is largely used to refer to the “sabotage for environmental ends” (Dupler 431), or “the illegal, deliberate damaging or destruction of goods or services on account of their potentially harmful environmental effects” (Doherty and Hayes 544). Other critics and theorists employ “ecosabotage” to refer to these acts of monkeywrenching and ecotage (e.g. Long 6; Volpe 9n1, 16; Christiansen 89; Welchman 105) It is intended to “cause material damage to [the] opponents” of “environmental activists” (Plows et al. 199) and “inflict prohibitive economic costs” (Doherty and Hayes 544) in order to “preserve the natural state of the environment” (Hoch and Giacalone 365n18).

This critical survey shows that the term “ecoterrorism” is a murky concept which has no clear-cut or even agreed-upon definition. It is used to describe the encroachment upon the environment, the violent and/or nonviolent actions of environmental activists, or both. I will opt for the clearer concept of “environmental terrorism” because it is used almost solely

to designate what is committed against the environment. This “commission” is not limited to direct attack against the environment, whether the latter is used as a tool or as a target, as in warfare, but it is widened to incorporate any minor or symbolic attacks, whether intentional or unintentional, as in pollution, side effects of ecotourism, unhealthy or anti-environmental human lifestyles, excessive exploitation of natural resources, unsustainable development, etc.

### **Green Rape and Environmental Terrorism**

Being both critic and poet, Vakunta is highly aware of the implications of devastation and destruction wreaked upon nature and the environment by abusive and over-exploitative human practices, whether these practices are deliberate or random. That’s why the images of disasters recur throughout the collection as an alarming reminder of the environmental dangers that await humanity at large.

The first poem of *Green Rape*, “Cataclysms”, uses “Natural disasters” as a starting-point to alert us through the inclusive “we” of the poem to the “fragile ecosystem” “we live/on”. This fragility amounts to a “tragedy”. But it is not a personal tragedy whose consequences are limited to one person or a small group. Rather, it is a deteriorated global condition

Where the tragedy of One/  
Is tantamount to  
the calamity of All/

Tragedy of the Commons (*Green Rape 2*)

The devastation of the “Commons” which might be regarded as a protective green zone around a village or a city implies exposing one and consequently the whole humanity to deterioration due to the tragic errors we commit and, consequently, lead to the tragic fragility of the ecosystem. This fragility is practically, not metaphorically, transferred to us who live among, and degrade, this ecosystem. Thus, deterioration is a (threat of) violence against the environment which turns out to be a deterioration of human living conditions as well.

In “Earth Poem”, Vakunta reasserts the fragility of “the Earth’s ecosystem”, describing it as “a fragile web” (*Green Rape 3*). Then he goes on to decry people’s ignorance of the basic facts that lead to the eradication of this ecosystem. The strategies that Vakunta uses to raise our consciousness with reference to our responsibility towards the environment take four main routes in “Earth Poem”. The first is concerned with what relates directly to human beings and the resources available for them. Here the poet calls our attention to the fact that “natural resources are exhaustible” and that “many of earth’s/ resources are non-renewable” (*Green Rape 3*). If we exhaust these resources, they will be depleted, leaving us in starvation

and consequently potential extinction. In other words, when we terrorize the environment, we, in fact, terrorize ourselves.

Then the poet moves to the real and possible forms of extinction regarding other species on earth. He introduces this move with the phrase “mind boggling” which tries to make the reader participate in solving the mystery enclosing the extinction of species, indirectly calling him/her to think of himself/herself as a possible participant in this extinction due to the accumulative textual effect of previous stanza dealing with man’s role in the exhaustion of natural resources.

Having highlighted the imminent danger facing both humans and non-human species, the poet turns the spotlight on the intersection of the position of “human and physical environments.” He calls our attention to the “protection” needed for “Earth’s biodiversity” and supports this call with the “reciprocity” obtaining between human life and the life of other species. Then he proceeds toward highlighting the “collision course” awaiting all forms of life in the world. But he does not stop at such an attempt to show this “collision”. He moves further to incriminate human beings by holding them responsible for all the forms of “damage” inflicted upon “Mother Earth”, including “climate change” and “global warming”. This “damage” is “irreparable”, a fact implying that man should stop any activity that might engender further damage to “Mother Earth” (*Green Rape 3*).

The last stanza of “Earth Poem” moves from the present damage and destruction to tackle the damage done to the “future generations”. Vakunta calls for moderate use of the resources of nature so that these future generations can have their legitimate access to non-degraded natural resources. Such charging of the present generation with exhausting earth resources involves the reader directly in attempts at finding a way-out of the present environmental dilemma because he/she may be threatened with not having a posterity at all.

It is noteworthy that the poet does not call for leaving nature and natural resources intact, as such a call would be impractical because we need these resources to live on. Rather he highlights our responsibility for providing future generations with a chance to have their share of these resources. In other words, we must review our own environmental practices and activities so that we can realize our negative impact upon the environment and reduce its negativity to a minimum. Here Vakunta calls for sustainable use of the environment in order to sustain ourselves without exhausting natural resources or leaving future generations deprived from their sources of sustenance.

In “Ecotage”, Vakunta exposes human beings as terrorists regarding nature at large. He begins this poem with a meta-textual contemplation of the title with which he designates it. This act of contemplation does not last for

long, because the denotation of the title is readily accessible to the mind of the speaker in the poem:

Wondering what this Lexis stands for? /

Denotes environmental terrorism/

Yeah!

We're environmental terrorists/

We brutalize Mother Earth! /

Scorch her/

Pollute her/

Suffocate her/

Poison her/

Slash her/

Burn her/

Slice her/

Bruise her/

We're a killer nation! / (*Green Rape 5*)

The speaker does not just describe human beings as “environmental terrorists”. He further enumerates the acts of terrorism we exercise upon “Mother Earth”. These acts substantiate our (conscious) activities that serve to eradicate all forms of life on “Mother Earth”. It is remarkable here that the earth is the direct object of all the verbs that signify brutality, terrorism and sabotage.

This poetic attitude of Vakunta runs counter to the common critical consensus on the concept of “ecotage”: critics associate ecotage with some activist environmental groups that inflict damage upon the corporations that harm the environment. Here Vakunta tries to make us review the manipulation of the prefix “eco-” because it appears that he sees this prefix as substantiating the natural environment, not the built environment, and all that is inflicted upon it.

It is also remarkable that Vakunta personifies/anthropomorphizes (and feminizes) the earth. Even away from the ecofeminist equation of nature or the earth with woman, this personification serves at least two purposes. First, it highlights the many against the one: there are so many victimizers here who actively participate in torturing the victimized earth. Second, it reinstates the concept of anthropomorphism with reference to nature.

Anthropomorphism means attributing “human feelings and motivations to nonhuman animals” (Serpell 94), “the use of human characteristics to describe or explain nonhuman animals” (Horowitz and Bekoff 23), or “the belief that animals are essentially like humans” (Daston and Mitman 2). It fulfills some human needs such using “animals as alternative sources of social support” (Serpell 94), compensating for the absence of strong social bonds “by creating humans out of nonhuman

agents” (Epley et al. 146). All these views imply that anthropomorphism can be beneficial to both humans and other creatures and organisms in the environment. This makes us differentiate between anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism. The latter sees human beings as the center of the universe. It may regard nature “as a resource for economic use” (Clark 3) and “as raw material for human uses, largely or completely without moral standing” (Biskowski 414) and become “the primary cause of environmental degradation” (Jeryan 489) and “of our destruction of nature” (Causey 413).

In “Ecotage”, Vakunta anthropomorphizes “Mother Earth” in order to show how it, as a being who has both bodily existence and substantial mothering and parenting value, is abused and brutalized by humans. This form of anthropomorphism is intended to subvert the core of anthropocentrism because it starts from the main assumptions of human beings who see their way of seeing things as applicable or extendable to what surrounds them. But this inclusive worldview regards Mother Earth as an Other upon whom all the negative aspects of human conduct are inflicted. She is anthropomorphized in order, not to find in her an “alternative source of social support”, or “compensate” for lacking social bonds, but to expand the realm of human violence to the Earth and project all hidden violent and terrorist impulses upon her. In this light, what humans do to the Earth can be seen as a kind of incestuous sadism that makes her a mother in order to terrorize and violate her integrity. Thus, Vakunta anthropomorphizes the Earth in order to question the “anthro-” or the human effect correlated with this form of shape-taking.

In the second stanza of “Ecotage”, the poet focuses on the things that are not immediately directed against the earth, but are a byproduct of man’s irresponsible attitude towards her. These things represent man’s maladministration of natural resources and human waste which cause environmental pollution and nearly lead to the extermination of “aquatic life”.

In the last stanza of “Ecotage”, the poet shows the outcome of this sort of environmental terrorism:

Biodiversity on the/  
brink of extinction/  
Wild life endangered/  
Guess what this generation will/  
bequeath to posterity? /  
A depleted ecosystem! /  
Halt this genocide! / (*Green Rape 5*)

Environmental terrorism is correlated here with species extermination and “genocide”. It appears that human beings see themselves as the sole tenants of the earth and do not recognize any rights to, or even any presence



of, any other species sharing life with them. As a result, they do not care about the life of such unrecognized species. The “cultural” and immanent consequences of such an attitude are manifest in the destruction of biodiversity, the carnage of wild life, the depletion of the ecosystem, and consequently the actual killing of all forms of life which are regarded in this context as an “other” who has no rights to life.

The deep thematic structure of “Ecotage” indicates that Vakunta does not use the word “genocide” haphazardly. This lexical item is consistent with the anthropomorphizing attitude adopted throughout the poem. It implies that as long as human beings see the Earth as an extension of the self or as revolving around the orbit of the human ego, the kind of terrorism wreaked upon her should logically be named “genocide” as seen from an anthropomorphic point of view. That the line “Halt this genocide” comes as a closure to the poem shows that it confirms our “expectations” that have been raised throughout the poem due to its extended anthropomorphic metaphor. This closure highlights “a definite termination point” and gives us a “sense of stable conclusiveness” (Smith 2). It also denotes “the totalizing thematic and textual strategies employed at the end of texts” (Lundén 56) and “implies a sense of purpose from which one can hypothesize backward about the poem as a whole” (Vincent xvi). The genocidal effect at the end of “Ecotage” makes us read the last stanza backwards because the “genocide” asserted in the closure relates first to what directly precedes it and second to the rest of the poem. Having built upon the accumulative effect of the anthropomorphic metaphor, Vakunta wants us to see the final stanza of the poem in the light of the form of incestuous sadism that we illustrated when analyzing the first stanza. Thus, we can look at the closure of the poem as a sequence where the poet shows how this sadism lies in human beings’ attempt to exorcise or terrorize life/spirit out of Mother Earth: they push “Biodiversity” out to “the brink of extinction”, drive “Wild life” out to the status of endangerment, and drive the “ecosystem” into depletion.

In this light, we cannot ignore Vakunta’s mentioning of “posterity” in the context of anthropomorphizing and terrorizing Mother Earth because it adds a second effect to the irony of anthropomorphism: it is the “decidedly edgy” aspect of irony (Hutcheon 35) that “would seem to ingratiate and to intimidate, to underline and to undermine” (53), “[a]nd it is because of its very foregrounding of the politics of human agency in this way that irony has become an important strategy of oppositional rhetoric” (11). This “oppositonality” “can take advantage of the vulnerability of systems instead of attempting to change their products directly” (Chambers 18). The concept of anthropomorphism here can be divided into the worldview that ostensibly sees the world as an extension of the self and the actual products of this view: that is, transferring Mother Earth to the realm of the other or the

subaltern who is subjugated through terrorism. Through “ideological split”, to use Ross Chamber’s concept (18), Vakunta exposes the “vulnerability” and fragility of the human “system” itself because this system eradicates itself by eradicating the living conditions of “posterity”.

In other words, Vakunta “underlines” anthropomorphism and “undermines” it at the same time by showing how its concomitant anthropocentrism does not leave room for either human life or other life-forms. That is perhaps why Vakunta entitles the two poems immediately next to “Ecotage” in the collection “Animal Beings” a la mode of *human beings* and “Symbiosis” (*Green Rape* 6-7). In “Animal Beings” he does not present animals as victims to human terrorism, but as role models who send messages of thanking, forgiveness, and love so that human beings may “learn to talk/ like animal beings” (*Green Rape* 6) in a symbiotic world. Vakunta urges us as human beings to live “in perfect symbiosis/ With one another like our/ animal friends do” (*Green Rape* 7). Although this point lies outside the scope of my study here, I would like to briefly refer to Vakunta’s textual strategy of using zoomorphism as a tool that creates a binary opposition and serves to deconstruct anthropocentrism which represents the negative aspects of anthropomorphism here because “Human anthropocentrism might explain this emphasis on anthropomorphism and lack of interest in zoomorphism” (Gerbasi et al. 198). It is people’s turn to learn from animals how to correct their anthropomorphism.

In “Eco-Terrorism”, Vakunta describes this kind of terrorism as an intentional “warfare” waged against “a healthy planet”:

Warfare and a healthy planet/  
 Are incompatible/  
 The human species/  
 has gone into overdrive/  
 On a growth-obsessed path/  
 Each year 27,000 species go extinct/  
 Fresh water sources dry up/  
 Microscopic organisms/  
 that fertilize soil/  
 are humus eradicated/ (*Green Rape* 9)

This warfare is both real and symbolic. But Vakunta focuses on the symbolic warfare against the planet. He wants to inculcate in our minds that warfare and its concomitant terrorism of the environment are not restricted to the terrorizing effects of actual war between armies and the degrading and deteriorating impacts of chemical weapons and the likes. In the context of the poem, warfare is largely a result of human beings’ colonial attitude towards the planet. They see themselves as the conquerors of the earth. This sort of colonialism depends for its existence on an expansionist worldview

where the “growth-obsessed path” should be trodden non-stop. The “overdrive” on this path aggravates the “fragility” of the ecosystem discussed earlier in this study. In other words, this fierce human war waged against the planet leaves it deprived of thousands of species, “freshwater resources” and “microscopic organisms”.

The manifest irony of this situation is that human beings are left, because of the war they wage against the environment, without the resources of their own subsistence. That is why the poet correlates, in the second and last stanza, human rights with environmental right. Both kinds of rights should go hand in hand with one another:

Environmental rights and human/  
rights are inseparable/  
The ozone hole/  
The greenhouse effect/  
The extinction of biodiversity/  
And the precarious depletion/  
Of the earth are interwoven/ (*Green Rape* 9)

The sort of irony operating here is “situational” which “occurs when events do not turn out as they were expected to be” (Gaunt 30) and emphasizes “the incongruity between some expectations or beliefs and the reality of a situation” (Gibbs and Izett 148). There is a remarkable incongruity between man’s warfare against the environment which apparently aims at achieving and embodying man’s superiority over earth and his/her complete control over nature on the one hand, and the actual “mal-achievement” which is represented in depletion of the resources on which he/she lives, the opening of the “ozone hole” and the ensuing of the “greenhouse effect” which threaten even human life on earth, and the “extinction of biodiversity” which is one of the main factors of the healthy balance on earth. In other words, man’s war against the planet turns out to be a war against his/her own (symbiotic) existence on this planet. As a result, man’s rights on earth must be accompanied by observing the rights of all other species, because any violation of the rights of any species will actually result in the violation of the rights of other species, including the human one.

It is remarkable that Vakunta entitles this poem “Eco-Terrorism”. He uses this term in the same sense of “ecotage” and “environmental terrorism” discussed earlier in this study. This terminological and conceptual usage implies that Vakunta regards the prefix “eco-” when associated with terrorism and damage as referring only to the destruction wreaked upon, and violence committed against, the environment only. In other words, Vakunta does not subscribe to the common recent deflection of the usage of “ecoterrorism” to refer to the violence done by environmental activists against the corporations that harm the environment.

The persistence of the nightmare of environmental terrorism in the ecological mind of Vakunta makes him regard this terrorism in his poem “Genocide” as an “apocalypse” (*Green Rape* 17). The apocalypse intended here is the end of animal life on earth. Since Frank Kermode incorporated apocalyptic visions into the study of literature, the idea have become an integral part of our interpretative view of textual practice. Kermode maintains that “the paradigms of apocalypse continue to lie under our ways of making sense of the world” (28), that when we think in an apocalyptic way, “we think in terms of crisis rather than temporal ends” (30), and that “The most terrible element in apocalyptic thinking is its certainty that there must be universal bloodshed” (107).

As “Genocide” represents “the voice of the voiceless” (*Green Rape* 17) and speaks for the animal world, Vakunta’s apocalyptic vision is not used here to make sense of the human world, but to make sense of what is committed by man against animals. The poet thinks in terms of the crisis that man creates in animal life regarding the “universal bloodshed” that man spills wherever animal life is located:

*It is the apocalypse! /*  
 A catastrophe has befallen/  
 Our friends on four/  
 Some are being slaughtered/  
 Others are guinea pigs/  
 In human laboratories/  
 Some more are being shipped/  
 to alien lands under the most/  
 horrendous conditions/  
 There’s pandemonium everywhere/  
 in the animal kingdom/  
 Broken bones abound/  
 Plucked feathers galore/

Who’s behind the Genocide? / (*Green Rape* 17)

The first stanza states three causes of this animal apocalypse: slaughtering, scientific experimentation upon animals, and animal exportation and hence expatriation and alienation. As for slaughtering, it is a direct result of the excessive human infatuation with “Red Meat” as the poem with the eponymous title shows and leads the poet to conclude this poem with a call for moderation in consuming red meat: “Let’s consume red meat / But do so in moderation” (*Green Rape* 50).

The second cause lies in the laboratories where animals are used in scientific experimentation. It is noteworthy that the poet describes these laboratories as pertaining to human beings. This implies that human experimentation upon animals is undertaken for the benefit of humans and

their health, not for the sake of improving the health conditions of animals in the first place. Science is often referred to as a culprit in the deterioration of the environment, and one of the reasons beyond the emergence of ecocriticism is to critique or counterbalance “scientific complicity in massive degradation of the world’s physical environment during the past two centuries” (Slewers 206).

As far as the third cause of animal apocalypse is concerned, it is two-fold. The first dimension of this form of “genocide” lies in the forced migration of animals, whether this migration takes the form of trading with animals as commodities, or of forcing animals out of their natural habitats into other habitats alien to them, as the phrase “alien lands” shows. As for the second dimension of this third cause, it is represented in “the most horrendous conditions” under which animals are moved from their habitats to other places. These conditions attest to the fact that those who are responsible for the “shipping” do not believe that animals have any rights to share with humans. This attitude runs counter to the logic of common things because from a philosophical and ethical point of view, “human rights are not *human*” (Cavaleri 139). In other words, these rights are not exclusive to human beings, as the term was devised for the first time with reference to humans: if it had been initially devised in a discussion concerning animals, it would have been called “animal rights”. That is why this initial naming does not prevent “*an expanded theory of human rights*” which should cover, according to Paolo Cavaleri, at least “mammals and birds, and probably vertebrates in general” (139). On the other hand, those who hold a biocentric view of life do not see any difference between the human species and nonhuman species: man inflicts harm upon himself/herself when he/she hurts or tortures an animal because “to kill another creature is in some sense an act of violence against oneself.” (Clark 24).

What the poem condemns can be explained by the fact that these “horrendous conditions” referred to by Vakunta are represented in the practice “factory farming” where animals are “mutilated in various ways without pain relief, transported long distances in cramped, filthy containers, and finally slaughtered amid the stench, noise, and squalor of the abattoir”(Francione 109). These insensitive practices deny any (relieving) rights to animals because they imply that these animals do not have even the ability to feel pain or the right to live in suitable healthy conditions.

Having highlighted the “genocide” that terrorizes animals, the poet carries on his argument by trying to answer the question that he poses at the end of the second stanza: “Who’s behind the Genocide?” (*Green Rape* 17). He names only three of the “culprits” who stand behind the genocide of animals worldwide, and leaves the rest of the names list to the reader to complete. He mentions three of the icons of international consumerist

capitalism or commercial/culinary globalization: they are the multinational restaurant chains “McDonald”, “Subway”, and “Kentucky” (*Green Rape* 17). According to Lyle Munro, “animal exploitation is endemic to capitalism” (59). This exploitation is caused, in Kate Soper’s view, by “the capitalist growth economy and its current structure of consumption” (*Looking at Landscape*: 138) which have proved to be “uncivil and ecologically disastrous” (*Representing Nature*: 64). That is why Vakunta concludes “Genocide” with the imbalance of the power relationship between consumerist capitalists and animal rights activists:

The cry of animal rights activists/  
has fallen on deaf ears! /

This is the voice of the voiceless! / (*Green Rape* 17)

Vakunta implies that consumerist culinary capitalism does not recognize any animal rights and therefore does not have any moral scruples about killing animals.

Again, Vakunta uses the term “genocide” to refer to the (mass) massacre of animals for human ends. Having discussed the implications of “genocide” with reference to both animals and humans in the context of analyzing the poem “Ecotage” earlier on in this study, I focus here on the implications of its usage in the present context. In the poem “Genocide”, Vakunta does not depend on the analogies derived from anthropomorphism to denounce the effects of anthropocentrism on both human life and animal life. He only concentrates on the scientifically- and capitalistically- generated apocalyptic massacre of “Our friends on four”. Vakunta builds on the thematic effects achieved in earlier poems in *Green Rape*. I have earlier referred to how Vakunta presents animals as role models from whom human beings can learn to live in symbiosis. In other poems preceding “Genocide”, he shows, in a poem called “Animal Rights”, how “All animals are born equal” and how “They are all in the same boat” (*Green Rape* 11). The result of this equality and that symbiosis is a “Brotherhood of the Jungle” as the poem with the same title shows (*Green Rape* 13). In other words, Vakunta poetically and textually establishes an animal world parallel and similar to the exemplary world that humans ostensibly want to achieve for themselves. Thus, the violence committed by human beings against *animal beings* can be regarded as an extermination of the human ideals themselves. Hence, this genocide is a killing of the “race” that is equal and parallel to the human race and is a model for it to follow, but the latter decides to kill it instead.

Due to the limitations of space here, I will briefly refer to how Vakunta elaborates, in other poems, his view of how humans terrorize the nonhumans who populate the earth with us. In “Green Rape!”, he describes man as the “Earth’s worst predator” whose actions have led to the loss of many “generations” of birds and animals (*Green Rape* 31).

Also, in “Lethal litter”, Vakunta maintains that human waste, “toxic waste”, and “oil spills” amount to a “carnage” which endangers “marine life” and puts “Aquatic biodiversity on/ On brink of extinction” (*Green Rape*43). The same critical view of human practices is adopted in “Our Fragile World” where Vakunta raises the slogan “Don’t kill the world”:

Don’t kill the world! /  
This land is disfigured/  
Choking with nauseous gases/  
There is hemorrhage/  
Streams and rivers festering  
with toxic waste.  
Don’t kill the world/  
Landmines abound/  
Fields overgrazed/  
Forests depleted/  
Animal habitats destroyed/  
Birds without nests/  
Flying helter-skelter/  
Let’s save the world! (*Green Rape* 48)

These acts of killing are not caused solely by toxic wastes, as in “Lethal Litter”, but also by man’s excessive living, economic, and military practices such as the explodable landmines that are laid during wars but not removed afterwards, overgrazing, and deforestation with its ensuing habitats destruction and the migration or extinction of animals and birds.

## Conclusion

Peter Wuteh Vakunta uses “eco-terrorism,” “environmental terrorism,” “ecotage,” “carnage,” and “genocide” interchangeably. He equates terrorism regarding the environment with “genocide” and “carnage.” He uses these poetically generated synonyms throughout *Green Rape* to give us a wide range of the terrors that we practice, intentionally or unintentionally, upon the environment of which we are part and parcel. He is highly aware of man’s detrimental effects on the environment. He uses textual strategies that discredit the theoretical attitude that tries to move the attention away from the actual terrorism of the environment at the hands capitalism, industries, corporations, warmongering, governments, ordinary people, etc., to those who oppose these acts of terrorism against the environment. For him, the environment is always the victim because she is “the voiceless” and by extension the passive party in face of human beings who are actively involved in committing atrocities against it.

Vakunta restores the root “eco-” back to its origin as referring to the environment or the common house that accommodates all creatures and

organisms, and hence the kinds of terrorism signified by the words annexed to this prefix make the environment a victim of human acts. In other words, he consistently uses this prefix with reference to terrorism and destruction in a way that always portrays the environment as the recipient, not the agent or initiator, of this destruction and that terrorism. He views this prefix as always referring to the environment in its capacity of being the nonviolent party, and in this light, it cannot be the source of terrorism as some proponents of the term “ecoterrorism” and all those of the term “ecotage” claim.

This also applies to his peculiar usage of terms which have a commonly agreed-upon meaning such as “ecotage” and “genocide”. Vakunta does not see any reasons for seeing the environment as a self-willing source of terrorism or destruction. It is human beings who use it as a tool to destroy/harm other humans and other creatures and organisms. As a result, Vakunta uses “ecotage” to mean the terrorism we practice upon the environment.

As for “genocide”, Vakunta plays upon its common usage to face human beings with what they perpetrate against the environment. This word play is achieved through the technique of irony. This irony is represented in the frustrated expectations of human beings’ manipulation of the environment. Employing anthropomorphism in a poetically skillful manner, Vakunta proves that the “geno-” of “genocide” is not limited to the *human* race, and the “-cide” is not restricted to the deliberate killing of a large number of people as an act of ethnic cleansing or of war, for instance. It is also expanded, in Vakunta’s symbiotic view of all forms of life on earth, to include other *races* of creatures and organisms on the globe.

According to this symbiotic view, as there are human beings, there are *animal beings, bird beings, plantbeings*, etc. When man attacks or violates the integrity of other beings, he/she disrupts the whole chain of ecological well-being, and this disruption will ironically be effected upon the well-being of human beings themselves. The other form of irony with regard to genocide is represented, according to Vakunta’s view, in that man catalyzes his/her own downfall/extinction on the earth because his/her excessive exploitation of natural resources may leave future generations bereft of any resources that may sustain them. Hence, human beings become the main cause of their own extermination. That is why Vakunta describes humans as “a killer nation”.

Vakunta tackles numerous environmental issues that can be seen as manifestations of human beings’ terrorism practiced upon the environment. These manifestations cover a wide range of human practices and acts which can be divided, at least, into three main categories. The first category is represented in the acts or outcomes of war, whether they are direct or indirect. Examples of direct outcomes include the extinction of species, the



drying up of fresh water sources, and the eradication of the microorganisms that fertilize soil. As for the indirect outcomes, they include, for instance, the landmines that explode when trodden on by animals, killing these animals and whatever forms of life in the neighboring areas.

The second category can be described as corporate or industrial. It is manifested in the overexploitation of natural resources for satisfying economic or capitalist impulses. Vakunta condemns the international corporations that kill or trade in large numbers of animals to make huge profits. These corporations export or move animals in extremely horrendous conditions that deny them any rights to health or even pain relievers. He also denounces the persistent cutting of whole forests, calling our attention to the dangerous effects of deforestation on both the life of human beings and that of animals and birds. This deforestation leads to the alienation and extinction of a large number of these creatures because they lose their habitats and consequently become exposed to endangerment. Also, this category includes the wastes of industry, whether this industry is civil or military. Both governments and corporations do not care to get rid of these wastes in a way that does not harm the environment. Releasing waste into water streams or dumping toxic waste in an illegal or unsafe way endangers aquatic life, eradicates soil nutrients, etc.

As far as the third category is concerned, it relates to unhealthy or anti-environmental human lifestyles that do not pay attention to the fragility of the ecosystems or respect biodiversity. It is revealed in man's exhaustive consumption of natural resources, pollution of the earth, causing global warming and climate change, depleting the resources available for future generations, littering streets, neighborhoods and parks, excessive hunting of animals, etc.

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