

**THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE
SELECTED POEMS OF JOHN KEATS AND
NIYI OSUNDARE: AN ECO-CRITICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

A Ph.D Thesis

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this work was carried out by Mr. Fortress Isaiah Ayinuola in the Department of Languages, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria.

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Fig.1: John Keats from National Portrait Gallery, London, and Niyi Osundare, retrieved on 13 February 2012 from Wikipedia.

John Keats (1795-1821)
If Poetry comes not as naturally as the
leaves to a tree it had better not come
at all (Gittings,1978:46).

Niyi Osundare (1947- to date)
Poetry is what the soft wind musics to the
dancing leaf, what the bee hums to the
alluring nectar, what rainfall croons to the
lowering eaves (Na'Allah, 2003:134).

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ABSTRACT

The natural environment has progressively been endangered by the activities of man over the past decades. Attention was first drawn to this by the romantic poets who were alarmed by the obvious danger posed to nature by the dynamics of the Industrial Revolution. Several poets of succeeding epochs have sustained this concern in different ways. Previous studies explored the ways different poets engaged this concern with the natural environment. However, no study that we are aware of has taken into account the time-space divide between the nature-poets by which their works were nuanced. This study, therefore, underlined this time-space factor as it compared the nature poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. The aim was to show how the poets' spacio-temporal realities undergird their delineations of the natural environment in their poetry.

The study used eco-criticism, an aspect of literary criticism, as its theory, and interfaced this with the comparative literary approach. Eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment, while comparative literature allows for an in-depth study of parallels and divergences between the literary development of different nations and between two or more literatures. Thirty-six purposively selected poems by Keats and forty-four by Osundare are subjected to comparative and eco-critical analyses. This is because they are from distinct environments and periods and are also celebrated nature-poets whose works emphasized the particular and the universal, thereby making them appropriate for our nature of analysis.

There is a steady decline in the romantic appreciation of the natural environment among nature poets: there is a shift of focus from its adulation to a seemingly more serious concern about its wanton exploitation and destruction. While Keats represented what Schiller called the 'simple poet', Osundare represented the 'sentimental poet'. Keats' and Osundare's positions on the 'art for art' and 'art for life sake' respectively are distinguishing generation and poetic markers that determined our subsequent eco-discourse. Though Keats and Osundare celebrated nature's beauty, Osundare specifically uses his poems to chastise humanity and urge moral and social change in favour of the natural environment. The poets' particular environments influenced the form and style of their poetry. In addition, there was already in place a well established poetic tradition centred on the natural environment in Osundare's Nigerian agrarian environment long before any western contact. Also, there were more environmental challenges in the contemporary world than in Keats'. Therefore, environment-related terms that were non-existent in Keats' days were emerging and Osundare had the singular advantage of acquiring and adopting a wider poetic horizon and content than Keats.

The study examined how Osundare inter-textually connected with Keats' poetic vision of the environment and how this relationship initiated an environmental specific dialogue between the past and the present. It proposed a distinct class of investigation and practice which we label as eco-poetics and eco-wheels, respectively. Future research should consider a word-pool: collection and compilation of eco-friendly words and terms that are not pejoratives; and Grapho-poetics which is an inter-disciplinary discourse of painting/poetry, photography/poetry and architecture/poetry.

Key Words: The Natural Environment, John Keats, Niyi Osundare, Eco-criticism, Nature-poetry.

CHAPTER ONE

The Natural Environment in Literary Ecology

1.1 Introduction

This study examines the connection between poetry and nature in an attempt to show nature as a source of literary creative enterprise and further describe its representation as an object of degradation and devastation. It brings to the fore the role of literature in reconstructing the universal concern that nature is endangered by human exploitation and neglect. The study explores the nature of literary attempts at creating awareness about the preservation of nature. Through an eco-critical investigation, the study compares the nature poems of John Keats, a Briton (1795-1821) and Niyi Osundare, a Nigerian (1947-to date). The poems considered include a total of 37 poems by John Keats and 44 poems by Niyi Osundare: *The Eye of the Earth*, 51 pages; *Midlife*, 109 pages; *Horses of Memory*, 131 pages and *Moonsongs*, 74 pages. Though they lived at different periods and in different climes they are both nature-poets who were inspired by and celebrated the natural environment, on the one hand, and through their poetry created awareness about its destruction and the need for its preservation, on the other hand.

The natural environment is a recurrent image in the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. Aspects like the landscape, seascape and heavenly bodies are frequent images in their poems. We have also 'Metascape' and 'Lifescape'. Lifescape features are represented in degrees of consciousness in a living essence like man, flora or fauna. If in humanbeing, lifescape could express inner dispositions like character modified by mental stability, environment, parents, society and culture. Visible or outer dispositions could be carriage, taste, introvert or extrovert tendencies. Metascape on the other hand has an esoteric leaning. Its abstractions are centred on the supernatural, mystical and thus these latter two types of 'scapes fall outside the ambit of this study.

There are recurrent images of seasons and beauty of specific sceneries in the poems in question. These may be found largely in the pattern of words used or in repeated phrases in most of their poems. It is these dominant environment-centred themes that are the concern of this study. The natural environment is thus our primary focus. This refers to the physical set-up which encompasses air, water, land, trees, fauna, flora, rivers, lakes, mountains, the seasons and all original inhabitants of a given geographical location which can be harmed by man's activities. There are three area groupings to be considered, ranging from nature dominated environments to human culture dominated environments: (a) 'The wildernesses' (e.g. deserts, oceans, inhabited continents, forests, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls and lakes. (b) 'The countryside' e.g. hills, fields and woods. (c) 'The domestic picturesque' - man made natural environment e.g. parks, gardens and lanes. These area groupings overlap and move gradually from nature to culture. These are the central themes, images and ideas that recur in the poems of Osundare and Keats.

1.2 Historical Overview and Issues in Literary Ecology.

Literature is a social phenomenon which has socio-political, psycho-social, metaphysical, philosophical, religious and socio-economic dimensions. It has influenced and has been influenced by other social institutions. Literature mirrors the society by recreating aspects of its existential realities. Writers have done this in a number of ways, for example by showing the interaction between literature and other arts, psychology, politics and the natural environment among others. The interest of English literary artists in the natural environment dates back to the romantic period (1798-1832), when England was transformed from an agricultural society into an industrial one. The industrial 'revolution' with the attendant mechanization of life at the period brought about the destruction of landscapes, general chaos, changes both in the landscape and in the social lives of the people. Romantic writers celebrated the freedom in nature and individual experience. We share Ronald Carter and John McRae's (1998:202) view that the romantic period embodies:

Many of the conflicts and ideological debates which are at the heart of the world; political freedom/repression, individual/collective responsibility, masculine/feminine roles, past, present and future. It was a time when ideologies were in the melting pot, when radicalism and tradition, change and stability, the old and the new were just as vital as the more traditionally literary themes of innocence/experience, youth/age, country/city, man/nature, language/expression.

Like William Blake, William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, John Keats responded to this in diverse ways, and, in recent years, writers like Chryll Glotfeltry of America and Niyi Osundare of Nigeria have dwelt on issues that were of interest in the romantic period. Dasylyva and Jegede (2005) describe romanticism as an intellectual movement that challenges orderliness in life and literature which was promoted in the neo-classical period, which is generally seen as a period of rigid conservatism. Romanticism encourages free expression of the revolutionary will. It promotes the radical condemnation of all that is rational and conventional. It gives to poetry a new definition that is deeper, personal and sometimes mystical. Besides, romanticism encourages a new interpretation of imagination and nature as a free creative spirit in man. It sees nature as an enabling text and source of inspiration, appropriating images, symbols and themes from nature and using natural descriptions, native dialects or simple language. The romantic poets see only the ugly side of reality and attempt to separate themselves from everyday events. So they powerfully engage in imagination and take poetic flight away from reality to find solace in the beauty of nature.

The poets of this age not only manifested a strong artistic desire but also went on to cultivate a radical use of the unusual in the form and structure of poetry. The romantic poets explored a fresh terrain of arts that revealed the extrinsic and intrinsic values of art and society. There are two basic works of imagination that inspire nature poets. These are the world of classical antiquity and medieval antiquaries such as paintings, engravings and writings from other continents (Ian, 1967:xix-xx). Other sources are original Greek sculptures and vases, some of which the British Government purchased and which have influenced the writings of such poems as “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by Keats, “Kubla Khan” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Coleridge. Though Coleridge’s poems show atonement with natural scenery, landscape and seascape, both his “Kubla Khan” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” have gothic and esoteric leanings. Thus, for him nature serves only a secondary function. William Wordsworth, on the other hand, uses nature in his writings only when they explain further the subject of his discourse; in other words, nature is only a passive concept in his poems.

The interaction between literature and the natural environment cannot be overlooked as it has generated a critical approach called eco-criticism or Green Studies. Eco-criticism started as a movement in America in 1980 and the United Kingdom in the early 1990s. This critical approach is devoted to the rereading of literary works from an ecological perspective with special attention being paid to the way the natural world is recreated. A reading of the works of Keats and Osundare reveals nature as their major theme.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The natural environment has been degraded by the exploitative activities of man with the attendant fatal consequences of earth warming, air and sea pollution and the destruction of aquatic lives, deforestation and desertification; gas-flaring and oil spillages on farm-lands in places like the Delta regions of Nigeria. These problems in contrast to the beauty of the natural environment like seas, hills, mountains and forests which remain a source for literary creativity deserve critical attention. Although it is acknowledged that studies in recent times have given them this attention, none of such studies, however, seems to have paid attention to the varying modes of delineating environmental concerns by the nature poets of earlier (Romantic) periods and our times occasioned by the realities of time/space specifics. This is the gap that this study fills.

1.4 Aim of the Study

As a study of eco-critical foregrounding, the focus is on the imaginative representation of the natural environment in the poetry of John Keats and Niyi Osundare, nature poets of different epochs and geo-space. The aim is to show how the poets' time-space divide or the spacio-temporal realities undergird their delineations of the natural environment in their poems.

1.5 Objectives of the Study.

1. The objectives of this study are to critically analyse selected poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare;
2. Compare the poetry of the two poets, the similarities and differences;
3. Show the different ways they have captured the natural environment in their poems;
4. Investigate how their different periods and environments have influenced the ways they represent the natural environments in their poems; and
5. Determine how the poetic visions, styles and techniques of the two poets lend a voice in the 'save the earth' programme/crusade.

1.6 Specific Research Questions

To pursue our set objectives, this study answered the following questions:

1. Are there grounds of comparisons between the poetry of John Keats and Niyi Osundare?
2. How have Keats' and Osundare's natural environments and settings influenced their poetry?
3. How has the natural environment been represented in Keats' and Osundare's poetry?
4. Can this study help students of literature to better appreciate the current negative attitudes on the natural environment and thus encourage the reading and writing of nature poems?

1.7 The Significance of the Study

Environmental discourse is contemporaneous. While it has been engaged in several other ways in literary and non-literary studies, it is not yet widely engaged by the eco-critical theory because of the recentness of this theory. What it means is that current literature based on this line of enquiry is relatively scanty. This study, therefore, complemented available literature on the environment. In addition to this, the study reinforces reference materials for students on the poetry of John Keats, Niyi Osundare, romanticism and literary ecology. This study provides a shift from a wholly human-focused perspective to an all-embracing nature-focused one. The Natural Environment is thus seen as both object-preserved and subject-preserved. This dual perspective of the natural environment is mutually beneficial and significant in understanding the gap that this study intend to fill and to project. By this study, we have added a poetic voice to this universal challenge. Finally, by proposing a distinct class of investigation and practice, tentatively labelled here as Eco-poetics and Eco-wheels, the study extends the frontiers of knowledge in this field. It has opened up further studies in eco-poetic reading and practice. While Eco-poetic reading comprises poetic vision, poetic techniques, spacio-temporal and inter-textual reading; Eco-wheels is the practical practice, made up of natural environment (Eco-) and poetic practice (-Wheels). Eco-wheels is subdivided into Eco-friendly word-pool and Grapho-poetics (painting/poetry, photography/poetry, architecture/poetry).

1.8 Scope and Delimitation

The study is limited to the selected poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. The selection is informed by the concern for the projected themes of nature and the individual styles and techniques of the poets. Thus, the selection is based on their thematic affinities in their profound employment of themes of nature and eco-critical perspective. In all, 80 poems which were purposively selected for eco-critical and comparative analyses form the data for the study. 36 of this number are from Keats' collections, while 44 are from Osundare's. The study areas are 18th/19th century (Romantic) Britain and 20th /21st century (contemporary) Nigeria, the respective spacio-temporal and cultural spaces of the poets being studied.

The justification for the choice of John Keats and Niyi Osundare among other romantic and contemporary nature poets is informed by their unique poetic visions and techniques. Keats' and Osundare's nature poems focus on the physical reality and influence of nature on their inner being and poetic creativity. They see themselves as part of nature but alienated from nature and thus the need to return to Mother Nature. While the Romantic writers like Wordsworth and others emphasizes abstraction, didactic and religious fulfilment, Keats and Osundare see themselves as part of the natural environment and so represent the environment in their lives and poetry. But Osundare, specifically, sees the wanton exploitation of the natural environment and describes it accordingly. Keats and Osundare see nature as human and material resources of which they are a part.

Colonialism and neo-colonialism forced politics on literary artists like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P. Clark and much later poets like Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare. Its impact on these poets and the nation of Nigeria became an area of literary focus for Osundare and his poetry. The common ground on which our poets in question stood is thus, their love for the natural environment and poetry as the medium for poetic expression. This is also one of our determining factors in our choice of specific nature poems common to both poets. The poems of Keats and Osundare chosen for this study are based on their relevance and uniqueness in their discourse, their themes and contents on the natural environment. The poets selected for this study do not just describe what they saw, they express their feelings and passion as a part of what they appreciate and describe.

1.9. Social and Artistic Vision in John Keats and Niyi Osundare

As a social being, Osundare is obsessed with applying every available method of bringing his poetry to his people. He is consumed with this goal because of his peasant ancestry, where poetry is acclaimed as the people's property. There is a symbolic relationship between the artist and his environment. No artist produces works of art just solely for himself (Na'allah 2003). According to Osundare, "My artistic philosophy of art is essentially holistic: Form enhances content, while content in turn enriches form; aesthetic elegance has to be balanced with social relevance. A Yoruba artist, constantly seeks the meeting point of the beautiful and the useful. Humanity comes first, hand in hand with a clear visionary thrust: for the poem or story that has no "eye" can only stumble into sterility and darkness." (Na'allah 2003: xxv).

Osundare's poetic vision is to take snap shots of the past in order to remind us of how the natural environment was and compare these with the state of the natural environment today and thus, project or visualize how our future environment would be. "For in the intricate dialectics of human living, looking back is looking forward; the visionary artist is not only a rememberer, he is also a reminder." (*Eye of the Earth*, x).

"The justification of the will to revolution in Osundare's poetry is based on a vigorous, sustained solicitude for one of the world's oldest producers: the peasants, those who till the soil, and their quasi-mythical ties to the earth. In his verse, we confront both poetry of revolution and revolutionary poetry, in forms and techniques. His focus was to immerse, through his poetry, into "the realities and multifarious lineaments of Africa's underdevelopment as you find internationalist dimension of solidarity with all world's oppressed peoples"(Na'allah 2003: 612-615):

All eyes like a sieve
We will build an enduring nest
Will a straw from the diverse forest.

1.10. The Nature and Scope of Comparative Literature

Efforts have been made to define comparative literature and identify its general nature and merit as an area of literary study. In his study on this subject, S.S. Praver defines the comparative approach as a study of literature which uses comparison as its main instrument. According to him, comparative literature "makes its comparisons across national frontiers, a

method of literary analysis and understanding which has its premise in literatures or texts which typify antipodal or dissimilar linguistic and cultural configurations”(Obafemi, 1994, 56). M.F. Guyard also offers that “comparative literature is the history of international literary relations. The comparatist stands at the linguistic or national frontiers and studies the exchange of themes, ideas, books or sentiments between two or more literature” (Obafemi, 56). Henry Remak defines comparative literature in terms of the literary relation between nations as well as the relation between literature and other areas of knowledge. For him comparative literature “is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture, music, philosophy, history), the social sciences (e.g. politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other” (Obafemi, 57). C.I. Maduka defines comparative literature as “an integrated single body of knowledge transcending the frontiers of national literature and traditional subject areas. Thus a study of literary phenomenon (e.g. symbol, theme, style) beyond the confines of two or more national literatures (e.g. Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) or an examination of a feature common to literature and any other discipline such as history, politics, religion, music and sculpture within the context of two or more national literatures could be considered comparative” (Obafemi, 57).

In comparing the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare, the issue of language and culture are of specific concern in this study because it is a consideration of literature across cultural and linguistic barriers; it studies the literary relation of these poets, their nations and their natural environment (i.e. Britain and Nigeria). There are no apparent linguistic barriers because while for Keats, English was his first language, for Osundare, there is a high degree of competence in English, the language in which the poems examined are written is his second language but English is almost a mother tongue. He studied English in Ibadan, York and Leeds.

Nature poems from Africa: David Rubadiri’s “An African Thunderstorm” and J.P. Clark’s “Night Rain”: A comparative study

This is a study of the poems of an East African, Rubadiri and West African J.P. Clark. The benefit of this comparative study with regards to these two texts is the common experience shared as it touches on the natural environment. “An African thunderstorm” gives a vivid description of the disorder and havoc caused by an African thunderstorm. To recreate this, the poet combined the use of suitable visual images, simile and personifications like “tossing up things on its tail/ like a madman chasing nothing”, “pregnant clouds/ ride stately on its back”;

(lines 8-11). The form and the rhythm of the stanzas represent the progression of the thunderstorm from the moment it starts to gather with fury “from the west” in its “whirling”, “sinister” and “pelting march” to the time it bursts as raindrops. There are vivid pictures of commotion along its path, the impact of its passing on things of nature. We feel the world of nature and man tormented by this storm:

Clouds come hurrying with the wind...
Turning
Sharply
Here and there
Tossing up things on its tail
Like a madman chasing nothing...
Pregnant clouds
Gathering to perch on hills
The wind whistles by
And trees bend to let it pass...

Its impact on a typical African village is that of:

Screams of delighted children
Toss and turn...
Women...dart about
In and out
Madly...
Cloths like tattered flags...
The smell of fired smoke(139).

Above this African village, thunder and lightning come as onomatopoeia:

Jagged blinding flashes
Rumble, tremble, and crack (139).

For rhythmic effect, the poet uses varying line lengths – short lines, single word or two words to capture this physical and natural phenomenon. J.P. Clark’s “Night Rain” is also similar to African Thunderstorm in imagery, alliteration and onomatopoeia. They both centre their themes on nature – the experience of a typical African rural environment during the rainy season, thunderstorm and rainstorm. The settings are in East and West African villages. While Rubadiri focus on the impact of the thunderstorm on the exterior environment - the clouds, the hills, wind, trees, lightning and thunder, Clark focuses on the experience of a village- home during a typical night rainstorm when every body will be at home and in bed. Through the theme of rain, the poet depicts the living condition of a people and broader phenomena of how they identify with their natural environment “joined to that of the sea”.

Through technical devices like simile, metaphor and alliteration, the persona conjured images of 'sleep' and death. The picture of a dead fish floating in the sea comes readily to mind:

... like some fish
Doped out of the deep
I have bobbed up bellywise
From stream of sleep...

The use of the -ing forms of verb are aptly used to serve as rhythm of continuity, to build the mood and to give the poem a prosaic rhythm. Thus, we have the rain "drumming", "droning", "falling" and "soothing". There is also the juxtaposition of two pairs of nature images - 'rainwater' and 'ants', "water drops" and "fruits" which continue to recur in the lines:

Great water drops are dribbling
Falling like orange or mango
Fruits showered forth in the wind....
The run of water
That like ants filling out of the wood
Will scatter and gain possession
Of the floor....

We must stress here that comparative literature is an area of scholarship that is potentially rewarding as a method of literary analysis in ecocriticism. When applied to the study of African poems especially that of Osundare, in relation to Keats', it has the advantage of reflecting the extent to which literary influences have positively shaped the artistic products of authors of African origin.

Nature Poems from Middle East: Yair Huri's *The Poetry of Sa'di Yusuf*

Yusuf is a poet from Iraq. He lives in exile due to the political instability in his home land and its environs. He was to shuttle as a refugee between his country and nations like Algeria and Beirut. His observations, memories and experiences are creatively expressed in poems like 'Electricity' and 'Raid'. The themes in these poems range from the trauma of war in and around Iraq, estrangement from home as an exile, his yearnings, fears and despair for the state of destruction of human lives, the built and the natural environment. Comparing his early childhood memories with the Middle East of today: he wrote in 'Electricity' of "nights in the villages of orchards...going to bed at night, learning the use of dawn,... the rooster's and the peaceful village". Comparing this poem with 'Raid' where "rooms shiver from distant explosions, curtains shiver and the heart shivers". Through the use of metaphor, personification and imagery in a poem like 'Rain Song', he was able to comment on a

common destiny that befalls the inhabitants of Iraq, the elementals and the natural environment:

The wind cries to me: Iraq.
The wave howls at me: Iraq. Nothing but Iraq...
Between villages timid of my footsteps and strange cities,
I sang your beloved soil
And I carried it – for I am Christ in exile dragging his cross (148).

The reference in this poem to “the wind” as news bearer of the happenings on his “beloved soil” of Iraq and “the wave howling” are allusions to the unstable state of affairs at home. The poet gives a mirror-like description of his native land. His technique is unadorned, straightforward picture of a ‘home-haunting’ and ‘home-hunting’.

In his ‘Equatorial Variations’, he made a comparison between the landscape in Algeria and that of Iraq: the scenery, the peace and quiet, almost regretting his return home:

What have you done to yourself?
Algeria was spacious like...Africa
On every plantation there was a forest like ... Africa
In every junction there was a palm tree like... Africa
Its shore was a playground for the little lions
He remembers the sea...
What have you done to yourself?(222)

‘Algerian Glances’ offers an everyday scene that unfolds in visual details. The desert landscape of Algeria – its seacoast, sun, and sand – is also a key point of reference in this early exilic poem presenting topographical elements:

The pine hills give the drowsy moon
A window
With shutters made of boughs
And a balcony
To view the cloudy harbour
And its cloudlike sea.
A seagull descends
To its sleeping orchard...(153)

His poem ‘The Other Person’ gives a sharp portrait of the ‘exiles community’ dissolving the poet’s own refugee identity in a universal depiction of uprootedness and loss. The human community is secondary to the ‘rain’, ‘wind’, ‘flowers’:

Yesterday in my room with its shuttered windows
I was singing, smiling to the soft rain and wind
And the flowers that were still
Sleeping.

Then suddenly,
I heard a rap at the window.
Are the hands of the wind calling on me,
Visiting me, or does the lemon branch
Want to come inside, fearing the wind?
Or is it a song of soft rain
Coming from the ends of the earth to bring me
The scent of my overcast country?... (157)

The nature of the relationship between the speaker and the anonymous person is not specified. Save for the elements of nature that kept him company there is no emotional attachment, just an observer. Yusuf's experience is that of a man uprooted from his natural environment of Iraq to a strange environment as an exile who needs to eke out an existence in exile. In his poem 'Winter Sight' there is an attempt at interaction between the self and the external environment:

How can I touch this winter?
How can I see the lilies?
My terrace is closed
and in my eyes there are water (284).

The poet here grasps, more clearly the possibilities of visual imagination: the concreteness of the facts of his surroundings. "In The End" is a typical example of how precision in language use gives apt images and provokes passion and awakens the reader's and sensitizes it to the visual immediacy of ordinary objects of the natural environment. In this poem the subject matter is the ant. The poet employs a language of domestic tranquillity that we can associate with the ants' routine life:

After the ants entered their house
and disappeared
a stalk of wheat remained near the door.
Is it its key
Or its lock?..
Soon rain will come(289).

Yusuf infuses into the poem an account of an ordinary event in nature a certain unexpected thought or vision which reflects a strange light around the poem. His imagery seems to derive simply from careful observation and an unexpected meaning emerging from the imagery. The poem renders an experience through an impersonal subject matter, the image of ants hiding from the coming rain. This precise natural description of the ants is transformed into a reflection of the poet's wish to secure himself against the 'rain,' the unpredictable destiny

that awaits him. By observing these simple activities from the ants, he poses a question for us: can we as human beings begin to think of our “phenomenal surroundings in this way”?(290). This is to reverse the traditional practice of lifting up one’s eyes to “an idealized and transcendent space, to find value in what we can see around us (290).

While Keats and Osundare have the singular fortune to live around their natural homeland, to touch, study and celebrate their natural environment, Yusuf lives in exile away from his traditional home and land and thus the materials for his poems are largely from memories of his youth in Iraq juxtaposed with that of his experience in exile. “For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live.”(205).

Nature Poems from the Orientals: *MIDANG: The early lyrics of So Chong Ju*

So Chong Ju, (Anthony, 1993), in his narrative poem “From a Diary: At the Foot of a Mountain” presents the Natural Environment of Korea as a living environment that has the capacity to love like human beings. Through apt use of imagery, personification and metaphor, he animates the landscapes, mountains and the clouds as one single romance. The theme of love is central here. There is the picture of the cloud wooing the mountain “just like when our young human couples kiss each others’ cheeks”. There is also the impression of the sensual imagery on our sense of hearing: “that night I heard the sound of a mountain singing...” singing “in a clear ringing voice”, like a song “sung softly by a new bride in a soft deep voice” (72). The imagery of sight is also vividly presented in “the mountains just squatting there, rough and stupid, oblivious, and the clouds in the sky were all the time clustering and snuggling round them...”(72). As for the sense of smell, “it was the kind of song that gives a glimpse of flower-gardens seen when still a maid, and brought their fragrance floating by”(72).

The poem of Ju that clearly celebrates nature like those of Keats and Osundare are his three poems “Flower snake”, “An owl” and “Flower-garden monologue”. While in “Flower garden monologue”, the poet has an affectionate attraction to his object of love – the flower. The other two poems are reflection of human culture and beliefs – the omen of evil associated with the owl and the scriptural place of the serpent. “Flower Snake” reflects the traditional hatred for the snake. The snake is pursued and killed based on religious belief that it deceived Eve: “with your crimson mouth where that eloquent tongue by which your grandsire beguiled poor Eve... our grandsire’s wife (78). When we compare “Flower snake” with Keats “Lamia” there is a resemblance in theme. Keats “Lamia” is an epic poem which describes a mythic snake and her transformation into a beautiful human maid by Hermes, the messenger of the gods in Olympia. The story tells how this Hermes grants human shape to a serpent Lamia,

who as a beautiful woman captivates a young Corinthian philosopher, Lycius. Lamia's physical appearance as a serpent is presented in chains of simile and colours brilliantly woven on her, and all strongly appealing to the visual senses:

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion – spotted, golden, green, and blue,
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred..... (131).

Ju's "Flower snake" on the other hand tells about a biblical story of deceit and inherited hunting down of the snake; the vengeful spirit handed down to humanity:

... Bite! Bite vengefully!

And as the snake made to escape: "headlong down the musky grass-sweet road". There comes a shout of:

Run! Quick! That vile head!...
Hurling stones, hurling, quickly there...

Conversely, while human custom demands that snakes be killed, the persona is strangely attracted to the snake:

So beautiful that snake....
If I could only wrap you round me,...
Far more gorgeous than any flowered silk...
Those lovely lips, blazing crimson(78).

The persona saw beyond the veil of tradition. He saw the snake first as a beautiful animal.

Ju's poem "An Owl" is ode-like in rendition. Unlike Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" where the bird "singest of summer in full-throated ease". The persona here is also "happy in the light-winged Dryad of the trees" Ju's "An Owl" on the other hand, conjures a picture of disaster, of "blood, wings soaked and unclosing eyes turned heavenwards". The poem gives an atmosphere of ill omen:

I wonder by what perversity that cursed creature
Visits us with its moping cry at deepest midnight?
He sees the owl as a bird that bears ill to man from one generation to the other:

It obviously bears some grudge against my father
And mother, against me and my wife-to-be as well.

While the song of the ‘Nightingale’ is a relief, from the ‘aches’ and the ‘drowsy numbness pains’, the owl’s ‘cry’ conversely comes as a “dubious spell”.

Japanese haiku poetry or seashore Haiku¹ is a century old Japanese form of poetry, in three lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables, that uses just a few words to capture the essence of its subject. Ed Weiss (2006: 3) called this: “Seashore Haiku – poetry and nature combined”. Inspiring natural phenomena like woods, forests, and oceans have been topics traditionally used by haiku poets. Seashore haiku combines both the love of the ocean and haiku’s inherent ability to portray nature subjects. For instance:

Early fall morning...
Only footprints
On the beach (3).

Together, this haiku creates something called an absolute metaphor. Haiku accomplishes this brilliantly. In only a few words, a match between economy and meaning emerge, just like nature itself. If haiku is done right, the craft comes from the juxtaposition, a series of images that creates a snapshot of a feeling or mood for the reader. Here is another seashore haiku:

Hot June day...
An otter
Slips into the sea
(Stephen, 1998: 25).

These brief poems are a perfect match for describing a nature scene. In fact not many poetic forms can transport you so easily to a scene as haiku does. With just a few choice words, you are instantly transported away to a place of beauty and peace.

The Kaluli music of Papua New Guinea situated in the Bosavi rain forest on the Great Papuan plateau in Papua New Guinea is a small indigenous population, called Kaluli. They live in scattered isolated longhouse. The sounds of birds, rain, wind, and insects are both imitated and utilized by the Kaluli when making music. Typical example is from a “song ceremony” held between dusk and dawn in a longhouse:

There are several drummers and dancers who primarily perform newly composed songs with texts and melodies that are structured in a densely layered echo inspired by the sounds of the rain forest (Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

1.11. Structure of Thesis

The study is in six chapters: Chapter one contains the introduction and the background to the study, aims and Objective of the study, statement of the research problem, Specific research questions, significance of study, scope and delimitation, the nature and scope of comparative literature and the research methodology. Chapter two is the review of relevant literature and critical theories. Chapter three is a comparative approach to the natural environment according to subject matter and theme: the significance of eco-critical poetics in selected poems of Keats and Osundare.

Chapter four shows how John Keats and Niyi Osundare de-emphasized convention for literary creativity, and how they identified with The Natural Environment through literary devices. Chapter five discusses our findings and the study's contribution to scholarship. Chapter six is the summary of the research findings, the conclusions and the recommendations for further studies.

Notes on Chapter One

1. Seashore Haiku form is a poem of three lines poem of 5, 7, 5 syllables, and like sonnet, it can be classified under mechanical form of poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

This section is devoted to the examination of past and current works on poetry that have the natural environment as the focus; and that will be to the extent of their relevance to this study. It was not until the twentieth century that we had a proliferation of theories. “Before twentieth-century developments in literary criticism, the great majority of readers chose to relate literary texts to their historical context and to the intentions of their authors, and this approach still commands great support” (Newton, 1994: xvi).

The 17th century, a period referred to as Renaissance sees a new spirit of adventure to explore West Indies. This gave new materials and stimulus to the literary imagination. The focus of literary writers leans towards their environment, the world around them and beyond the sea. A new learning emerged in Europe. Renaissance scholars called humanists revived the knowledge of the Greek language. They discovered and disseminated a great number of Greek manuscripts which added greatly to the stock of ideas, materials, literary forms and styles available to Renaissance writers. This period sees growth in the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and literature. As they became more environmentally conscious, Renaissance writings began to explore the geography of the human soul and the physical world without redefining their relationship with authority, history, science and the future. They experimented with form, genre, linguistic and literary innovations. Great names in the English Renaissance include poets like William Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, John Donne and John Milton.

According to Coombes (1977: 275), John Donne’s poem “The Sun Rising” has a trace of the natural environment in it. The poem is more like an ode to the sun and is a powerful, amusing union of wit and feeling. Donne employs shock tactics, a dramatic form of ‘direct address’, rough idioms, and rhythms for the living voice characteristic of his metaphysical style(275).

Chickera (1979) contends that the metaphysical poets pick their themes based on the individual and his relationship with God, the universe, the natural and the supernatural. The

Metaphysical poets deal with abstract subjects of life and death, hate and love, God and the entire universe. The term is today applied to a group of sixteenth century poets influenced by John Donne. John Donne is widely recognized as the finest of Elizabethan-Jacobean lyric poets. This is due to his precise control of rhythm gained from an understanding of the weight of words, the apt use of imagery and unexpected references as in the poem: “Go and catch a falling star/ Get with child a mandrake root.../ And let me love...(256-259).

Poets like Cleveland, Marvell and Cowley are largely, writers of secular poetry while, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw are religious metaphysical poets. So, what distinguishes metaphysical poets from nature poets is that some metaphysical poets make passing comments on the natural environment. An example is George Herbert’s “The Flower”. From this poem, it can be adduced that Metaphysical poems are usually man and society-focused while nature poems always celebrate the beauty of nature.

Watkins (1989) opines that Shakespeare specifically had great literary influence on Keats. He was an admirer of Shakespeare. Illustrating the genius of Shakespeare's creativity in a letter to his brothers, Keats writes: “At once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously - I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Keats’ definition of this ‘Negative Capacity’ is “the ability to contemplate the world without the desire to try and reconcile contradictory aspects or fit it into closed and rational systems” (12).

Augustan writers had been fond of invoking nature as a value. The classicist’s discourse on nature is abstract, philosophical and refers to aspects of nature. These aspects interact and are reflected in the Augustan poems and throughout the Romantic Movement, though in a very different, altogether more organic way. Until the seventeenth century at least, nature generally thought repulsive, even horrible. With gradual change though, wider settlement and the growth of town population, a new sensibility began to find expression in literature and nature poetry in particular.

Poetic intellectual activities in Africa and Madagascar include poets like Taban lo Liyoung, Okot Bitek, Dennis Brutus, Augustino Neto, Senghor, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo etc. regional and political peculiarities like apartheid in South Africa influence their creative output and approach to the issues of the moment. According to Reed and Wake (1975), Rabearivelo belongs to the pre-independence pioneer poets. He is regarded by French African poets as a

key forerunner and precursor of negritude but his early rhymed poetry was largely influenced by the French Symbolists like Pierre Camo and Leon Deubel (xxiii-xiv). His nature poetry fuses French free verse style and traditional Malagasy *hain-teny* poetry. Although verses from these two phases of his poetic adventure are of considerable technical skill, they are not of concern or in celebration of Malagasy's natural environment. Rabearivelo's poetic focus was the loneliness and frustrations of a black poet who adopts the colonizer's language and culture but finds himself still trapped by the restrictions of pre-war colonial society. His poems include "The hide of the black cow is stretched", "What goes on under the ground", "Slow", "Listen to the daughters of the rain" and "There is living water" (Rabearivelo 1975:41-43).

Robert Boudry's observation of Romanticism after Rabearivelo's death was that of decay: "It is clear that the western literature, the decaying Romanticism, the nebulous Symbolism, the black poetry, existentialist before Existentialism, with which he was saturated 'rotting' him and his mind. Everything becomes for him allusions and quotations. Literature is for him not a pastime but the driving power of his brain and life, his reason for living. He saw in literature the means and the only possible means to escape from his situation as a Malagasy and from the island which he experienced as a person" (xv). According to Boudry, literature did not bring him that hope that a young nation must have. It did not stir him to action but gave him instead a craving for the void and for despair. In contrast to Rabearivelo's succumbing to despair and subsequent depression and suicide, literature (poetry) stirred poets like Gabriel Okara to write "The Call of River Nun". It spurs Osundare to action about his Nigerian environment. Not craving for the void and for despair". Unlike Rebearivelo, Keats could recommend healing and support in his "Ode on Melancholy".

In Nigeria, pioneer, pre-Independence poets include Dennis Osadebay, Nnamdi Azikwe, Gabriel Okara etc, their preoccupations largely celebrate Africa, assert black consciousness and pride in African personality through movements like Negritude, protest against British colonial government and fight for political independence. Poems of this period include poems like David Diop's "Africa". Nigeria's post independent poets include Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, John P. Clark, and much later Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Odia Ofeimum and Ken Saro Wiwa.

The themes of writers of post independent Nigeria focus on the exploitation of the ruled by their rulers. The wanton exploitation of the natural environment was almost none existent or not pronounced until most recently when international and national focus turned to the danger of the destruction of the ecosystem that poets like Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide and Ken Saro Wiwa in Nigeria took the literary front seat in the defence of the natural environment through their nature poems. Osundare consciously through his nature-poems draws the attention of the world to a new kind of colonization, the exploitation and the gradual annihilation of the flora and fauna in his environment, thus introducing a minatory approach to mere romantic and passive appreciation of the natural environment.

Udoh's (2011) paper, "The Pioneer Poets of the Niger Delta" considers the contribution of three Nigerian poets from the Niger Delta and their contributions to socio-cultural and environmental issues of Nigeria. These poets: Dennis Chukude Osadebay, Gabriel Okara and J.P. Clark. According to Udoh, Osadebay, poet, statesman and politician published one poetry collection, *Africa Sings* (1952). The central focus of this collection is cultural and political, the desire for Africa, and by implication Nigeria, to be free from colonialism and slavery. The focus of his poems is self-assertion, adulation or condemnation of the values of the white man"(111). The poem "England I Love You and I Fight For You" is pro-England, while the poem "Ode to the Niger" is pro-Africa. Osadebay foresees two periods: the era preceding the publication of *Africa Sings*, when the exploitation was that of the human, cultural and material on the one hand, and the exploitation of the Niger Delta expressed in "Who Buys my Thought" written many decades after *Africa Sings* where the emphasis is economic, political and environmental on the other. The second era talks of "Young Africa's soul,/ The soul of teeming millions,/ hungry, naked, sick,/ yearning, pleading, waiting"(112). Gabriel Okara's "The Fisherman's Invocation" and "The Call of River Nun" are poems that have a leaning towards the purity of the natural environment of the Niger Delta before the negative effects of oil exploration as expressed in Ikiriko Ibiware's *The Oil Tears* (2000, 26).

"The Fisherman's Invocation" seems parallel with J.P. Clark's *The Raft* where the raft, symbolizing the nation, seems to drift with no apparent direction. The persona sees the present society, with its arid contrarities birthing man who will "no more be man among/men; for you have defiled the Back and the Things of the ground"(114). The defilement according to the words of Okot p'Bitek is the "pumpkin in the old/ homestead/uprooted, and the end result has brought forth ... monster" (114). Okara's "The Call of River Nun" though symbolic and prayerful, is apparent that the persona is far away from the River Nun and its surrounding natural environment, its "silver-surfaced flow" and

“ceaseless flow”(115). The poet no doubt has a nostalgic emotional feeling for the River Nun and celebrating the river is the direct satisfaction he derives from its purity not a warning cry for its sustainability which is the present environmental sensibility. His other poems like “Piano and Drum”, “The Mystic Drum”, “Once Upon a Time”, and “The Dreamer” are culture centred and not directly relevant for our purpose. Though these poets and poetry in their spaces and times make reference to the natural environment and celebrate its beauty, the poems reveal the inclinations of a simple romantic poet and because most parts of their environment is still in its natural state, there is no trace of any anxiety about pollution and condition of the natural environment; thus the subject in question is taken for granted.

2.2. Tenets of Eco-criticism and Theoretical Framework

The tenets of eco-criticism revolve around the rereading of major literary works from an ecocentric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world, give special canonical emphasis to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter, such as the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics like Jonnathan Bate, the poetry of John Clare and the work of Thomas Hardy. They extend the range of literary-critical practice by placing a new emphasis on relevant ‘factual’ topographical writings like essays, travel writing and regional literature. “They emphasis “ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves” (Barry, 1994:264). Jonnathan Bate, the British Romantics makes a distinction between ‘light Green’ and ‘dark Green’¹. According to him the former on one hand are environmentalists who value nature because it sustains humanity and contributes to our well-being. This school believe we can ‘save’ the planet by more responsibility forms of consummations and production while ‘dark Green’ or ‘deep ecologisits’ take a more radical stance. They opine that technology is the problem and therefore can’t be the solution and so man have has to ‘get back to nature. ‘dark Green’ dislike the anthropocentric term ‘environment’ but prefer the term ‘nature’. Nature, according to this school, is there for its own sake, not for man’s sake.

Eco-critical literary theory emerged from an ever-increasing enlightened consciousness and concern about the state of global environment. Post-colonial studies have been involved in environmental issues, particularly in terms of the relationship between humans and his environment, between land and language. Recently, anthropologists, geographers and

environmental managers, historians and literary critics have shifted focus from these broad areas to relationships between neo-colonial interests and eco-centred or eco-critical perspective. The ethical acceptability of the systematic, institutionalized killing of ‘non-human others’ (Barry, 1994: 213), by the industrialized world is one of the reasons for categorizing other peoples as animals and thus justifying the liberty to exploit colonies and their environment and the general eco-system for economic ends.

The scramble for modernization has enticed developing countries into the destruction of their own environments, consequently making the destruction of the environment one of the most damaging aspects of Western Industrialization. This is further evidence of the continuing importance an eco-critical analysis of global crises. Eco-critical theory attempts to find a meeting point between literature and the environment. It is a literary type where literature and the natural environment are fore-grounded. This theory celebrates the purity and the sustenance of the natural environment on the one hand, and addresses man-made and natural disasters on the other. The latter are deeply problematic issues which conflict with the disinterested nature of our environment. These problems are earthquakes, desertification, deforestation, land degradation, air and water pollution, waste management, acid rain, massive erosion, global warming, ecological genocide or eco-cide which lead to the gradual destruction of a large area of land including all of the plants, animals living there and general threat to biodiversity.

Literary movements and eco-criticism

The interaction between literature and nature has been a viable area of research, but it has drawn little critical attention. In order to put this study in proper literary perspective and also to see how the awareness of the natural environment today comes to the fore, we need to see how literary concepts gradually grew from nature conscious individuals into organized literary groups which have today come to be associated with Eco-criticism or green studies. Since this study is premised on the interaction between the natural environment and poetry, the term eco-criticism becomes relevant and important to our discussion. Eco-criticism or Green studies are the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Barry, 1995).

Ecocriticism or Green Studies refers to an emergent movement and denote a critical approach which began in USA in the late 80s and in UK in the early 90s respectively. Glotfeltry is considered to be the founder of this academic movement. She co-edited with Harold

Freeman, a collection of essays on nature related matters titled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1990) and also co-founded the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992, with a house journal called *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (ISLE).

However, Michael P. Branch, notes that Ecocriticism as a concept first arose in the late 70s at a meeting of 'The Western Literature Association' (W.L.A.), a body whose field of interest is in the literature of the American West. He traces the word back to William Rucckert's essay: 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism'. The term 'Ecological' is made prominent by USA ecocritic Karl Kroeben in his article 'Home At Grasmere: Ecological Holiness' (*PMLA*. 89, 1974: 132-41). Branch observes further that, the terms 'ecocriticism' and 'ecological' remained dormant in the critical vocabulary until the 1989 W.I.A. Conference when Glotfeltry, (then a graduate student at Cornell University and subsequently Associate Professor of Literature and the Environment at the University of Nevada), revived the term 'ecocriticism' and encouraged its use to embrace the critical field previously known as 'The study of nature writing'.

Three major 19th century American writers, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) whose works celebrate nature, the life force, and the wilderness as manifested in the American natural environment are credited with the current status of ecocriticism in the USA. Among their collections are: *Nature* (1836). *Summer on the Lakes* (1843), and *Walden* (1999). UK's version of ecocriticism, or green studies takes its bearing from British Romanticism of the 1790s. The founding literary figure was Jonathan Bate who authored *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991).

The study discussed the selected poems from literary and archival materials in order to bring out the similarities and differences in the poetry of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. It adopted a content analysis approach of the selected poems of Keats and Osundare and subjected same to literary and critical analyses of their nature poems. These poems constitute the basic materials for the study. The study made use of environment related reports and documentary from Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Nigeria Conservative Foundation (NCF), Lekki, Lagos. Based on their profound discussions of the natural environment, eighty poems from different poetry collections of John Keats and Niyi Osundare are purposively selected. The poems constitute the basic materials for the study, however, secondary materials, related reports and other literatures from Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Nigeria

Conservation Foundation (NCF) Lekki, Lagos which are relevant to the discourse on environment preservation, in the study, are also used. The study is library and archive-based. The selected poems are subjected to comparative and eco-critical analyses.

2.3. An Eco-critical Reading in the Nigerian Context

Nigerian poetry in the English language spans about six decades from its inception, and has been a medium of engagement, decrying colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic oppression and political tyranny (Nwagbara, 2008). In Nigerian poetry, there is often a direct relationship between literature and social institutions. What was observed and experienced in the natural environment is translated into oral forms like praise poetry, songs and chants, mostly in the accompaniment of musical instruments and audience participation in social gatherings like naming, marriages or religious functions. These oral forms were later translated into written forms with the introduction of writing. This medium of writing introduced a new form of literary agitation. The principal functions of literature became that of protest poetry. Most recently however, eco-poetics has come to the fore. The mode of poetic enterprise, called resistance poetics, which was popular among Nigerian poets is gradually taking the secondary seat. Thanks to current national awareness and consciousness of the realities of ecological imperialism in the Delta region of Nigeria, the question of environmental degradation which has brought this region to the attention of the world is foregrounded through eco-critical poetics. Tanure Ojaide is considered the most prolific nature-poet from this area of Nigeria. Ojaide's collections like *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986), *Daydream of Ants and Other Poems* (1997a), *Delta Blues & Home Songs* (1997b), *The Blood Peace and Other Poems* (1991), *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* (1998), *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007) and *Waiting for the Hatching of the Cockerel* (2008) are illustrations of eco-critical poetry. By extrapolation, Ojaide's activist artistic enterprise finds ample expression in the use of poetry for resistance dialectics, which culminates in environmentalism and cultural reaffirmation. His eco-poetry is a testament to this artistic commitment (Nwagbara, 2008).

According to Oyesola (1995), Niger Delta is the economic base of Nigeria and it has witnessed one of the uncanny forms of neglect and marginalisation - and yet 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange comes from oil exploration, exploitation and marketing by the multinational corporation. At the heart of the struggle for participatory environmental governance is the question of land control and preservation. O.A. Mayowa, the Nigerian

political scientist has said that violence and ethnic agitation in Nigeria can be described from environmental and economic perspectives (Mayowa, 2001). The search light of eco-poetics is on the consequences of this interplay of social politicking on the Nigerian natural environment. Following such a polluted socio-economic landscape, Nigerian writers have risen to the occasion. They employ art to address as well as to bring to the knowledge of humanity this form of environmental exploitation. As an environmentally conscious poet, Ojaide allows the social facts in his lived environment to find expression in his art. This trademark is also characteristic of the style of the martyred poet and eco-activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was killed by the Sanni Abacha military regime. Before his death, upon winning the 1995 Goldman Environmental prize for campaigning against oil companies' environmental destruction in his native Ogoni land, he sent the following message from prison:

“The environment is man's first right. Without a safe environment, man cannot exist to claim other rights, be they political, social, or economic” (Encarta, 2009).

The shared interest and inheritance of these poets is clearly expressed in Ojaide's *Delta Blues & Home Songs* tells of the horrors and tragedies of multinational corporations' presence and activities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Their activities crush the biodiversity of this region. Ojaide also highlights the damage done to the flora of his native natural environment in his poems “The AT & P, Sapele” and in the collection ‘*When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*’ and ‘*Daydream of Ants and Other Poems*’ Ojaide called forth pictures of the socio-physical disaster, the deplorable condition of man and the fauna.

These poems paint a gory picture of the state and condition of the local plants and animals. They draw attention to the way the environment, human beings and animals are being maltreated by the politicians or ‘elders of state’: the polluted atmosphere, the choking in the air and the battered environment; ‘the gnarled barks of trees’, ‘babies’ and ‘goats’ point to the perils of deforestation and the evil of imperialism wrought via gas flaring and oil leaks in the Niger Delta and by extension Nigeria. Ojaide likened this loss of feeling for nature with decline of poetry as a genre, since he reckons that the basic function of poetry is to spur and to educate. Consequently, he considers the eco-critical art of poetry as a kind of public duty, which he owes to the Nigerian people, to expose, reconstruct, and negate the actualities of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Above all Ojaide uses literature for environmental purposes. He places premium on the biotic community – its sustainability and preservation. His is a poetic blueprint that is environmentally conscious and ecologically sensitive to the plights of the people and their environment.

Glissant E, the Caribbean writer, offered a statement to corroborate this literary pattern: that Ojaide is committed to “aesthetic of the earth” (Glissant, 1997: 149). In this light also, Aldo Leopold, the American ecologists, in his *A Sand County Almanac* said that “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community (Leopold, 1966: 262). One distinct aspect of this study is that eco-poetics ex-rays and presents nature related themes in clear and unambiguous pictures, without cultural or regional bias. It stands in battle against a new type of global colonial and neo-colonial conspiracy against the entire earth’s ecosystem.

Generally, the American ecocritics prefer the term ‘ecocriticism’, while British ecocritics frequently use the term ‘green studies’. As is common in Keats poems, Ecocriticism tends to be ‘celebratory’ in tone, in their writings on nature, while Green Studies is more ‘minatory’, that is warns on matters regarding nature. Osundare’s themes, largely, lean towards the latter. They seek to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governments, industrial, commercial, and neo-colonial forces. While our study is aligned more to the latter, to protect our natural environment and to keep us abreast of threats against our natural environment, we shall, through comparative thematic studies of the poems of Keats, that are more celebratory, with that of Osundare, that are largely minatory, find common grounds and points of divergence, and by so doing obtain objective views on the natural environment during Keats time of early Industrial Revolution.

The ecological horizon and the eco-critical enterprise

Eco-criticism took its original inspiration from the ecological movement. The variations of position that we find in ecological movements are moral, political and the rejection of an anthropocentrism or human-centred position. These are also the only variations of positions that we find in ecocritical studies. Within the ecological movement, we find proponents of ‘Deep Ecology’, ‘Eco-Feminists’, ‘Liberationists’, ‘Marxist ecologists’ and ‘Social Ecologists’(Bertens, 2008: 204-206). Proponents of deep ecology favour more radical solutions. They find purity only in the virgin wilderness of the natural environment. They attribute intrinsic value to all life and believe that the interests of non-human life on this planet can only be protected by a reduction of its human population.

The eco-feminists reader considers the historically unequal relationship – a relationship of domination by the human male and female. Nature mirrors this relationship between men and women as similar to a relationship between the human species and other living species -

fauna and flora coexisting in the natural environment. This situation is founded on the creation belief, sanctioned by the Judaeo-Christian heritage, which historically has privileged men, and the Enlightenment, built upon a long history of inequality. Belief has constructed men as responsible and rational and women as their more 'natural' but less rational and therefore inferior – opposite. Some eco-feminists consequently identified rationality itself as primarily responsible for our environmental crisis and adopted an anti-rationality approach to the natural world (Bertens, 2008). Henry David Thoreau in his *Walden* (1854) complained that 'the landscape is deformed' by 'avarice' and 'selfishness'. His contemporaries were outraged by the mass slaughter of millions of bison on the American Great Plains, resulting in the near-extinction of the species by 1890. The result of 'dominion' by implication included the reduction, within one single century, of herds totalling tens of millions to a bare three hundred surviving animals. In the United Kingdom, the consequences of the industrial revolution for a landscape that had remained essentially unchanged for centuries provoked similar protests (Bertens, 2008). Human beings often point at our mental superiority which puts us in a class all by ourselves, thus creating what seems to be a solid distinction between us and say, our livestock, an idea called 'speciesism' by the philosopher Peter Singer (Berten, 2006).

Another shade of dominion can be deduced from the Marxist Ecologists perspective of exploitation of human beings by human beings. Marxist Ecologists see the degraded state of our environment as the direct result of the unrestricted operations of international capital. The exploitation of the environment that is responsible for the environmental crisis follows the pattern of the capitalistic exploitation of labour. Marxist ecologists also argue that the principle of the 'free' market contributes to environmental problems because the market will always try to meet demand, even if supply can only be realized at great cost to the environment (Bertens, 2008: 119). Social Ecologists are interested in the social cost of environmental problems. The cost of environmental pollution and toxic wastes on a waste disposal site to human, plant and animal health; cost of clearing the topography for a new road or runway which is usually borne by the socially and politically powerless are a few of their paramount concern.

The Social Ecological reader targets the power relationships, cultural and political intrigues at work in the process of decision-making that leads to socio-environmental problems. Though this is marginal to the business of ecocriticism, the discourses of pollution and waste have in recent years drawn ever-increasing ecocritical attention. With the exportation of industrial waste in – soft and hardware products – into developing countries like Nigeria, the

inhabitants are confronted with socio-environmental problems and critics have recently realized that social ecology has a productive interface with postcolonial studies. Graham Huggan's article: "'Greening' Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives' of 2004, for instance, opens with the question "What do a polemical report on dams, a (pseudo) philosophical treatise on animal welfare, and a novel about elephants have in common?" (Berten, 2008: 206). These are all legitimate objects of the practice of ecocriticism. They give a fair idea of ecocriticism's range. One of the items mentioned is the animal welfare which brings us to another strand of ecocriticism or another group within the ecological movement - the 'Liberationists' (or animal liberationists). Liberationist criticism tried to undermine the moral and legal distinction between humans and animals. It does so in order to improve the fate of the animals whose short and miserable lives only serve the interests of the international bio-industry.

The widespread assumptions and beliefs that the human species has a right to use, and even exploit nature because of its place in either a divinely sanctioned or 'natural' hierarchy is damaging the natural environment. Ecocriticism has strong moral and political commitments. It differs from most other approaches in its rejection of the more radical forms of constructionism like 'Deep ecologists'. Though most ecocritics accept that our knowledge of our natural environment and the damage we do to it is a product of our consciousness, they believe also that, that does not exclude knowledge of things as they are. Ecocriticism is thus an exception in contemporary literary and cultural studies because they are not hostile to the world of science and are willing to accept its data, analyses, and authority in matters where laymen tend to be helpless, e.g. the long-term effects of global warming (Bertens, 2008: 208).

The colonization of the eco-system

Bate's book, *The Song of the Earth* (2000), argues that "colonialism and deforestation have frequently gone together" (Barry, 1995:251). There is today the colonization of our natural environment. Man has become, practically, a parasite to the natural environment. Ecologists tell us that the tropical forests harbour as much as half of all the plant and animal species and produce about a third of all living materials on the land. When man came with chainsaws and bulldozers and the colonizers started to level forests for western industries, the 'tragic epic combat' and eco-cide had started. The poet laments the eventual defeat of the ecosystem. The sentiments, concern and celebration of the natural environment which abound in the creative imaginative literature of Keats and Osundare are a testimony that Ecocritical Theory is

appropriate for this study. Ecocriticism is premised on the interaction between the natural environment and poetry. It is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Therefore, the theoretical concept that is all embracing and most adequate for this study is ecocriticism. This theory will thus form the bases for our analysis. The assumption in our comparative study on the environment will be that our two poets can adequately represent other societies like their own.

2.4. The Natural Environment and Romanticism in English Literary Tradition

The conception of romanticism varies from period to period. In an article titled “Wordsworth in the Tropics”, Huxley (1973) criticizes Wordsworth’s conception of the romantic tradition. He opines that Wordsworth’s advocacy that we worship, love and revere nature, the rivers, the woods, the flowers, animals, birds, etc. as great teachers of knowledge and morality is not tenable. Huxley goes further that indeed his pantheistic philosophy is only possible in the Lake District where he lives and not in the tropics. According to Huxley, there is a disquieting strangeness in nature in the tropics, and rivers imply wading, swimming alligators, plains mean swamp, forests fever, Mountains are dangerous or impassable. To travel is to hack one’s way laboriously through tangled prickly venomous dangerous darkness. Wordsworth, continues Huxley, misses the natural environment peculiar to African forest kind of wilderness. He never travelled beyond the boundaries of Europe but had confined his knowledge of nature to Europe that is so well gardened that it resembles a work of art, a scientific theory, and a neat metaphysical system which man has recreated in his own image (2084).

Though Huxley is convinced that romanticism will not thrive in wild dangerous tropics, George Meredith in his poem ‘Woods of Westermid’ is more assuring. The terror and fear associated with the forest and therefore the natural environment are more apparent than real. According to Meredith, “If we but trust nature, we shall find our fears transformed into serenity, joy and rapture” (Fowler 1994:2085). That Romanticism cannot thrive in the tropic is a farce. Poets like Christopher Okigbo, Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare are romantic poets in their own rights and have disproved this view by their works which show romantic leanings. Okigbo’s(1979) “The Passage” for example, is a poem of a home coming, a ceremony of innocence, an offering of reconciliation to Idoto, his village stream from which

he drank and washed: “Before you, mother Idoto,/ naked I stand;/ before your watery presence,/ a prodigal”(3). This poem celebrates nature in ritual cleansing. It involves total nakedness, a complete self-surrender to the water spirit that nurtures all creation (xi). In the poem are images of the natural environment, allusions to its fauna and flora, in general.

The negative perception that African forest environment does not have anything to celebrate lacks credibility. That such statement comes from a foreigner from the temperate region is understandable. In order to get a balanced view however, the works of nature poets, like Osundare on the natural environment is necessary. He was born and educated in Nigeria. As a poet, he wrote extensively about this region in his collection of poems like *The Eye of The Earth*(1986). Literary creativity is a product of human consciousness; a consequence of imitation and a result of cultural diffusion and thus not constrained by boundaries. Consequently, in Africa and indeed Nigeria, poets like Gabriel Okara, John Pepper Clark and Niyi Osundare consciously or unconsciously demonstrate Wordsworth’s dictum of learning from the ants: “let nature be your teacher” Woodring (41). They contemplate nature and listen to it as a teacher. They write in the romantic tradition and the poetic outputs are proofs that this dictum is tenable and applicable in the conquered and domesticated temperate lands as well as in the wild tropics. In “The Call of the River Nun” for example, Gabriel Okara expresses the nostalgic pleasure of tropical environment which gives him excitement of sweet memories.

According to Huge Holman (1980: 394:1980), “Romanticism is a literary and philosophical theory which tends to see the individual at the very centre of all life and all experience, and it places the individual, therefore, at the centre of art, making literature most valuable as an expression of his or her unique feelings and particular attitudes...”.

Among the qualities of romantic literature, according to Holman are love of nature, sympathetic interest in the past, mysticism, individualism, abandonment of the heroic couplet in favour of blank verse and many experimental verse forms, the dropping of the conventional diction in favour of fresher language, the idealization of rural life, enthusiasm for the uncivilized or natural, interest in human rights, sympathy with animal life and interest in lyricism. Despite this seemingly laudable literary venture, the natural environment is not central to their discourse. It remained just an object of passing referent in their works. While man remains the centre on which everything revolves, the natural environment remains and

still is endangered by exploitation and neglect until nature-poets came to reverence the earth and its environment - then focus starts to shift to the natural environment.

There is that contrasting creative output which common themes on nature can elicit from different poets. Several years after Okara writes 'The Call of the River Nun', Ibiwari Ikiriko (2000), in his *The Oily Tears*, writes a poem of disgust, regret and disappointment on the same river Nun. The same river Nun, Okara celebrates has become a symbol of sorrowful loss of the beauty of nature to those who live along its banks. Oil exploration in the Niger delta area of Nigeria today destroys a considerable part of the natural environment, the agriculture and fishing potentials of River Nun. It has lost the natural beauty and attraction that Okara writes about. Ikiriko writing about the same river today gives a different picture of River Nun. This shows that creativity is more of an action of man's imagination, his consciousness and indeed his experience located in time and space. Both poets express what they see and feel at various times in the life of the river; and go on to express these. The first is the effect of the river on Okara's young mind and the second, the destructive effect of men's activities on the river.

While 'The Call of the River Nun' is a personal nostalgia of childhood, Okara's poem 'Piano and Drum' is a subtle nostalgia of the primal life of Africa before foreign intervention, and the exploitation of Africa's natural environment. It presents to us a sense of loss and nostalgia for that sense of mysticism associated with the river, the 'jungle', 'green leaves' 'the flowers', 'the panther' and 'the leopard' all of which are elements of nature and characteristic of romantic poetry. As we can see from this poem, a major characteristic of romanticism is that it celebrates the rustic and glorifies the common things of life. There is an overwhelming influence of the natural elements in J.P Clark's poem 'Night Rain' (Senanu & Vincent, 2003:20). The ultimate effect of the rainfall in the poem is built up through vivid imagery involving the fauna and flora of the environment.

Osundare's poem 'Ode to a Falling Tree' in *Songs of the Season (1990)* is a praise poem on a tree. The tree remained the dwelling place 'for a harvest of birds chirping crisp serenades for a parting day'. The beauty which this element in nature confers on the environment is contrasted with the bareness that comes to it when: "One noon a thoughtless matchet hurried out of its/ Itching sheath a few maddening scoops and the/ Towering glory crashed to the muddy earth (143). In the above poem 'Ode to a Falling Tree' Osundare laments over man's mindless destruction of nature as he strives after modernization. In the place of the lovely

songs of the birds is silence. Though man thoughtlessly destroys good and useful things of his environment, the global trend today is the crusading for the preservation of the natural environment and the importance of literature is apparent. Though the likes of the above mentioned poets feature in the 20th century Africa and could be referred to as postcolonial poets, they belong to the romantic literary tradition that blossomed in 18th and 19th century England, France and America.

Onuekwusi (2002) observes that there is an attempt by Anyanwu (2001) to establish Christopher Okigbo, a Nigerian, postcolonial writer, as a Romantic poet. He argues that one definition of the concept: Romanticism seems quite inadequate (9). To view the romantic tradition as a revolution against neo-classical straight-jacketed adherence to order and decorum in poetic diction would have been adequate when the movement is first pioneered by Wordsworth and his group in the early 19th century but surely that will be inadequate in the contemporary age when romanticism has been seen to represent much more than revolution. At about 1798 everything which had been classical become suddenly romantic. Every romantic symptom appeared decades before this time and the temper of thought changed gradually, though the year 1832 brings the movement to a close, romanticism, in varying quantities has lived more than a hundred years since 1832.

The challenge in the study of romanticism is the indefiniteness of its definition and imprecision of its time of emergence. Onuekwusi sees romantic period in English literature as a period of more than a century between the Augustan period, 1688-1744 and Victorian period, 1837-1901. Romanticism has as its principal writers in men like William Hazlitt, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, John Keats, Byron, Percy B. Shelley etc. It is a gradual literary revolution against established rules of creativity especially in poetry where it blossoms more (3).

Ademola Dasylyva and Olutoyin Jegede (2003) in an array of articles on poetry, written in two parts and including sources, origin, movements and traditions, examine romantic poetry as an important type of English poetry. They highlight the characteristics of the romantic tradition and important poets within the tradition. They devote extensive attention to William Blake, William Wordsworth and John Keats. However, few examples of their poetry are explained in the book. The second part of the book discusses poetry from other parts of the world. Though much attention is on romantic poets, and their influences on one another, the current study intends to explore further the impact and influence of the natural environment on Keats and Osundare in particular, look at specific areas where the natural environment promote and

inspire their poetic creativity, their poetic vision and techniques and how their poetry helps in the 'save the earth programme.

2.5. The Romantic Era: John Keats and Niyi Osundare

Eruvbetine (1985: 251) posits that Keats draws some consolation from his love of the principle of beauty in all things because he believes that "the supreme thing in life is beauty." Eruvbetine compares Keats' conception of beauty with that of Hazlitt's: Keats' is platonic. Beauty is imminent and indwelling in all things while Hazlitt's conditional statement in the "Essay on Beauty", that beauty "is in some way inherent in the object." (252). Keats' view is, in this respect, analogous to the Platonic idea in which beauty in every form is one and the same, making his ideal some form of abstraction (253). For Keats, a poet's duty consists of seeking, exploring and depicting this beauty which inheres in nature and man's life. Eruvbetine further contends that Keats "belief that poets attain immortality through the eternal existence of their beautiful works also parallels the Platonic, since "men who are creative in their souls" create beauties that guarantee them the respect of posterity.

Beauty and the Keats' Ideal

Keats himself, refers to immortal works of beauty as "souls of poets", that serve as the means by which they "hold lofty converse with after times"(Eruvbetine, 1985:253). Nevertheless, the notion of beauty in Keats' works is un-platonic in some other respects. He does not regard personal beauty as an imperfect shadow of "the beauty absolute" but as "particles" that are integral parts of the essential beauty in all things. "The concept of an abstract beauty that exists apart from particulars is alien to the Keats' system. His abstract "idea of beauty" is conterminous with the mass of beauty formed from the various particles"(253). Keats does not believe in the Platonic progression from particular beauties to the absolute or ideal beauty, that Platonic steps or stages leading to the absolute beauty: "from one to two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions and from fair notions to the notion of absolute beauty"(253). For Keats, a passionate concentration on anything, irrespective of whatever Platonic stage the object is classed, leads the poet to the discovery of the essential beauty in all things. Just as a poetic individual gives free rein to the beauty within him, through intense experiences, which naturally flows out and unites with the beauty that flows through all things in the world, so also the organic beauty of the vegetation, fauna and the natural environment in general express their innate beauty

outward to their surroundings. Coleridge aptly describes this process as “a silent communion of Spirit (or beauty) with the Spirit (or beauty) in nature.”(255).

The beauty in Keats’ works is not in abstract forms but concretized in sensual and pictorial forms and this helps readers to appreciate his nature-poems. The rhythm that makes up our ecosystem and sustains life in the natural environment is an archetype of “eternal music” which Keats refers to. The rhythm that is sustained by keeping the balance through the mutual exchange of giving and taking in, of carbon dioxide and oxygen by plants and animals respectively. The beauty of the natural environment is destroyed by rocking the rhythm of the ecosystem through discordant sound, air, water and soil pollutions. Relatively, this position on beauty of our natural environment is not the concern of romantic poets of Keats time but this is inevitably the concept, qualities and tool required in our study of the natural environment.

Onwuekwusi (2002), in his book *Romanticism in Literature* contends that to the romantics, the subjects of poetry are the common incidents and situations of life, through which the poet traces the primary laws of nature (6). The natural scene remains a primary poetic subject as in Wordsworth’s “Lines Written in Early Spring”, Keats’ “On the Grasshopper and the Cricket”, P.B. Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” and Coleridge’s “Frost at Night”. Descriptions of landscape and other natural phenomena are prominent in romantic poetry including African poets like Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide. Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey”, Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight”, Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” and Keats’ “Bright Star” are landscape poems. Romantics celebrate and extol common things like the rustic, humble subjects and objects in nature; the supernatural, mystery and magic. Consequently, many people consider romantic poetry as synonymous with nature poetry (16).

What distinguishes Keats and Osundare from other romantic poets is that Keats on one hand is uniquely a poet of beauty. Osundare is a performance poet who introduces the use of musical instruments into the reading of his poems. He recommends that the flute and heavy drums should accompany the reading of “Forest Echoes” and “The Rock Rose to Meet Me” is to be chanted with *agba* drum throbbing in the background (The Eye of the Earth, 3&13). Through performance mode, Osundare reintroduces the total poetry which has its root in Yoruba oral folk poetry. According to Osundare “Musical accompaniment forms an important part of my poetic performance. My poems require the call-and-response mode” (Shook, 2007). As Onuekwusi (66) puts it, Keats is “a poet of sense impressions, tactile and sculptural imagery. In the same vein, Onuekwusi contends that Wilson Knight opines that

“Keats poetry is brimful of sensuous richness and sculptural yet exquisitely living attraction” (66). While Keats is “a poet of sense impressions, Osundare is a poet of word impression. According to Osundare “The Yoruba has a deep abiding respect for and interest in the word (*ohun/oro*). I like words and, their music: the way that music informs their meanings, the way words make things happen or not happen; the bridges they build and the gulfs they impose; their love-and hate relationship with silence” (Shook, Web: September, 2007). Coleridge is not as specific and relevant to the natural environment, be it intuitively or in imagination as Keats. Coleridge lives in a world of memory and dream. Though, an extremely knowledgeable person, he learns so much but publishes so little. As critic and philosopher, his poetic vision is to yoke “science, religion and politics into unity” (Onuekwusi, 2002: 55). While Wordsworth believes there is a great joy in nature and in simple things, nevertheless, his concerns lean more towards the natural man and not the natural environment as an entity. “His poetry insists that natural man can do a lot for himself by holding himself open both to imagination and to nature”(Onuekwusi 2002:37).

2.6. Aesthetics and the Natural Environment

Emmanuel Kant, in his *Critic of Reason* (1790) compares the difference between the Beautiful and the Sublime, noting that beauty is connected with the form of the object, having boundaries, while the sublime is to be found in a formless object, represented by boundlessness. Kant considers both the beautiful and the sublime as indefinite concepts, but whereas beauty relates to understanding, the sublime is a concept belonging to reason, and shows a faculty of the mind surpassing every standard of sense (25). Kant goes on to clarify this concept of the feeling of the sublime, and compares it with that experienced with the beautiful. The feeling of the beautiful may be correlated with pleasure one derives from simply seeing a waterfall or lamb; however, the feeling of the sublime is pleasure in seeing an overpowering, vast or malignant object of great magnitude, one that can destroy the observer. Kant contends that the feeling of beauty could be light reflected off a flower, giving pleasure from an object that cannot hurt its observer, but the weakest feeling of sublime could be light reflected off stones. An example of a weaker feeling of sublime could be an endless desert with no movement. This scene gives pleasure of an object that could not sustain the life of the observer. The feeling of the sublime can be understood from observing turbulent natural environment phenomenon like the flooding of Katrina or the Tsunami. A scene perceived from an object that threatens to hurt or destroy an observer. A full feeling of the sublime comes also from an overpowering turbulent nature and from beholding very violent,

destructive objects. The fullest feeling of the sublime is experienced from the immensity of the extent or duration of the universe. Pleasure here is from the knowledge of the observer's nothingness and oneness with nature.

Edmund Burke, comparing beauty and the sublime, explains the awesomeness of the natural environment in his consideration of the value of the sublime on art. He considers ugliness as an aesthetic quality. This view was developed into a new kind of criticism by T.M. Know who in his *Aesthetics Lecture on Fine Arts*(1975), considers the sublime as a marker of cultural difference. His argument is based on the Oriental cultures which most western critics described as less 'developed', Know observes that because cultures like the Chinese are autocratic in political structures and more fearful of divine law, oriental artists are more inclined towards artistic expressions; leaning more to the sublime. This according to Burke accounts for the excess of intricate details that is characteristic of Chinese art: The dazzling and multiple colours and patterns of Chinese art including its embodiment and formlessness. These were typical examples of the sublime which the West might see as 'ugly' but which inspires the viewer with an overwhelming aesthetic sense of awe. The same feeling of terror, that subliminal "darkness" expressed by Huxley (1973) on the disinterested nature of the African forest region. This will partly explain why Keats is referred to as a poet of beauty. No doubt, Keats is a poet that combines the three aspects of nature's aesthetic qualities which Eruvbetine (1985) refers to as "Keatsian aesthetic ideal" (202). Keats does not only appreciate beauty, he derives poetic pleasures from the boundless magnitude of the sublime in nature, and he is not timid in life's inevitable ugliness – the pains and the escapes. It is from these examples of beauty, sublime and ugliness that Keats creative imagination in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn, find poetic expressions.

2.7. John Keats and Niyi Osundare: A Comparative Interfacing

Fowler (1994) contends that while Keats is influenced by Greek classical and neo-classical art, mythology and literature which reflect in his poems like "Lamia", "Hyperion" and "Endymion", in 1813 when Keats first began to read lyric poetry, it is Edmund Spenser's works that draw him closer to poetry, and Percy Shelley, his friend, that inspires him. He challenges Keats to an epic poetry competition over the summer. The poem "Endymion" is the result of that competition. Fowler talks of "The new warmth of feeling was a strong vector of change; and so was the taste for folk songs and ballads surviving from an earlier condition of society". (202).

Nature has many meanings but the ones that classicists invoke are preconceived, abstract, philosophical and static. Others are psychological nature; scientific and concrete nature of geographical exploration. These various meanings of nature interacted throughout the Romantic Movement. Until the seventeenth century at least, the unexploited natural environment is generally repulsive, the forests and wildernesses are horrible and dreaded, but by very gradual change, wider settlement and growth of town populations, affection for travel into wild regions become fashionable. Horace Walpole, for instance, in 1739, writes of how built environment started to find inroad into the natural environment: “road winding round a prodigious mountain and a torrent breaking through cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks!” (204).

This sublime view had an impression on Richard West who said: “Your description of the Alps made me shudder...”(204) albeit, the British theorizing about the experience of sublime went back to Shaftesbury who develops this from Longinus who sees the sublime as an adjective of grand thought or language. This view further develops through Edmund Burke (1729-97). In developing the sublime, he contrasts the sublime with the beautiful. While the sublime is a boundless form, beauty is a subject with bound and form. Beauty is seen with the proportion of the human finite eyes, but the sublime belongs to an altogether different, non-human scale. This infinite, irrationality of sublime is excluded from the neo-classical ideal of beauty. In all, the issue of sublime and beauty continue to remain a factor of importance in the vision and poetic creative of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. Keats in his letter to Thomas Keats on Saturday, 27th June 1818, made a definite and critical comment on the sublime, and how this subsequently influenced his poetic vision.

Sublime in Osundare’s poetry is largely akin to what Longinus refers to as “an adjective, grand and lofty in ‘thought’ and in ‘language’”. Keats’ poetry does not directly influence or colour Osundare’s poetic vision and technique, in thought or in language. In some way Coleridge does influence Osundare in areas of poetic imagination, fancy and poetic journalism. Coleridge has great significance as a thinker than Wordsworth ever does. Influenced by “contemporary German works” Fowler (214) contends that he constructs a system of thought, a complete Romantic philosophy which “he achieves simultaneously with copious journalistic writing for his own papers: *The Watchman* (1796) and *The Friend* (1809-10). There is also a consistent political philosophy, besides containing a great many profound ideas. This is the closest one can assume that Romantic thinking influence Osundare. Osundare is not only a prolific writer, a performing poet, he also has a column in a Nigerian

news paper, The Nigerian Tribune, where he expresses his thoughts on current national issues in poetry form.

Another significant area of Romantic influence on Osundare is Coleridge's whole approach to literature which relies on his concept of the creative imagination as an agency of change and of growth. "As an associationist, it is vital for Coleridge to distinguish imagination from any mere 'fancy'. "The imagination is far more active and powerful and ideal poet must have a fully active consciousness."(215). It is this 'active consciousness' that provokes Osundare's social responsibility. Fancy is secondary. It is from a perspective that contrasts the 'imagination' and mere 'fancy' that we can say that Osundare is influenced by Romantic era. For imagination is at the centre of his poetic vision.

Keats also writing on imagination has this to say: "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination – What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not – for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty ... My Imagination is a Monastery and I am its Monk" (Eruvbetine, 254). Conversely, Fowler (214) opines that the Journalistic writing which serves to promote Coleridge's and Osundare's poetic craft and vision becomes an object of pain and a means to discredit Keats' poetic career. "The Quarterly Review" of April 1818, and "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" of 1818 make derogatory statements on the poems and person of Keats. And Lord George Byron, in his narrative poem "Don Juan" (Canto 2, stanza 60), writes: "T'is strange the mind, that very fiery particle/Should let itself be snuffed out by an article".

Keats' reply to these criticisms is simply philosophical and definitive; a further proof of Keats conviction of what his stand is regarding poetic creativity and vision. It draws also a clear line of distinction between Byron and himself concerning poetic imagination. In a letter to his brother George in September 1819, he confides: "You speak of Lord Byron and me - There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees - I describe what I imagine - Mine is the hardest task."

Keats (Gitting, 1978), in reference to imagination over fancy in poetic creativity, though awed by the sublime, the magnitude of the mountains of the country side, nevertheless, disagrees with Hazlitt, a contemporary poet and painter who infers that "such scenes make man appear little". Keats' reply is: "I cannot think with William Hazlitt that these scenes make man appear little. I never forget my status so completely – I live in the eye and my

imagination, surpassed, is at rest” (53-54). “I live in the eye” is Keats’ response to a thing of beauty and the sublime: live in the eye of my imagination tells me through the vehicle of my physical eyes. His physical eye is only a vehicle of his mind’s eye. His position is quite distinct from that of his contemporary and critic, George Byron who describes what his physical eyes see. Keats describes what he imagines through the vehicle of his physical eyes thus Keats is synonymous to his imagination and this is why he believes that poets are “most unpoetical of all things, they occupy other things” (87). Because, his imagination is not controlled by his physical eyes, Keats can occupy bodies and flow like the river and endure storms like the mountains. Osundare in an interview with Shook (2007) contends that his agrarian environment, his parents and the total theatre in Yoruba traditional festivals have profound influence on his performance poetry. Osundare’s poetry also demonstrates Marxist’s orientation – a class struggle against human and environmental exploitation. Thus Osundare does not adapt Romanticism as Keats, but craftily combines Yoruba poetic thought and expresses these in English language.

2.8. Lyrical Ballads and Folk Poetry

According to Abram (1987), a narrative poem is one written by a learned poet in deliberate imitation of the form and the spirit of the popular ballad. Some of the greatest of these are composed in the Romantic period. Like Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” which is much longer and more elaborately developed than the folk ballad. Scott’s “Proud Maisie” and Keats’s “La Belle Dame sans Merci” are other examples (13). Abram opines that the Romantic poets’ interests are in the ballad, as an authentic, native poetic form. According to him, Sir Walter Scott publishes his three-volume collection of traditional ballads, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in 1802-3, and Wordsworth and Coleridge adopts the ballad form in their first joint collection of poems, *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798(13). Each of these poems presents an encounter between a mortal and a supernatural being and the blighted life that follows this encounter. Both poems have an eerie, nightmarish atmosphere and haunted setting. In this poem “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, Keats uses a variation of most common ballad stanza form, which is a four-line stanza (quatrain), rhyming *a b c b*. (Ballads are seldom absolutely regular).

The frequent repetition of words, phrases and even whole lines is another typical feature of the poem. This aides the memories of reciters and listeners as well as emphasising points in the story when long ballads are spoken aloud: the word ‘she’ is repeated on the first lines of

stanzas 'vii' and stanza 'viii'. The conjunction 'and' appears in all the twelve stanzas of the poem. Phrases like 'palely loitering', 'pale kings', 'pale warriors', 'death-pale' appear in stanzas 'i', 'x', and 'xii'. The first lines of stanzas 'i' and 'ii' stated with same sentence "O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms" and the sentence "And no birds sing" appear on the fourth lines of first and the last stanza. In spite of its apparent simplicity, the poem is a powerful, haunting poem and the many repetitions contribute to its strangely hypnotic effect. These observations and peculiarities that we see in the British ballad distinct from the Africa/Yoruba folk poetry forms. The ballad and Yoruba folk poetry are species of British and Yoruba oral forms respectively and oral roots help Keats and Osundare to align themselves with their traditional environments and settings. It gives them a sort of belonging and a sense of return to the rustic, simple rural setting.

Drabble (2000) says that lyric poetry denotes poetry that expresses the writer's emotion. It derives from the Greek adjective 'for the lyre', the name given in ancient Greece to verse sung to a lyre, whether as a solo performance or by a choir. The Greek lyrists are then imitated in Latin at an artistic level by Catullus and Horace. However, what appears to have been more important for the development of the genre is the tradition of popular song which exists both in Rome and among the German tribes. This continues to flourish in spite of the Church's disapproval and produces in all the medieval literatures of Western Europe a lyric harvest that ranges from hymns to bawdy drinking songs and drew its authors from every social category. In England lyric poems flourishes in the Middle English period (618). According to Drabble (618), by the 16th century, it has become quite sophisticated lyric tradition, enriched by the direct imitation of ancient models and reaches perfection in the song books and plays of the Elizabethan age. During the next 200 years, the link between poetry and music was gradually seperated, and the term 'lyric' comes to be applied to short poems expressive of a poet's thoughts or feelings.

Ballad is a narrative song or poem, slow and sentimental in rhythmic verse and suitable for singing. It is originally a song intended as an accompaniment to a dance, hence light, simple song of any kind. The old English ballads are in the great collection of F.J. Child, English and Scottish Popular Ballads, (5 Vols, 1882-98) the oldest ballad being 'Judas' (c1300), with an uncharacteristically religious theme. Ballads, more traditionally deal the pagan supernatural with tragic love, with historical or semi historical events e.g. Robin Hood ballads. Traditionally, a ballad is a poem that tells a story of exciting, heroic or even supernatural events. Originally, ballads are sung or recited to an audience and the story moves rapidly through action and dialogue (62).

This is the similarity between ballad and African oral poetry. Like most African oral poetry and oral folk tale forms in Osundare's poems, many of the most popular ballads are handed down by word of mouth through the centuries and exist in several different versions, alter and improve by generations of minstrels, i.e. musicians, entertainers and local storytellers. The popular ballad, known also as folk ballad or traditional ballad is a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story. Again, this is like the Yoruba poetry called 'ewi' and 'aalo apagbe', a variant of Yoruba folktale, often rendered with accompanying songs and audience participation. Drabble also observes that ballads come as the narrative species of folk songs, which originate among illiterate, or only partly literate, people.

The initial version of a ballad is composed by a single author, but he is unknown; and since each singer who learns the ballad by word of mouth is apt to introduce changes in both the text and the tune, it exists in many variant forms. Typically, the popular ballad is dramatic and impersonal: the narrator begins with the climatic episode, tells the story tersely by means of action dialogue, sometimes by means of the dialogue alone, and tells it without expressing his personal attitudes or feelings. Although, the ballad and the African oral poetry have enormous influence on the form and style of Keats and Osundare, especially since Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads and Okigbo's rhythmic verses respectively, this study's focus is on the individual poetic innovation and creativity, distinct from imitation and convention.

The Eco-Therapeutic Perspective

Ngiewih (2009) observes that Novalis Hardenburg (1772-1801) preoccupies himself with the eco-therapeutic perspective; his concerns with the aspects of the pharmaceutical in nature and its impact on human life. He remarks, stressing that nature is a pharmaceutical principal, a poison and a healer (4). Ngiewih establishes a type of connection between the three subjects: Hardenburg, Keats and Osundare. Keats expresses sensitivity to the way the natural environment affects the health of the human body. With his training as a medical doctor, he points out the therapeutic or pharmaceutical importance of nature to the body and soul through his poems. While "Ode on Melancholy" warns against the misuse of natural herbs as intoxicants (L.1-2), his "Sleep and poetry" explores the healing power of nature, showing that nature does not serve merely as an element of creation and source for aesthetic and poetry but could also serve a medical purpose to whoever is open and receptive to it. Osundare also, in his "Let the Earth's Pain be Soothed", presents a lyrical tone in expectation of 'rain', a

symbol of healer after draught. Compares 'dust' caused by lack of rain as 'poison' and rain therefore as symbolizing 'healing' for both man and vegetation(LL.27-29).

2.9. Art as a Source of Inspiration for Nature-Poets

Woodring (1965) contends that Wordsworth writes more of didactic poetry than nature poetry. In "What Man Made of Man" he sees nature as the best teacher (45). Wordsworth's writings often consider nature in his writings when it helps to explain further the subjects of his discourse; otherwise nature is only a passive concept. Lucy, the persona in his poem "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Way" is his ideal English girl, and is the subject of reference, not nature (45). Natural environment in his poems is not the focus but plays a secondary function. While Wordsworth and the other poets describe the natural environment from a distance, Keats aligns with the quickening essence of the natural environment, its feelings, colour and texture. Conversely, Keats and Osundare see nature as part of their lives and so personalize same. This is exemplified by Keats in "Bright Star": "Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art,/Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night..."; and "Ode to a Nightingale" we have: "But being too happy in thine happiness, and with thee fade away. Away!... away! For I will fly to thee"; and in Osundare's "The Rocks Rose to Meet Me": "The rocks rose to meet me/ like passionate lovers on a long-awaited tryst/The rocks rose to meet me..."

In the poems selected for this study the poets in question expressed what they experienced and imagined. They see themselves as a part of the natural environment that they appreciate and describe. As Keats puts it, "Poets fill other bodies". He would rather speak to his objects of reference as we have in "To Autumn" and "Ode to a Nightingale", which spoken to in the 2nd person instead of the detached 3rd person. Keats and Osundare use relatively simple not ornate or esoteric forms as in Samuel Coleridge's nature poem "Kubla Khan".

Unlike in Keats' nature poems, in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", order is not that of prose logic. Its fragmentary nature interrupts ordinary reality in such a way that conscious efforts of inanimate object of the imaginary world become problematic" (Fowler, 1994: 213). Coleridge's poetic vision focused on abstractions that give hints of an "earthly paradise, magical powers of the poet set apart from society". Keats's and Osundare's poems, on the other hand, relate to their immediate society and physical realities. Coleridge's poems, distinct from Keats' poems, are largely founded on what Fowler (1994) referred to as "speculative thought"(214). In line with this frame of thought, Hazlitt argued that in

Coleridge's work, "the individual is always merged in the abstract and the general." (214). Based on the above observations, our choice of Keats and Osundare became imperative. They brilliantly embodied their visions in vividly sensuous yet economical details. Structurally intense and subtle of texture, their diction is simple but optimally compressed and thus adequate for this study.

According to Ian (1967), Hazlitt describes what he sees in his journey through France and Italy, as "the choicest remains of the works of arts, the proudest efforts of the mind of man, a whole creation of genius... There were the golden hues of Titan, the Raphael's speaking faces, the splendor of Rubens, the gorgeous gloom of Rambrandt, the airy elegance of Vandyke, and Claude's "Classical scenes lapping the senses in Elysium", and Poussin breathing the spirit of antiquity over them" (xix-xx). Keats got his inspirations from such mental and visual paintings, coupled with an innate imaginative power, an ability to make use of apt visual images of what he sets his eyes and mind upon.

Keats and his friends, B.R. Haydon, Leigh Hunt and Joseph Severn are keen arts enthusiasts especially of paintings of landscape and seascape. An example is a portrait of John Keats in 1819, painted by Joseph Severn. Other paintings are Poussin's "The realm of flora", "Autumn or the Grapes of the promise land". "Landscape with Narcissus and Echo", "Landscape with Bacchus at the palace of the dead Staphylus". These paintings, especially those by Poussins and Claude are according to Keats, "incarnate delight of Greece" (xix-xx). Goslee (1982) contends that other sources are original Greek sculptures and vases, some of which the British government purchased. "Examples of such sculptures and vases are the 'Elgian Marbles', and the 'Townley vase' " (73-85), from where images in poems like "Ode on a Grecian Urn" emerge.

Gittings (1978) contends that "Ken, Fitful Gusts" was written in October 1816 after Keats meeting with Leigh Hunt in Hunt's cottage in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, where they read or discuss, among other things, Milton's "Lycidas" and Petrarch's "Sonnets to Laura". Keats receives inspiration also from the historical painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, who dedicates the sonnet "To Haydon" (175-176). Some of his poems are not direct description of a particular natural phenomenon, sculpture, urn, engraving or painting. He introduces or employs details from various works, synchronizes them into outstanding poems. According to Gittings (3), One other source of his nature poetry concerns his atonement with and love for natural scenery and landscapes. In one of his letters to Severn in 1816, Keats explicitly

expresses his desires “to look into some beautiful scenery for poetic purposes” (4). In the notes of Williams Hazlitt, a painter, critic and nature poet, the following comments also described some art works that he sees depicting the natural environment as “The choicest remains of the works of arts, the proudest efforts of the minds of man, a whole creation of genius. Coupled with these sources are Keats imaginative ability, the abstracting and modifying power to unify bits and pieces of materials into artistic montage or aesthetic essence(3). Keats in his letter to Severn, supports this position: “I particularly, would look into some beautiful scenery for poetic purposes” Gittings (3). Gittings remarks that “Keats probably thought more continually about poetry than any of his contemporaries... Keats thought and wrote with boundless interest about literature and literary composition” (9).

Art is a factor to be considered when considering Keats’ and Osundare’s poetic creativity. Its importance cannot be overemphasized when we see that Keats receives poetic inspiration through works of art especially those from classic period. According to Haskel and Nicholas (1981), Keats never left England until 1820, the very year he died but his works always remind one of Titan, Claude, Poussin, John Martins and the like, whose works were largely of Greek origin(12). This is a proof of Keats interest in Grecian life. It also means that the paintings and sculptures of ancient Greece from where his inspiration comes must be in their original form or in form of reproduction. He has the opportunity to use both. There are two basic worlds of imagination that inspires him. These are the world of classical antiquity as recreated by the Neo-classical painters and the world of the Middle Ages as recreated by the antiquaries and romance writers and artists of the 18th century. We have writers and artists like Charles James Fox, Benjamin West, Samuel Rogers, Fanny Burney and Hazlitt Williams who had, like Keats, the opportunity to travel out of England to France and Italy (14). These artists bring back with them their impressions of great works of art as they see them in the Laure Musee Napoleon. These impressions are represented in the form of paintings, engravings and writings of Hazlitt.

Mensah’s (2003) views on ‘simple’ and ‘sentimental’ poets classify Wordsworth under the ‘Simple’ poet. Simple poets “are at home with nature, they paint nature’s details with great care, yet at the same time, they seem detached from nature” (288). I concur here with Mensah on the one hand while on the other hand, in his classification of ‘sentimental’ poets as poets that do not take nature for granted, they reflect and present nature with greater intensity of feeling” A sentimental poet will rather visit, visualize, feel and touch nature than just mention it in passing (288).

Furthermore, Ngiewih (2009) observes that Taylor Coleridge, a contemporary of Keats, is another nature poet of the esoteric order. “Nature is apprehended by Coleridge, for example, from pantheistic and monistic dimensions as a universal force which sheds light on man’s spirituality. In other words, the question of nature is examined from an eco-metaphysical dimension”(2). Coleridge’s poems ‘Kubla Khan’ and ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ are nature poems which reflect his atonement with and love for natural scenery and landscapes. He writes poems with gothic and esoteric leanings. His “Kubla Khan has esoteric leanings. The imagery in ‘The Rime of the ancient Mariner’ is that of a shipwreck on a haunted isolated area of the North Pacific. The geographical setting invokes images of a natural environment untouched by man. He describes the sun as a monster, emerging from the sea. Ngiewih contends that Keats nature-consciousness lends credence to his appreciation of “nature from this organicist viewpoint” (9). Natural environment therefore plays a vital role in the understanding of his aesthetic ambitions and achievements. Keats, no doubt, is conscious of poetic expression as an aesthetic process rather than as a final achievement. His poetry is largely organic, growing naturally into a full concept just as a cell would from a nucleus.

2.10. The Construction of the Natural Environment in Africa

The study by Ezenwa – Ohaeto (1994) continues the discussion on the interaction between literature and nature, but it only makes passing remarks on literary ecology. Its focus is on orality in Nigerian poetry. Niyi Osundare’s and Obiora Udechukwu’s poems are effective because they portray the environment of modern Nigerian poetry in terms of craft. They combined in their artistic rendition African oral poetry and foreign poetic elements. Their poetic craft are fresh and innovative and so can be classified as modern Nigerian poetry. Ezenwa’s observations are obvious in respect of Osundare’s poems. This study intends to research into the areas where Osundare uses oral poetic artistry, social experience, foreign poetic elements, craft and innovation to project and promote the course of the natural environment and justify his concern for it.

Patrice Nganang (2006) discusses the negative relationship between natural environment and literature as it is constructed in films and in the process of film making in Congo by Colonial Belgium. He contends that such destructive effects on the natural environment are more evident in Africa than in other parts of the world. While making adequate textual references to the devastating effects of colonialism on natural environment in the Congo, he describes

colonial attempts at domesticating nature, penetrating the landscape, installing colonial plantations, and exploiting the natural resources. His study on the natural environment is relevant to the discourse on nature but it is limited in scope to film making in the Congo. The current study gives a robust view of nature as it is depicted in the poetry of Keats and Osundare.

Adekoya (2011) relates the dual subject/object nature of the natural environment with the paradoxical nature of Ogun. Exploring the poems of Wole Soyinka's *Idanre* in his paper "The Creation Myth of Ogun and the Technological Transformation of 21st Century African Society" (5). Adekoya elucidates the symbolic paradox of Ogun, the God of Iron, war, hunting, and the creative essence and guardian of the road. In him "there is no separation of the artist and the scientist", the explorer and the warrior-destroyer. "The Ogun myth reveals the paradoxical essence of creativity as well as the complex relationship between the arts and the sciences" (5), The nature of human poet and creativity found in the natural environment complements the nature of human and destructive scientist symbolized by built/domesticated environment. While Soyinka's *Idanre* aligns with Ogun whose "fingers drew warring elements to a union of being" (5), Adekoya opines that "Poetry personifies nature and urges on humanity a romance attitude that can help preserve the environment" (5). Ogun's role as poet is a symbolic representation and creative nature in man; and his vocation as scientist represents the destructive nature in man (5). This can also be represented as natural environment and built/domesticated environment respectively.

In our current dispensation, Ogun's other half, the active, warrior Spirit, the destructive part of his being destroying his other half, 'the guardian essence' will be his undoing for the Earth and the entire humanity, except an urgent stand is taken for the creative essence symbolized by the natural environment. "That bloody thirsty destructiveness" (5) in Ogun's human nature must be contained within the framework of current global environmental reality. The conflict in Ogun's nature, the fight between Ogun and Sango, the two fiery Gods (6) is still on in the 21st century. The "splitting of the atom (6), an act that is originally intended to "liberate man from fear of insecurity, create and advance culture,(1) only release more potent power for human's negative use"(6). The 'earth warming' storms and eco-cides are warning signs of Ogun's impending self destruction. In our present 21st century dispensation, there is need to foreground and cultivate eco-friendly attitudes towards the natural environment. Ken Saro Wiwa, poet and environmental activist says that "The environment is man's first right.

Without a safe environment, man cannot exist to claim other rights, be they political, social, or economic.” (Web, June 2010).

While Adekoya draws attention to the need for human peaceful co-existence and an attitude that will promote and help sustain an harmonious environment; aligning poetry with science through the paradoxical dual nature that is in mythic Ogun, essentially focuses on arts, politics and cultural transformation of Osundare: “one of the indices of which is the displacement of metonymic idioms by the metaphoric and symbols”. (5) Ogundele (2011) in his paper: “Niyi Osundare: The Poet as Trickster” explores Osundare’s poetry that is deeply rooted in oral and performative tradition of the Yoruba people. These resources also provide the language for his expression; the element of transformation in his poetry: from political to cultural poetry. He focuses on cultural poetry.

Ogundele emphasises the significance of the opening and closure in his poems, how these technique yields deeper insight into the structural and thematic features of Osundare’s poetry. The features contribute to the poetry as ceremonial and ritual performance.” These opening and closing poems have their ancestry in *ijuba*, the homage chant which precedes performance proper, and which no Yoruba oral artist, past or present cannot dispense with” (20). We have such example in *The Eye of the Earth* (1986), where the opening salutation, homage chant is to the Earth “spouse of the roving sky/ virgin of a thousand offsprings/ Ogere amokoyeri.” This homage precedes the *ijade* public performance poems of the natural environment that follows. “Our earth will not die” is an example of a closing chant or announcing that the performance is ended.

Ogundele’s approach to the collection of Niyi Osundare’s poetry titled *Moonsongs* (1989) is that of sign post of Osundare’s transformation from political to cultural poetry where the moon is a symbol of deep cultural issues of social stratification as we have in the last line of poem “XXII”: “The moon is a mask dancing”(42). In this poem, we see the aspects of the natural environment like “jungle”, “cobras” and “leopards” employed to allude to Ajegunle, a neglected, crime-redden community of Lagos city. There is here also a subtle reference to how built environment seals man physically away from the natural environment as we have in “The ceiling is a sky/ weighted down by chandeliers/ of pampered stars”(LL,6-8). *Moonsongs* is indeed transformational. It is an expression of an implosive poetic vision symbolized by the ‘moon’.

The collection is a symbolic reconstruction of cultural issues, using resources from the natural and built environment. Ogundele sees *The Eye of the Earth* as taking a ceremonial and ritualistic form as in opening of the poem “Earth”. An incantatory homage to and invocation of *ile* (Earth) in the idiom of the Yoruba oriki (praise chant) on the last line: *ogere amokoyeri*. In the poems that follow, poems like “The Rock Rose to Meet Me”, “Forest Echoes”(3-12), “First Rain”(29) deals with aspects of the natural environment and minatory perspective in “Ours to Plough, not to Plunder”(48-49). In *midlife*, Ogundele (20) explores the volume as “a poetic analogy, emphasizing the personal pronoun by playing upon the name of the deity Osun. After whom the poets father is named” (20). It is in this volume that the “Yoruba mythological figures and deities first made their emphatic entry”(20). Though Ogundele elaborates on culture and language, he does not mention the aspect of the natural environment in poems like “Rock Song” (1-15), “What the River Said”(17-32), and “Diary of the Sun”(72-86). Osundare in *Midlife* uses snap shots of the natural environment to write his autobiography by comparing the flow of human life – from birth to death with the flow of a river from its source to the mouth of the sea, where it empties itself into the larger body of water. The author uses the natural environment to allude also to human flesh and blood in the volume’s Foreline (ix-x): “The rocks are my bones, the river my fluent veins. And the valley where both meet in clod and clay, that valley moulds the legend of my flesh”(x). “Midcourse now, equidistance between heady mountains and the waiting sea”(x) Ogundele’s interest is in nothing but the obvious stylistic and thematic shifts in Niyi Osundare’s poetry from political content to performance style in which oral literary materials are appropriated.

In a contrary development, Adeleke’s (2013) dissertation looks at Osundare’s poetry from sociological and psychological perspectives. Using Osundare’s *City Without People: The Katrina Poems* (2011), Tanure Ojaide’s *The Beauty I Have Seen*(2010) and Tayo Olafioye’s *Arrow Heads in My Heart* (1999), he discusses these authors pains about their home land while in Diaspora. They represent the psychological impact and lament the human degradation and inhumanity they suffer. Their writings capture the writers’ experience of the two worlds – their home land, Nigeria and the Diaspora (34-36). The present study is interested in the degradation that the natural environment suffers and how Keats and Osundare capture these in their poetry.

2.11. Natural Environment Issues in the Niger Delta

The current environmental realities – earth warming and its consequent impact - that have made the cry for a ‘Greenearth’ imperative, has become the new sensibility in the Niger

Delta. These challenges give Osundare the spur as a social critic to see the significance of setting creative imagination as an agency of change of attitude and enlightenment over mere ornate and fanciful writing. Okpewho's *Tide* (2003) is an example of the nexus between literature and the Natural Environment.

Onuekwusi's (2004) study is on Romanticism in the Nigerian context and three Nigeria poets in post-colonial Nigeria: J.P. Clark, Gabriel Okara and Niyi Osundare. He opines that the universality of literature is what makes the Natural Environment relevant during Keats' Romantic era and Osundare's. This accounts for the global prominence that is associated with the state of the natural environment today. Onuekwusi (88) suggests that "the interest in the concept of globalization and its consequences are aroused in part by an interest "to understand the nature of the socio-economic changes which seem to consume all advanced capitalist countries.

In "Ode to a Falling Tree" in *Songs of the Seasons*(1990), this praise poem on a tree according to Onuekwusi, contrasts the beauty which this element in nature confers on the environment with the barrenness that comes to it when "A thoughtless matchet hurried/out of the itching sheath" and cuts down the tree. This poem according to Onuekwusi is a "Lamentation over man's mindless destruction of nature as he strives after modernization."(99). He opines that this is crusading for environmental preservation which is the global trend and also metaphoric statement that speaks of the propensity of man to thoughtlessly destroy things that are good, useful and admirable, be they fellow human beings, ideas or even elements of nature(99) like air and water.

Doki (2008), observes that the African poet occupies a very prominent and unique place in the literary firmament in his capacity to use orature as a medium to re-enter the essence of his tradition and culture. According to Doki, the African poet stands tall above others because of "his ability to employ in African poetry elements from African flora and fauna and devices from traditional African images."(30). His imagery, themes and symbolisms are also drawn from a communally accessible pool and he can express himself in a truly African idiom. Leopold Sedar Senghor an African poet of French expression, represents one of the important aspects of negritude, its concern with recapturing for modern literature the technical repertory of traditional African orature and Niyi Osundare, the Nigerian poet, whose poetry seeks experimentation for the purpose of modernizing and revitalizing tradition. The author contends that "all these constitute the mode and manner of poetic expression and creativity in Africa and that the African poet works from the standpoint of the African community. He

observes that what distinguishes the African poet from the European poet is that “Africans are more natural and original because they are more closely related nature and the African poet does not distinguish himself from the objects in nature such as, animal, tree, mountain or social event. On the contrary, the European poet is detached from the object and for this reason he attempts to isolate man from his environment. It is all these attributes that reveal the greatness of African poetry and creativity. These same attributes have earned the African an eminent place on the literary map.

This position may be true to a point but not wholly true for John Keats. Keats in one of his letters to Richard Woodhouse in 1818, observes that “The poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other body, - the sun, the moon, the sea, men and women who are creatures of impulse, are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute. – the poet has none, no identity, no self” (Gittings, 87). Based on this position, Keats and Osundare are the most unpoetical of all things: They are not “detached from the object nor isolated from their environment”. They are “more closely related to the object” and do not distinguish themselves from objects like trees, mountains, rivers, stars, moon, fauna and flora.

Doki contends that scholars of Nigeria/ Africa poetry disagree on the major distinguishing trait in the old and new Nigerian poetry in English. Biodun Jeyifo and Tanure Ojaide “consider the new trends in modern African poetry as a development from and yet a deliberate reaction against earlier trends, especially those associated with early Okigbo, Soyinka and Clark (30). Other Scholars like Bryce and Bamikunle are of the view that “there is nothing the new generation poets have done that was not attempted by the first generation poets of Africa”(30). If we take this arguments together, we will discover that the only true distinction between the first and second generation poets of Africa is the confidence and optimism of the second generation poets in the ability of the working class to bring about change on the African continent”(30). In order to take a stand relevant to our study, poetry and the natural environment, there must be a redefinition of the positions of the poets in question and the new Nigeria poetry in English.

Agbada (2009), in his “Soil, Oil and Foil: Isidore Okpewho’s Tidal Victims in Niger Delta Novel of Environment”, contends that “The Niger delta has become both a geographical space and social constituent in the Nigerian lexicography of agitation for justice.” The Niger delta in recent past and today has become a volatile region because of the wanton exploitation of the natural resources, oil and the unmitigated neglect of the people of the land. The people

live in abject poverty, the built environment destroyed by shelling from the Nigerian military might and the natural environment, its soil and waterways milked without the required replenishment and sustenance by government and foreign oil companies. Agbada infers that the Natural Environment has “suddenly become an issue as if the people of Niger Delta has just awoken from their sleep” (2). The dormant Niger Delta community suddenly became active. The result of this sudden awareness became what Ikiriko (2000) metaphorically refers to as ‘oil tears’ and consequently, the parasitic milking of the blood of the people and the land culminated into resistance, restiveness, violence and further destruction of the built and the natural environment. This turbulence is compounded when the people discovers that they are being short changed all along.

The sense of betrayal spills over into socio-economic sabotage which results into the hiking of the price of crude oil in the world market. This issue of degradation of Niger Delta’s natural environment which draws Nigeria to world notice and shakes the world to the very foundation of its moral-economic conscience is of great interest to this study. But the implication of the environment on the creative force that produces the work is ignored. This gap is to be considered in Keats’ and Osundare’s poetry. Any community that allows its Natural Environment to be unduly exploited suffers untold hardship and the Niger Delta is neither an exception nor the only region that suffer human and environmental degradation.

Seagal (2009) in his documentary film of the Natural Environment of the Amazon region of South America contends that it is a natural right to fight against oil cartels in order to save the natural environment: “Governments of the world have forced us to use gasoline for over 100 years. Oil Cartels and big business are responsible for destroying the water we drink, the air we breathe and the food we eat”. This fight for our natural environment includes the vegetation, desertification and fauna, most of the species which are already going extinct.

Seagal’s (2009) article explores the film genre to enlighten the peasant rural community of the need to fight against all forms of destruction of their natural environment. It presents a vivid picture of man’s wanton, destructive activities on the environment and the eco-system at large.

Today, the destructive effect of man’s activities on the environment has shifted from Africa and the developing world to the industrialized world like Britain where Keats was born. Unlike the attempt to domesticate the African mind and its natural environment for the West, Industrialization now attempts to domesticate the earth – its space, lands and seas and the consequences of this are the destruction of the world eco-system. This universal concern is

expressed by Ross Parmanterin in the last quarter of the 20th century, that “In remaking the world in the likeness of a steam-heated, air conditioned metropolis of apartment buildings, we have violated our kinship with nature. The recent Gulf oil spill on the Pacific Ocean, though far from African shores, it is human induced disaster against global aquatic system. The destructive effect on the American economics, aquatic life and the concerns of governments of the West is clearly expressed by president Obama of the United States of American. On the 29th August, 2009 via web, he laments: “The people of Gulf Coast have demonstrated what it means to persevere in the face of tragedy - and rebuild in the face of ruin”. (Microsoft Encarta, 2009).

Like Okpewho’s paper, Oghenememo’s (2012) is preoccupied with the issue of the Niger Delta; but unlike it, the roles played by the Nigerian poet in his environment is emphasized. The author looks at what writers and critics, over the years, have said about the poet, in Nigerian society in relation to his environment. He focuses attention on the “waterside poet experiences” as reflected in Ibiwari Ikiriko’s *Oily Tears of the Delta*. The study presents the experiences of the people of Niger Delta and their natural environment, where despite abundant natural resources like crude oil, offshore and on land, aquatic fauna and vegetation, they are still faced with countless problems, exploitations and degradation(1).

Drawing from Umez’s (2012) *Dark Through the Delta*, Oghenememo (1) opines that the consequence of these daunting state of Niger Delta’s natural environment is social revolt: a revolt against foreign oil explorers and their Nigerian counterparts on one hand and activities of the politicians that resort to oppression and killing of the Niger Delta people who find reason to question or interrogate the unjust treatment meted to them. The result of neglect and exploitation of the natural environment on the people of Niger Delta remain an anathema: a tragedy which can only be averted and resolved if the cries of nature poets and the poor masses are heard, about the immediate need to take environmental friendly steps by government officials in Nigeria. Oghenememo opines in the study that this could be done through provision of job opportunities to youths in the area.

Abimbola’s (2012) thesis focuses on the huge gap that exists between non-Western perspectives and Western perspective in the area of architectural design: Western design traditions, Nigerian architecture and aesthetics. The author presents a pedagogical model to help designers, architects, educators and students integrate non-Western perspectives in the built environment. He discusses how “ethnographies from the Nigerian cultures can inform the development of a multicultural design course, draw from these ethnographies to discuss

space articulation and organization, spatial quality, interior materials, arts and crafts from Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Benin cultures, four major Nigerian ethnic groups and give illustrations of how design principles from Nigerian cultures can be used as references for discussing design ideas (2). The focus of the current study is not limited to built environment but also to domesticated ones as they affect adversely the surrounding natural environment. Besides, the current study's interest is also on the nexus of poetry and architecture: How would Poets interpret into poetic forms architectural designs on one hand, and how would Architecture design and concretize 'written poetry' into 'frozen poetry' on the other.

Mogborukor's (2012) study highlights the causes and effect of water pollution which come in form of acid rain on the water resources in the Niger Delta region. Basing his study on 300 water samples which are collected from 100 water sources: rain, open well and river water resources, he argues that before the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta area, all rivers, streams, ponds, well and rain water which served as a source of domestic water supply to the inhabitants were free from pollution. Further, the exploration and flaring of natural gas in the environment, gives rise to emission of carbon into the atmosphere and the resultant acid rain which "increased the level of acidity in most of the water bodies rendering them to be turbid and toxic" (217). Today, acid rain in this region has adversely affected the ecosystem. Fish in the rivers and sea have disappeared. Because the petroleum industry has degraded the physical landscape and water ways, the attachment of the population the natural environment become disoriented.

McGrew (2012) contends that "Globalization emphasises the multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness" that surpasses and together constitute the modern world system. Globalization and literature become relevant when seen from the position of nature poetry because this give builds a forum for eco-critical comparative discourse. In doing this, we will deduce their spacio-temporal differences. Which nature items are universal and the ones that are specific, their areas of divergence and convergence of their physical nature of their regions.

For Keats and Osundare, their seasons are unique, distinct and specific. Keats is from a temperate environment while Osundare is from tropical Africa. Naturally, Keats describes winter, summer, spring and autumn and Osundare describes nature resources based on rainy and harmattan seasons. What will be universal and easily global attention and appreciation will be aspects like rivers, seas, mountains, waterfalls, wildernesses, countryside and built/domesticated environments. Onuekwusi's position on Globalization and Literature is

thus relevant in eco-critical studies and poetic constructions. Globalization applies not only to human societies and cultures; it impacts also on the earth's eco-system – its fauna, flora and the physical landscape and seascape.

Landscape, Seascape, Flora and Fauna

Landscape is considered in this study under its physical geographical terms. Landscape is an area of land or countryside, particularly when reference is made to its appearance or aesthetic disposition. Landscapes could be appreciated as flat, mountainous, hilly or rolling. Flora is the assemblage of vegetable species of a region or age. They are plants that grow in a particular place or country. For the benefit of this study, we shall consider the flora of England and Nigeria as represented in the poems of Keats and Osundare. Poems of Keats like “To Autumn”, “Ode to Melancholy” “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “On the Grasshopper and the Cricket”; Osundare's poems like “Back to Earth” and “Forest Echoes” are poems that deal elaborately with the subject of vegetation. Fauna is the assemblage of animals of a region or period. Through poems like Osundare's “Forest Echoes” (*The Eye of the Earth*, 1986), Keats “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode to a Grecian Urn” and “The Grasshopper and the Cricket” (Gittings, 1978). We are introduced to animals on land, fish and birds of all kinds akin to Africa and Britain.

Macaustin's (2012) study examines the extent of damage politics has done, and the vision of hope Niyi Osundare offers. The author's opinion is that “Decades after the exit of the colonial powers, Nigeria is yet to experience true liberation of its citizenry” (12). He examines the social responsibility of a poet to his environment through Niyi Osundare's three poetry collections in question. Macautine further examines the magnitude of insensitivity of our leaders over the problems of the Nigerian populace and explores the possibility of change in many facets of our Nigerian life in the course of time. He deduces from Osundare's poems that Niyi Osundare believes that the poor Nigerian masses could find solace from the excruciating pains that surrounded them because Niyi Osundare understands that the sufferings of the poor Nigerian masses could not be perpetual and so offers them hope. This thesis is more of a socio-political comment. It is largely Nigeria people focused rather than natural environment focused (12).

Nnimmo Bassey, the founder of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria has been at the forefront of the campaign against the presence of Shell Oil in Nigeria. He contends that “Africa is where everybody goes to extract resources. Our land is being grabbed, torn into

plantations, torn into agrofuel farms, torn into where people would plant trees and claim carbon credits.” (Retrieved: May, 2013).

2.12. Built Environment, Natural Architecture and the Natural Environment

At the global level, Adeyeri (2009) contends that, built environment in each country is estimated to account for about 25-40% of the energy construction; 30-40% of the material resource consumption; 30-40% of the waste production and 30-40% of the greenhouse gas release. For most African countries, he further stated, the figures are mainly at the lower end of the intervals given above. Based on this statistics, it is safe to adduce that the Nigerian natural environment that is still largely untouched by the construction industry and the built environmental structures need protection and preservation. While infrastructure is very important for industrial development, it must be built to make development sustainable and the environment life sustaining. The infrastructure affects the environment just as the environment can affect the infrastructure. Thus, the impact of climate change on the infrastructure and the impact of industries on the environment must be considered in the location, design and use of the system.

The government needs to recognize the importance of protecting and conserving the environment during construction and after construction of infrastructure projects. According to Adeyeri (13), “Environmental Impact Assessment should be mandatory before undertaking implementation of all project to ensure that the activities carried out do not impact negatively on the environment”. There is thus the need to consider some activities which when properly harnessed can positively impact the natural environment. These are sustainable designs and constructions like energy and water efficient design and incorporating pollution prevention measures during construction; Renewable energy technology – for example solar, wind and earth-energy technologies; Waste management and recycling facilities; Flood risk management like sustainable drainage systems, river rehabilitation schemes, Protection and enhancing biodiversity by incorporating natural habitats as part of project design and Connectivity with public transport - i.e., providing cycle ways, footpaths, and vehicle free zones in some business centres (13).

Most of our utilities have a negative impact on the appearance of the landscape. Power lines and NITEL telephone lines go through many unplanned community settlements and these are

sources of danger during rain storms. In order to help retain the natural beauty of landscape and protect lives, an enabling law should be enacted which would require that public-utility power lines for telephone, telegraph, and electricity be placed underground. Also some public utilities have destructive effects on the environment. Utilities such as sewage-disposal systems are directly connected to the rapidly increasing pollution of air, land, and water throughout the world. There is also the exporting or dumping of industrial waste into the waterways of some African countries or even the emptying of toxic waste directly into sea. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in recent times continues to be a source of concern to governments of that region and those whose livelihoods depended on that environment. Critiques from the sciences testified to this concern.

J.B. Adeyeri (2), contends that “Civil Engineering plays a critical role in determining how our environment looks and functions, it includes the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of structures and site topography to suit human needs”(2). Though this action is beneficial to man, the continuous quarrying of the natural environment for example gives rise to natural disasters. Where geological balance is tampered with, natural disaster is always the result: as we have in Katse Dame, Lesotho where the weight of the water diverted into this reservoir by the Katse Dam of Lesotho caused minor earthquakes and damaged houses in surrounding villages. The dam, which is 182 meters high, represents the first phase of the Lesotho Highland Water Project. Despite environmental concerns and allegations that several companies competing for projects contracts violated international policies, the Highland Water Project is scheduled for completion in 2015. (Encarta 2009).

Aize Obayan (2009) in response to Adeyeri’s (2009) lecture, said we cannot focus our emphases on built environment to the detriment of natural environment, “We cannot only meet human needs, there is also the need to sustain what prevents extinction”. Sustainable growth calls for a development strategy that does not compromise the balance of our ecosystem and welfare of future generations. Humanity and Nigerian government in particular need to discourage all activities that deplete our natural resources, with the consequent degradation of ecological systems. Environmental management and economic development are closely interrelated. The natural environment consists of complex ecological system: the floras for example, not only provide fuel and fodder, they build also soil fertility, prevent erosion, provide wild life habitats for the fauna and ameliorate climate changes. These intricate systems are central to human welfare and survival and also very valuable as ready-made raw materials for imaginative literature and literary arts as seen in the case of

Keats and Osundare. They are invaluable sources of inspiration for nature poets. Consequently, these systems need to be preserved and well managed for the general good.

2.13. The Cognitive and Objective Aspect of the Built and the Natural Environment

Chawla (1991) observes that there is a close relationship between language, philosophy, world view and our handling of the natural environment. He observes that while the Danes were able to live in harmony with such arctic rivers as the Mackenzie for twenty-eight thousand years, the newcomers like Euro-Canadian and Americans have polluted the waters in less than a hundred years (115). According to him, in discussing the relationship between human beings and the natural environment, we can distinguish between two dimensions of reality: objective and cognitive. While the objective reality is the natural environment – air, water, oceans, mountains, climate, etc. Cognitive reality is human perspective and creation. The creative dimension modifies objective reality, ranging from building a hut to erecting a skyscraper, using animal power to nuclear plants. Thus cognitive reality and language are closely related, for the modification of objective reality is facilitated by language. Language has the power to evoke images and complex ideas. These great ideas produce great inventions, but unfortunately, most of them are exploitative to the environment. Language is definitely a very important factor in determining the limit or extent to which we succeed in maintaining a sustainable environment.

Schultz (1992), observes that “The use of pejoratives is a manifestation of human tendency to downgrade, denigrate and debase things or people in order to control, harm and or destroy them. According to Schultz, commercial users of the environment make use of pejoratives a lot. For example, words like ‘weed’ is used to describe a principal tree species, ‘locked-up’ land is used to refer to national parks and other conservation reserves protected from destructive exploitation, ‘litter’ and ‘trash’ used for humus and plant material on the forest floor, ‘greenhouse effect’ is used to refer to human-induced or climatic dislocation, and ‘degenerate’ tree is used for old or ancient tree (112).

These are few words and expressions favourable to exploitation used by commercial users of the natural environment. Consequently, he opines that there is need to use language to protect the environment (112). In order to help achieve the desired shift in attitudes and behaviour,

people who seek to promote this objective need to take a strong stand on language. We must be careful about the language we ourselves use and we should encourage others to do the same. Debate and discussion should be encouraged so that alternatives to the language of exploitation can be proposed and adopted. We can begin by doing this within our own networks, and then introduce the results into other networks. The issue should be brought to the attention of teachers, who can raise it in their classes and encourage the use of non-exploitative language. A compilation of these words could be started by an individual or groups. At the end a glossary or dictionary of environment friendly words and phrases should emerge (112). Pope Benedict XVI (2008) urges people to care more for the environment. According to him, “The world’s natural resources were being squandered by insatiable consumption”(The BBC, 17th July). It is observed that the lack of reverence for the earth’s environment is a major cause of the dismal state of the earth today. As far back as the late 19th century, Anthon Chekhov, the Russian playwright and short-story writer stated in his *Uncle Vanya* that up to now man hasn’t been a creator, only a destroyer: Forests keep disappearing; rivers dry up, wild life become extinct, the climates ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.

The testimonies about the natural environment through the ages are dismally provoking. The BBC News of the 18th of February 2009, carries news on an environment-focused meeting that takes place in Denmark; It observes that a satellite camera stationed in the Antarctic (South Pole) picked pictures of ice that is breaking at double the rate earlier claimed. This is a further proof that the sea level might rise a meter or more faster than originally predicted. This will definitely affect the level of the world oceans and the consequent submergence of land and flooding of coastal areas of the earth. Kofi Annan (2009), the former Secretary General of United Nations, also observes that “Today’s economic down-turn is global equivalence of the tsunami”. The tsunami, by implication, is a direct consequence of earth warming (The BBC, 10 March). Stewart L. Udall (2009) refers to the United States environment, in his *The Quiet Crisis*, that “United States of America today lives in a land of vanishing beauty, of increasing ugliness, of shrinking open space, and of an overall environment that is diminished daily by pollution and noise and blight” (Encarta).

In our review of existing literature, on poetry, built and natural environments, we observe that the constructions of the natural environment in existing works are largely human-focused. There is need to explore areas that are natural environment-focused in order to give an all embracing perspective that considers the natural environment as both object-preserved and subject-preserver. This dual perspective of the natural environment is mutually beneficial and

significant in understanding the gap that this study intends to fill and to project. By this study, the frontier of knowledge in the area of nature, literature and built environment is extended. The social function of poetry, the creative process as well as the ideo-aesthetic faculty of poetry to resist ecological domination are also foregrounded.

Notes on Chapter Two

1. 'Light Greens' and 'Dark Greens' are schools of thought that stand opposed to all social constructivism and antropcentric theories on the natural environment. They both claim to love nature but their principles and opinions diver on the basis of believe, reading and practice.

CHAPTER THREE

Nature Poeticizing and Primal Recollections

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter we shall consider nature-related themes as it concerns the earth's natural environment: the earth's landscape, the seasons: spring and raining season; winter and dry season. We shall consider how these items from the natural environment are represented in selected poems in question. This chapter will examine the stages in the poetic career of Keats and Osundare; their respective exploits on earth related themes like: landscape, flora, fauna and the symbolic juxtaposition of the natural environment with the personae.

3.2. Autobiography and Faction in the Poetic Careers of Keats and Osundare

Keats and Osundare poetically and contextually combined elements of autobiography with faction. The collection of poems in Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth, Horses of memory* and "Settled dust", John Keats and "When I have fears" are significant and relevant here.

The Poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare: Historical & Social Contexts

Poets like Blake, Wordsworth and Keats saw the beginnings of the industrial Revolution, which was to change the face of Britain. The period also witnessed the French Revolution and the demand for freedom from oppression became a rallying call throughout Europe. The desire for liberty was fuelled by the dreadful poverty endured by the poor, especially in the cities. These social factors have direct or indirect impact on the land and the natural environment in particular. At the same time as there were demands for social change, artists were stressing the importance of the individual imagination, as what is known as the Romantic Movement swept Europe. Keats belongs to this Romantic Movement. The pain of living informs the poetry of Keats and he pursued the ideals of Romanticism and cherished the world of the imagination above all else. (Pascoe 1997: 6 & 35).

Keats's early contact with poetry

John Keats was one of the most richly talented of all English poets, a fact made all the more remarkable by the difficulties of his short life. His poetry speaks of idyllic and romantic worlds and far off places but he was a city person, born in London in 31 October 1795. His interest in words emerged early. According to Pascoe(1997, 8): "A neighbour recalled that

when he (Keats) was beginning to talk, instead of answering questions put to him, he would always make a rhyme to the last word people said, and then laugh". From 1803 to 1810, he attended the school of Rev. John Clarke in Enfield, where he received a broad education and become acquainted with Greek, Latin and French literature. The small school had a liberal outlook and a progressive curriculum more modern than the larger, more prestigious schools. Here, Keats develops an interest in classics and history, which would stay with him throughout his life. Charles Cowden Clarke, the headmaster's son, becomes an important mentor and friend, introducing Keats to Renaissance literature, including Chapman's translation, Spenser and Tasso. Apprenticed as a surgeon in 1810 and licensed to practise as an apothecary, he soon abandoned a medical career in favour of poetry. "I find I cannot exist without poetry" (9). His first published poem appeared in 1816 and the next two years saw the production of virtually all his poetic output.

Keats's letters reveal an extraordinary intelligent and sensitive nature. In his letter to 'To John Taylor, 27th February 1818, we can see his love for the natural environment when he compared poetry to a leaf: "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all"(46). Sadly, his life was beset with personal tragedy. His father died when he was eight, his mother died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen. His younger brother Tom died at age nineteen. In mid September 1821, at the age of twenty five, Keats also died in Rome³. Keats and his siblings went to live with their grandmother in Edmonton after their mother remarried after the death of their father. There is an echo of this phase of Keats's childhood in the light-hearted doggerel verse, "A song about Myself", written to amuse his sister Fanny:

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he
He kept little fishes
In washing tubs three
In spite
Of the might
Of the maid
Nor afraid
Of his granny-good-
He often would
Hurly burly
Get up early
And go
By hook or crook
To the brook...(Carstairs: 1996, p.6).

Three words here are informative about his interests in nature: 'fishes', 'brook' and 'hook'. 'Hook' is used in this poem together with 'crook' to mean 'by all means' or 'at all cost'. Denotatively, the word 'hook' is an instrument for catching fish and he will need this at the brook. At the age of thirteen Keats did his schoolwork with a kind of frantic energy, refusing to stop reading even during mealtimes or when out for walks, and winning prizes for translations from French to Latin. This creative phase and relative security was interrupted when his mother died in 1810 of tuberculosis. Keats was only fourteen. In Adult life, Keats was extremely reticent about the early loss of his parents. He was deeply affected and in particular to find his later relationships with women difficult or even painful. And it is surely possible to see in these experiences of loss and insecurity in childhood and early adolescence the sources of some of the dominant themes of Keats's poetry. (Carstairs: 1996, p.6). A poem like "Ode to a Grecian Urn" refers to the impermanence of beauty and the fragility of happiness under the constant threat of parting, illness, or of death:

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal – yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Ah, happy, happy bough! That cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
Beauty is truth, truth beauty (Gittings: 1978, 127-128)

And his poem 'When I have fears' tells of his fear that he may not be able to be an accomplished poet before he dies:

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain (43).

In this poem, he compares the compilation of his poems with rich granary full of grains after harvest. In fear, he laments:

Then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink (44).

Preface to 'The Eye of the Earth' takes us to the early days of Osundare's life as a child, his rural home at Ikere Ekiti and the influence of the agrarian culture, its rocky landscape, the coming of western culture, his school days and their impact on his young mind and adult literary creativity:

Farmer-born, peasant-bred, I encountered dawn in the enchanted corridors of the forest, suckled on the delicate aroma of healing herbs, and the pearly drops of generous moons. living in those early days was rugged, but barns brimmed with yams fattened by Merciful rains and the upland sun. The cock rang the bell of dawn, promptly aided by a lone and distant corn-meal which hummed into action, making sure it carried the village along. Earth was ours, and we earth's. We grew what we ate and ate what we grew(iv).

This simple rustic rural life and the closeness to nature were to give the poet a pastoral foundation and cultural depth in his poetics. This period was followed by the influence of western culture on the rural community:

The schoolyard jilted the farmstead and the bell emptied boisterous playing grounds into dreary classrooms where the teacher loomed like a forgiveless cane. The story before the virulent advent of European's merchants who turned native farmers into cocoa-coffee-cashew croppers, while yamfields succumbed to weeds and granaries rang out like mourning shells. A cancerous god called MONEY crashed in from across the seas(iv).

The yoking of these cultures, the consequences and its impact on the agrarian environment are aptly described in the following passage:

A blind sword and a crown of noisy gold, smashing old customs, assailing the very Core of ancient humanistic ethos. Africa abandoned what she ate, committing her Fertile soil and rugged energy to those alien crops which cushioned the European Stomach(Osundare, 1986: x).

Most contemporaries of Osundare like Tanure Ojaide chose models from among African poets like J. P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, and Wole Soyinka who did not have the advantage of reading African literature in school. Osundare was part of the group who was fascinated by the poetic persona cut by Okigbo, the musicality, and word play of his poetry. "One can see Osundare's interest in poetic musicality, in the forms of chant-like rhythms and the use of figures of sound, especially alliterations, to this Okigboesque disposition of most of us "budding" undergraduate poets at the University of Ibadan in the late 1960s and early 1970s"(Ojaide: 2003). Niyi Osundare's Yoruba background, his university education in the late 1960s through the 1970s in particular, combines with other factors to shape the direction of his poetic exploitation. According to Ojaide (2003):

A prime influence on Osundare as a poet is the education he received at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His formative years as a poet were spent at Ibadan. In the English department, we had started to read African literature primarily side by side with British literature. These modern African literature courses were taught along with modernist poets, like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, courses on Shakespeare, metaphysical poets, and other areas and periods of English literature (Ojaide, 2003: 18).

His interests determine the choices of what to experience. With Osundare, some choices appear forced upon him by conditions of the time, as others arise from personal options and considerations. Thus he is influenced at certain times to “imitate” and at other times to react against. For example, admiration of the later poetry of Christopher Okigbo makes Osundare musical, and disliking Wole Soyinka’s obscure poetry in *Idanre* makes him write what he considers to be accessible to the generality of poetry readers, there is a strong influence of both writers. *Midlife* consists of poems that are of his experiences so far up to his fortieth birthday.

West Africa, Nigeria inclusive is directly under the direct rays of the sun and the equator and so Africa is easily associated with the sun. Thus, the ‘sun’ is typically symbolic in this collection. The sun represents a creative essence in its outpouring of life upon the earth – warmth that gives life far from what obtains in Europe. Osundare says “the sun rules the universe of these songs, the sun that makes fertile “the rocks of my origin” and the “noon lit river thrives with dappled shoals.” These rocks and rivers are what give meaning to his being. Referring to this as ‘noontide in the diary of the sun’ Foreline(ix), he alluded to an early childhood, comparing it to dawn, a symbol of a new day: “Dawn has raced quietly by” giving an analogy of a quiet peaceful environment in rural setting as child. He sees the future, ‘twilight’ as looming shadows. At forty, he saw himself as standing between dawn and twilight of life. Dawn and twilight symbolized the beginning of a new day and the end of the day. This is an allusion to the seasons in human life represented by birth and maturity. At fifty or midday, “A few grey strands in the thicket of the head” appears. At this stage in life one is ‘bold enough to ask some glaring questions on the continent of Africa. “Grey strands”, “kolanut” ripening in the mouth are allusions to wisdom in the African context. Comparing the earthly landscape with that of human physique he says:

The rocks are my bones, the river my fluent veins. And the valley where both meet in
Clod and clay, that valley moulds the legend of my flesh (*Midlife*, 1993: ix).

The 'rock' stands for human 'bones', the 'river' stands for 'veins' carrying the blood of human life. In Yoruba cosmology everything in nature is interrelated. There is that union between the natural environment and the community:

I am child of the river, child of the rock
Child, of rocky hills holding hands
For here the rock is earth, the rock is sky (*Midlife*, 1993:11).

The phases in human life – from birth to the grave can be compared to the flow of the river – from its source to the point where it enters the sea. In the poem "Rocksongs" Osundare compares his own life to that of a river. At forty, he is a river at its middle course, "Midlife, Noontide"(ix), meandering into the sea of life. "Mid course now, equidistance between heady mountains and the waiting sea"(ix). "Middle course", "equidistant", "heady mountains", "waiting sea" are significant words here: they represent the flow of human life from cradle to the grave: from the youthful stage of a river, 'heady mountains', with its rapids, falls and erosive nature to a gentler 'mid course', equidistance, to a more gentle meandering flow in the valley and eventually into the sea where the river joins the larger body of water of sea. Through devices like personification he asked Africa and humanity many questions as "Questions tumble down like cataracts of upland". He asked the mountains and the valleys questions about the mysteries and miseries embedded in their nature. Once again, as in '*The Eye of the Earth*', *Midlife* not only attempts to ammonize creation as one single entity of creation, having similar characteristics, he sees his own journey through life as going through the same inevitable course and end as that of the river:

The boulder plucked off its upland base suffered life's long river till
Midcourse. The world I see is bend. I am mode and medium for its straightening
Foreline (x).

The boulder plucked off its upland is in reference to the energy of the river and its rapid flow down-stream and the consequent erosion of the upland. Osundare sees himself at the 'midcourse' of life', and like the river, an agent for the making or marring the earth's landscape. In 'The Rocks Rose to Meet Me', *The Eye of the Earth*(1986), Osundare reflected on his early childhood experience with the natural environment. It was a rural setting, yet untouched by western civilization and:

the haunting sound and silence
of this sweet and sour forest
dig deep channels to the sea of memory...
This is Ubo Abusoro
Where my first faltering steps
Broke the earthworm on the path of dawn. (5)

His memory of the imposing Olosunta and Oroole (rocks in Ikere) was that of two entities which “loomed so fearsomely close/ in the harmattan dawns of our learning days...(15).

Sources of Poetic Vision and Inspiration

Two impulses command Osundare’s inspiration and we can use this as a yard-stick to examine Keats as well. On one hand, the response to immediate issues of communal life in the context of situation that his work seeks to address; on the other hand, the aesthetic imperative that he is aware places upon him the obligation to give artistic form to his mode of response. He tries to strike a balance between the two and also seeks to underwrite his social vision through an aesthetic project that reconciles the need for personal statement with a mature poetic expression” (Na’Allah, xviii).

Moonsongs is an expression of a departure from socially engaged tone and public attitudes of his earlier work to the exploration of self, the inward direction, where the moon serves as an appropriate image for its prevailing atmosphere and its reflective tone, developed in a series of reflections on the passion of time” (Na’Allah, xviii). This departure from “socially engaged tone” is akin to Keats’ views and the kind of life he purposed for himself: “I am ambitious of doing the world some good” and “all I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs.” (Gittings, 88). Keats’ his poetic vision is not premised on the praise of men, but according to him: “I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. That the solitary indifference I feel for applause even from the finest Spirit, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful...”(Gittings, 88).

Keats’ and Osundare’s poetic visions are consequently, similar in the sense that while John Keats’ social vision is to “do the world some good and to reach to as high a summit in Poetry”(88), Niyi Osundare responds to immediate issues of communal life that border on the wellbeing of his people and their immediate environment. While Keats’ aesthetic imperatives are built on his fondness for things of beauty, Osundare’s obligation is to give form to his mode of response to artistic demands (xviii). While Keats’ exploration of self falls under the ambit of becoming a great and renowned poet, “never afraid of failure but would sooner fail than not be among the greatest”(Gittings, 84); Osundare sought the inward direction or ‘artistic implosion’ as we have in *Moonsongs*.

3.3. Landscape and Seascape

Keats's "On the Sea" dwells extensively on the theme of landscape and the seascape around Shanklin and Carisbrooke. This poem is a product of Keats' experience with the natural environment in these areas. In a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds on the 17th of April 1817, he wrote on what he saw and heard. According to Keats "Shanklin is a most beautiful place – sloping wood and meadows, cleft filled with trees and bushes in the narrow path; and as it widens becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side which spread to the very verge of the sea, perched midway in the Ballustrades of beautiful green Hedges(28)". Keats exclaimed, moved by his impression of the scenery: "But the sea, Jack, the sea – the little waterfall – then the white cliff – then St. Catherine's Hill – "the sheep in the meadows, the cows in the corn".(Gittings, 28). From this personal experience, coupled with his reading of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and a passage in it: "Do you not hear the Sea": he wrote the poem 'On the Sea':

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand caverns (29).

While the persona "sat near some old caverns mouth"(30), he listened to continuous whispering sound of the sea and watched its fall and swell as it washed in and out of the caves by the sea. To the poet, this activity is like 'eternal wind of heaven' (30). John Keats 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in stanza four, lines 35-36, though a work of art, the urn describes the landscape on which a little town is built:

What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain built with peaceful citadel (LL. 35-36).

Conversely, his approach to the natural environment took a different perspective in his 'Bright Star'. In this poem, he presented a view of the earth's landscape over looking a temperate natural environment setting. The star is personified as constant, 'steadfast' and immortal personality watching the earth's landscape below:

Watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eramite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors (LL.3-8).

The poet contends that if he be endured with this supernatural and “unchangeable nature like the star, he would not passively admire the beauty of the landscape below but would rather be “pillow’d upon his fair love’s ripening breast and so live ever”(LL.10, 14). Osundare’s “Whispering Mountain” in *Horses of Memory* (1989) has similar theme on the landscape. It gave a snap shot of mountain ranges and mountain tops with peaks in the cloud. Through personification Osundare describes a type of relationship between the earth and the sky. Mountains reaching to the sky; with the blue sky at the background:

the mountain whispers
in the ears of the clouds
when earth and sky meet (L.46)

“The rocks rose to Meet Me” in the *The Eye of The Earth* (1986) focuses on the topography of Ikere Ekiti, Osundare’s home town. Its landscape; especially, Olosunta and Oroole rocks (14-15) and river Osun are good examples. This poem is a journey back into Osundare’s past. It celebrates the rocks called “Olosunta”, and ‘Oroole’ the “siblings of ‘Esidale” (xi). They are imposing physical monuments and symbols of the Ikere people’s spiritual and economic heritage. Like elders and “guardians of the harvest spirit” (xi), they are metaphorically represented as eternally waiting to welcome their young ones back home from their sojourn in foreign lands. Osundare gives a picture of this meeting: “The rocks rose to meet me/like passionate lovers on a long-awaited tryst/their peaks cradled in ageless mists”. Typical of Yoruba poetic praise-form, the poet sang a list of the physical, economic and spiritual qualities of the rock. Its rendition can easily go with talking drum:

Olosunta spoke first
The eloquent one
Whose mouth is the talking house of ivory.
The lofty one whose eyes are
Balls of the winking sun
The riddling one whose belly is wrestling ground
For god and gold
The elephant hand which hits the haughty man in the
Head (14).

Olosunta’s huge and imposing structure is the reason for comparing it with the elephant that subdues the pride of “the haughty man”. This rock, worshiped annually by the Ikere people is also reputed to be a repository of gold. This dual role of serving as spiritual and economic object makes its “belly” or its interior an arena of struggles for its treasures and spiritual blessings. It is a battle ground for those who revere it for its spiritual significance - its worship during annual ‘Olosunta festival’ and those who want to exploit its gold for

commercial ends. This conflict of interest is the dilemma of the persona who asked a pertinent question: “how dig the gold /without breaking the rock?”(14). ‘Oroole’ is next to ‘Olosunta’ rock. It has a pyramid-shape and its voice came to the sensual sense as voice ancient and tremulous. As the “pyramid of the brood”(15), Oroole rock is praised as the rock which robs its head to pay its foot. Metaphorically, Oroole sacrificed its top, its “head” and treasures for its “foot” – the Irele and its people and thus the consequent pyramid shape. At its base also, “cornfields flourish/elephant grass follows the land for unborn harvest”. Grains swell “with living water from your rocky arteries” (15).

Pyramid of the brood,
 You who rob your head to pay your foot²
 For earth is where we stand
 Earth is where we strive(15).

This is where humanity lives, stands, struggles together or falls, “and what greater vantage to a wrestling rock than a platform of a thousand feet?”(15).

In “Forest Echoes” Osundare weaves a poetic narrative around the palm tree and the flow of the Osun river on her meandering journey into the sea:

Their faltering foliage swaying noise
 Lessly in the sleepless mirror of Ogbese
 Osun’s rebel daughter...
 parted somewhere below the mountains(7).

This poem gives a panoramic picture of palm trees along the river Osun. The landscape is that of a river confluence - ‘mother and child parting somewhere below the mountains’. Snap shots of rocks, hills and waterfalls “descending on lower rocks with the youthsome clatter”. The effect of erosion is vividly represented: “her luggage of sand and rock slicing the hills like a liquid knife” and “tunnelling through caves”. Pictures of aquatic life along her bed are not left out: the stream “throbbing with fishlets and tadpoles”(7). This beautiful panoramic view is a contrast to the lamentable state of the landscape in “Our Earth Will Not Die”. This is a solemn elegiac poem that conveys a sad and sickly state of the natural environment destroyed by wanton exploitation and destruction by Industries. This poem, though sad and repulsive in tone and visual impact, its disposition is resolute and determined. The voice is that of rugged hope, steel-hope interjected into an atmosphere of despair: “Our earth will not die”. Repetition device is creatively used to contrast the appalling state of the environment and the steel-hope to weather all storm:

Here
 there

everywhere
a lake is killed by the arsenic urine
from the bladder of profit factories
a poison stream staggers down the hills
coughing chaos in the sickly sea

But our earth will not die.

The rain falls, acid, on balding forests
Their branches amputated by the septic daggers
Of tainted clouds

But our earth will not die.

Weeping willows drip mercury tears
In the eye of sobbing terrains
A nuclear sun rises like a funeral ball
Reducing man and meadow to dust and dirt.

But our earth will not die (50)

According to Osundare in an interview conducted by 'Poetry International Web'(2010):
"Undoubtedly my poetry is influenced by incantatory mode, hence my constant use of
repetition". The above poem is a testimony to this statement.

3.4. The Seasons: Summer and Rainy Seasons

Summer and rainy seasons are typified by planting, fruitfulness, productivity and harvest. The nature poems of Keats and Osundare preoccupied with these seasons will be considered here. John Keats' sonnet, "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" presents the main preoccupations of the grasshopper and the cricket during summer and winter seasons. The unifying theme of these seasons is the undying activities of the earth's fauna typified by the grasshopper and the cricket. The poem is based on the fun the grasshopper is engaged in. The first line: "The poetry of the earth is never dead" is both philosophical and introductory to the remaining thirteen lines that follow it. In the same vein, line nine is like line one. It serves as a confirmation to the first line and also as introduction to the five lines that follow it. While the preoccupation of the first eight lines is on summer and the grasshopper, the remaining six lines are preoccupied by winter and the cricket. We are concerned in this section with the first eight lines, "the grasshopper in summer luxury"(Lines 5-6):

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's – he takes the lead(5)

In summer luxury, - he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed (27).

This part of the poem dwells on the unending fun the grasshopper is having in summer. When other animals are “tired out with fun” the grasshopper and the cricket are still busy “running from hedge to hedge” of the grassy field. The unending voice of the grasshopper could also be heard “beneath some pleasant weed”. The picture of the total natural environment is presented in this poem. The fauna and flora are adequately represented here with the persona as a passive watcher. In this poem, it is the activities of the fauna that is the focus. In ‘To Autumn’, Keats personifies the autumn season itself:

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor (LL.12-14).

The last stanza of this poem tells us that every season has its own rhythmic qualities and uniqueness. Though spring is the beginning of summer, autumn also has its own songs of fruitfulness:

Where are the songs of spring? A, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too (LL.23-24).

Through the use of imagery and personification, Keats introduces us to autumn and its activities. Autumn is the “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”. It is a “close bosom-friend of the maturing sun” autumn and the maturing sun together work on the field “to load and bless with fruit the vines”(LL.1-4). The word ‘maturing’ used to qualify the sun is significant here. The sun that appears in winter can only be perceived at the horizon and its rays are often overwhelmed by the cold winter. The sun in autumn is warmer and mature enough to “conspire” with autumn in the activities of autumn. It is maturing (continuous tense) and will fully come to maturity in summer. Together, autumn and the maturing sun will “load and bless” the natural environment with life:

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more (157, LL.4-8).

Another prominent literary feature is the use of visual imagery of weight, ripeness, increase and fullness. We have the image of weight in “bend with apples the cottage-trees/ and fill all fruit with ripeness to the core”(LL.3,7). Phrases like “to load and bless with fruit” and “swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells” presents images of fullness in the mind’s eye. “To set budding more,/and still more, later flowers for the bees”(L.9) are images of increase and fullness. The four seasons, autumn, spring, summer and winter have a mutually enriching and rewarding relationship with one another and with humanity. Poetic composition could not be restricted to peculiarities of a particular season. Poetically, all seasons can serve in the same capacity as life sustaining and creative essence.

The poems of Osundare that are preoccupied with the season of fruitfulness, or rainy season, could be studied under “Harvestcall” (*The Eye of the Earth*,1986). This poem is filled with the leisure of feasting and harvest. The air is saturated with drumming, songs and the sound of mortar and pestle as pounded yam is being prepared. The first part of the poem introduces us to a particular Nigerian staple food – Yam. Yam is a delicacy of the Yoruba people and its harvest is always associated with festivities. The two main seasons peculiar to Africa and Nigeria in particular, the raining season and dry seasons have peculiar activities associated with them. From May through June into December one crop or the other is being grown or harvested. May is the beginning of the rains and farmers are set to prepare their seedlings for planting. Part two of this poem takes us through corn planting in the month of May - from its appearance as cobs on the farm to the point of milling; the poet gives us a vivid picture of the corn field “where coy cobs rocked lustily/ in the loin of swaying stalks”. (LL.2-3). This lines gives a picture of a corn stalk bearing its cobs as the African mother would carry her baby around her waist or her back. The words that convey this allusion to mother-hood are: “rocked”, “loin”, and “swaying”. “Once here in May”(L.4), The entire field is “robed” in “green”:

Once here in May
The sky was a riot of pollen grains
And ivory mills waited (im)patiently
For the browning of grey tassels (LL.7-10).

“Pollen grain ”in line 8 alludes to fertility and reproduction. The lines that follow it implies a time of waiting, a gestation period “for the browning of grey tassels” to mature and ready for harvest. This is followed by the onward journey to the mills. By June the corn cobs are ready. They “flash their milky teeth” as their layers of coverings are removed in the kitchen.

Reference to “milky teeth” (L.13) remind us of the freshness of youth before they are replaced by permanent teeth.

The month of September is a month of dryness. The harmattan has partially set in. This is a period favourable to the drying and harvesting of cotton pods. Part three of “Harvestcall” shifts focus to cotton pods. The December sun is hot and dry and right for the pods. The cotton pods with lips parted to expose the white cotton and the joy of the farmers combine to make the entire cotton farmsteads “a harvest of smiles”. The months of May, June and December play their parts in the scheme of things. By the close of December, January and its “tiger claws of the harmattan”(Line.7), must clinch the baton to continue on this circle of seasons. Because the “earth’s wardrobe lent a garb to every season”(8); these seasons have their unique rhythms. They give life and beauty to the earth and its natural environment and to humanity in general.

‘Let Earth’s Pain Be Soothed’ (*The Eye of the Earth, 1986*), is a poem under the collection “Rainsongs”. These poems celebrate rain, the giver and sustainers of life. “Rain” occupies a godlike place in the consciousness of Ikere’s agrarian people”(xi). It stands as a symbol, an agent of the difference between plenty and famine, life and death.

‘Let earth’s pain be soothed’ invokes the healing power associated with rain:

Let it rain today
That parched throats may sing
Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
Let it rain today
That cornleaves may clothe the hills
Let it rain
The earth has been lying too long, and songless
Let it rain (28).

3.5. The Seasons: Winter and Dry Seasons

The poems selected for this section are poems preoccupied with dryness and draught: winter and dry seasons. These seasons are typified by dryness. They are symbolized by images of death and lack. Winter is a western concept. It is associated with cold weather, snowfall, haze and frost. It is a time of cold weather and snow fall, fauna hibernate and flora lost most of their blossom and withers. Winter belongs to the four seasonal circles of – autumn, winter, spring and summer and autumn again.

Harmattan or dry season on the other hand is an African concept. It is associated with a climatic phenomenon noticeable between the months of September and February in Nigeria. This season is associated with the wind called the 'North East trades'. It blows across the Sahara desert on its southward journey to the Atlantic Ocean. It loses most of its moisture to the desert but picks up dry-dust on its Southward journey to the sub-Saharan region, Nigeria and the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean. In 'To Autumn', Keats made use of rich sensual imagery. The sense of sound is very pronounced. He drew largely from the activities of natural life in autumn:

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies.
(“To Autumn”.LL.27-29).

The sensual images of touch, sight and the auditory are well represented in this poem. We have the sense of sight through the world made reddish by the sunset “touching the stubble-plains with rosy hue.” There is softness about “the soft dying day” and “the light wind,” making the earth delicate and warm. There is also the impact on the auditory sense: from the noise of “small gnats in a wailful choir”. When these sensuous images of nature are placed side by side the pictures of “full-grown lambs bleating from hilly bourn”, “the hedge-crickets singing soft treble”, the “red-breast whistling from garden-croft and “the swallow”(LL.23-33), twittering in the skies. There is no doubt that the natural environment is to Keats a workshop for poetic artistry.

Through personification, Keats confers honour on autumn. He established a mood with emphasis on autumn as life giver not as a season which is associated with lack or death:

Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruits the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core...”
(*To Autumn*. Lines 2-6).

This endowment of human qualities on autumn season is a poetic device used to comment on the qualities and nature of autumn. Although, autumn is not as fruitful as spring or summer, its ability to “conspire” with and work with the “sun” made her equal to spring and summer in fruitfulness. “Autumn” and the “sun” work together to generate bounties of harvest and

“load and bless/with fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run” (LL.3-4). The picture of autumn in this poem is not that of falling leaves, hibernation, decay or of impending waste; autumn portrays a positive manifestation of life as winter draws near. In a letter to Hamilton Reynolds, Keats described his impression of autumn:

How beautiful the season is now – how fine the air...I never lik'd stubble fields
so much as now – Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble
plain looks warm – in the same way that some pictures look warm – this struck me
so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it...(Gittings: 1978, 14).

It is informative that Keats poetically contrasted and juxtaposed what he felt with what he actually saw in nature. He compares images of spring, autumn and art: “somehow a stubble plain looks warm” in autumn “in the same way that some pictures look warm” comparing this with his impression of spring: “better than the chilly green of the spring”. Keats sees everything in nature as beautiful and what the casual eyes perceive as repulsive in nature are to him sources of warmth and materials for poetic expression. Keats' poem ‘Keen, fitful gusts’ is another poem influenced by setting and this time, winter. Written in the middle of October, when autumn is just giving way to winter and the leaves dry and the weather is cold, he reflected on what he saw in Leigh Hunt's rural cottage home: The beauty of the natural environment, the whispers of lovers in the garden, the peace and the friendliness of the people of Hampstead:

Keen, fitful gust are whisp'ring here and there
Among the bushes half leafless, and dry;
The stars look very cold about the sky,
the cool bleak air,
Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,...
For I am brimful of the friendliness
That in a little cottage I have found (25).

In this poem, the images of winter, its half leafless, dry, dead, cold and cool bleak air are juxtaposed with the warmth of life from keen, whispering lovers and the brimful friendliness found in the cottage. There is reference to winter season on the last six lines of Keats ‘On the grasshopper and the Cricket’. It focused on the cricket and the grasshopper in winter. With the natural environment, there is no season that lacks its own song. Although the rhythm of summer may be different from that of winter “the poetry of the earth is ceasing never”(L.9). The cricket and the grasshopper are symbols of life and activity in this poem. When autumn or winter evening is lonesome, silent and cold, the “shrills” of the cricket and the grasshopper could be heard around “some grassy hills”(L.14).

The poetry of the earth is ceasing never:

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills (LL.9-14).

Osundare's "Let Earth's Pain be Soothed" can be compared to Keats "The Cricket and the Grasshopper". Harmattan is Nigeria's counterpart of Europe's winter. This poem laments the paradox in nature. While human beings express their longing and hope for a relief from the dryness of harmattan, flora, fauna and the elementals continue to express, disinterestedly, their innate, inbuilt nature:

Prostrate like famished horses
Brown hills cast vacant looks
At balded plains....
Let it rain today
That parched throats may sing
Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
The roofs have been silent too long
The seeds noiseless in the dormitory of the soil
The earth has been lying too long, and songless.
Time to leap, time to lilt (27-28).

The poem presents snap shots of the topography of the persona's natural environment. Through devices like personification and metaphorization we see the impact of the dry season on humanity: "parched throats", on flora: "seeds noiseless", on fauna: "prostrate like famished horses" and on the landscape of "brown hills", "bald plains" and "the earth lying toolong", "silent" and songless".

Osundare's 'Eyeful Glances' is also a descriptive poem which uses allusions, symbols and metaphor to describe the natural environment during the harmattan season. The harmattan wind is dry and lacks any water vapour. This is because of the expanse of dry land of the Sahara desert covered on its way to West Africa. The impact of this wind on the environment of West Africa and Nigeria in particular is that of dry cold weather. Its impact on the natural environment is similar to that experienced in winter. The harmattan is alluded to in this poem as 'the desert caller':

The desert caller
Comes on a camel
Of clouds,
Undulates through the dunes
Of hazy shadows

Gliding through the open welcome
Of January's door
Whispers urgent tidings
In the ears of my skin (23).

Osundare makes use of words associated with the Sahara desert and the month in which it is most felt in Nigeria. Words like “camel”, “dunes”, “hazy” and “January”. These words denote ideas related to the hot desert, its dryness and its stunted vegetation. ‘Camel of clouds’, ‘open welcome of January’, and ‘urgent tidings in the ears of my skin’ are metaphors and contrasts relating to the arrival of harmattan, the dry cloud, wind and dust on the back of the camel, desert wind, and its drying and irritating effect on the skin.

‘Let Earth's Pain be Suited’ is a poem of longing desire and expectation for the rains to come again, to reduce the dry effect of harmattan on the people and the environment:

Our earth has never lingered so dry
In the season of falling showers

The sky carries a boil of anguish
Let it burst

Prostrate like famished horses
Brown hills cast vacant looks
At balded plains where playing kids
Provoke the dust in what once was
The cradle of green

The sky carries a boil of anguish
Let it burst (27).

These lines describe in vivid pictures the condition of the environment during the dry season. Each word aptly describes the discomfort on the earth and the action of the sky, its “boil of anguish” and its impact on “famished horses”, the flora or “the cradle of green”. The “brown hills” and “balded plains”. The hills wear the colour of dust, brown instead of green. The valleys or plains that are “cradle of green” during the rains are also bare of vegetation.

3.6. Flora and Fauna

Keats's poem “To Autumn” presents visual images of flora through the images of fullness, roundness and ripeness:

To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core,
To swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel, to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees (LL.5-9).

The phrase “to bend”, “to fill”, “to swell” and “and still more” conjure pictures of fullness, roundness and ripeness. Trees bend with apples and fruits are “ripe to the core”. “The gourd swells” with ripeness and “the hazel shells are plump” with sweet kernel.

In ‘Ode to Melancholy’ Keats warns against the use of poison herbs like “wolfs-bane” for escape from trials and depression. Melancholy was once known as ‘the Elizabethan malady’ and one of Keats’s favourite texts was a treatise on its causes, symptoms, cure and social implications, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), by Robert Burton (Carstairs, 54). What Keats called melancholy we might now describe as depression, an illness which can lead to acts as well as thoughts of suicide in its acute form. “The thought that trials and depressions are a necessary part of the progress of the soul is paramount in Keats at this time”. (Gittings, 1978: 189). In this ode, Keats did not address his subject, melancholy, directly, but instead made a plea to the sufferer. The poem opens with an urgent emphatic command not to indulge in thoughts of death:

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf’s-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine (LL.1-2).

The second stanza continued in the line of thought started from the first two lines of the first stanza. Comparing the impact of melancholy on the sufferer to rain cloud “that fosters the droop-headed flowers” and “hides the green hill in April shroud”, he went on to proffer solution using images from the natural environment. He advised that when melancholy overwhelms you; feed it to the point of satiety by looking at fresh, beautiful flowers, the sunlit spray of a wave breaking:

When melancholy fit shall fall
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave
Or on the wealth of globed peonies (LL.11, 15-17).

Melancholy, on its victim is like the harshness of winter where everything is virtually covered in snow and all plants drooping, withered and dead. Snow is well alluded to with the word ‘shroud’. Shroud alludes to covering over the dead. Instead of giving up to the pain of melancholy and remaining under the shroud of its fit, the poet’s advice is to “glut” and “feed” on the beauty of nature like “a morning rose”, “rainbow of the salt sand-waves or globed peonies”. ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ contrasts the permanence of art with the world of natural beauty.

This poem is not a direct description of any particular Greek Urn. Its images represent in essence references from different vases of the classical age. Vases and marbles like ‘The Townley Vase’, ‘The Vase of Sosibios’, ‘The Borghese Vase’, ‘The Ornate Urn’, and ‘Elgin marbles’ have great influence in the poem. Of no less importance are paintings of Claude like ‘View of Delphi with a procession’ and ‘landscape with the father of Psyche sacrificing at the Milesian temple of Apollo’. Though the images of nature on the ‘Urn’ are physically dead, Keats made them to radiate life and tactile warmth metaphorically. The natural environment described on the urn apparently radiates sensuous warmth. Stanzas two and three specifically focus on flora:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare
Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu (LL.5-6, 21-22).

In Osundare’s poem “Forest Echoes”, there is a vivid description of the thickness of the rain forest region of sub-Saharan Africa. Osundare refers to this vegetation as “shades and shadows of a remembered landscape, echoes of an ‘Eden’ in the remotest past:

the rain forest, terrifyingly green
a baffling baptism of Nature(x).

Talking of the thickness of the forest:

The sky is tree high
And the horizon dips into an inky grove...
Bouncing boughs interlock overhead
Like wrist wrestlers straining muscularly
On a canvas of leaves...(3).

In Osundare’s lyrical praise songs to the varieties of forest woods, he identifies their various local names, traditional herbal functions, natural qualities and mythic powers. The ‘Iroko’ is recognized as king of the forest wood, for its toughness, height and size:

Iroko wears the crown of the forest...
The champion machete assays a bite,
Beating a blunted retreat to the whetting stone.
The ironwood wears the crown of the forest(6).

The ‘Oganwo’, though not as tough as the ‘iroko’, stands tall in height and its roots annex the depths of the earth. It is a tree very valuable to the ‘Babalawo’ or Yoruba medicine men. They use its bark and roots for preparing traditional healing concoctions; thus these trees are ready victim and target for the saw-mills.

Wounded by wanton matchets,
Bled by the curing cutlass of the babalawo(6).

‘Ayunre’ or soft wood is traditionally considered weak because it is easily cut down and used for firewood:

Oh ayunre!
Feather tree of the forest
Willing wick of the blazing hearth,...(6).

Osundare, introducing another tropical tree - the palm tree - enumerates its unique and outstanding qualities. He goes into a lyric metaphor, comparing and contrasting the two extremes – of weakness and strength of the palm tree:

Let iroko wear the crown of the roof
let ayunre play the clown of the fireplace,
But let no tree challenge the palm,
Evergreen conqueror of rainless seasons(6).

He goes further to enumerate the palm tree’s numerous social and economic qualities and values. The palm tree is fruitful, ‘mother of nuts and kernels’ (6). Its economic value rests in the fact that it is ‘precious like the sculptor’s wood’ (6); The palm tree has many social values as well. It is used as source for the local wine called ‘emu’: the “bearer of wine and life” (6). The tree is considered physically invincible because of its height. It has “scaly stems, thin necks, faltering and swaying foliage” (7). A climber requires experience and craft to get to the almost “unreachable parents”. It is considered “too tall, too thin, too distant for the climbing rope” (7).

In “Forest Echoes” we are greeted with typical Nigerian animals common to Osundare’s home town – the rain forest region, south of the Sahara. “Forest echo” is indeed full of nature activities. In this collection we are acquainted with fauna, the animal world of birds, insects, reptiles and mammals. The poet gives us mental snapshots of particular parts of their body that are unique to their nature. There is the chameleon, noted for changing its colour to adapt to its immediate environment:

aborigine of wood and wind...
prince of easy wardrobe...’(9).

There is the millipede with its thousand legs:

With the millennial leaplessness
Of millipede legs (9).

There is the image of the scorpion ‘with the ireful fire on its tail’ and the snail “which carries its home on every journey”. The prayerful posture of the praying mantis in “its eternal tabernacle wringing green hands before an absent god...this praying brood, this school of dancing twigs...praying like a flock of green aladura” (9):

The ants or termites are noted for their anthills:
‘pyramid of the forest, with a queenly pharaoh swollen with stony orders’ (9, 10).

There are also snap shots of the snake, the monkey and the gazelle – all common species in Nigeria forest region:

The monkey which jolts the gym of towering boughs,
The gazelle which graces the grass
With maidensome glamour
The snake which echoes the rustle
Of my parting feet (12).

The poet goes on to give a list of how animals hunt down one another “in the cannibal calvary of the forest”. He suggests that cannibalism occurs in the plant world as well:

The iroko which swallows the shrub,
The hyena which harries the hare,
The elephant which tramples the grass(10).

Keats’s ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ is a poem that celebrates the song of the Nightingale and the persona’s desire to escape from the world of pain, weariness and fever into that of the nightingale. He compares the perfect world of the Nightingale and his own where “there is no light” and where he “cannot see what flowers are at his feet”, “where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes”. He desires to dissolve into the world of the Nightingale’s songs through “the viewless wings of poesy”. The Nightingale is a bird whose song is heard chiefly at night and had been a traditional subject for poetry from the Middle Ages (Charlotte, 1996: 47). According to Charles Brown, it was inspired by the song of an actual nightingale in the garden at Wentworth Place (Gittings, 1978: 187). The poem contrasts the realities of human life and death with the ideal world of natural beauty, typified by the nightingale’s song:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown (LL.61-64)

Stanza four, lines 32-34 of Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' could be considered as the only lines that touched on fauna. A priest is described leading a cow, garlanded with flowers, in procession to the sacrifice:

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?(LL.32-34).

In its treatment of the relationship between imagination and reality, the temporal and the immortal, this ode is very close to the 'Ode to a Nightingale' although it is much less personal in tone. The word 'I' does not appear at all in the poem, Keats though compares the world on the urn as superior to reality (Charlotte, 52).

The main focus of the poem 'On the Grasshopper and the Cricket' is based on two insects – the grasshopper and the cricket. The bird is only mentioned in passing:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's - he takes the lead
In summer luxury (LL. 2-7).

The cricket like the grasshopper is found busy despite the "lone winter evening" and the "frost" that "wrought a silence". The cricket is unperturbed by the intimidating weather. Its "shrills" and "songs" came in "warmth increasing ever":

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever (LL. 10-12).

The poem: "The moon, too, is a dream", in Osundare's *Moonsongs* (1998) is similar to Keats's "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket". This time, it is the cricket and the night bird's songs during the night that is the focus:

Let the cricket slit night's silence
With the scalpel of it's throat
Let nightbirds coo and cuddle
In the swinging Eden of their nests (LL. 29-32).

We have studied the various natural environment-related themes and subject matters in selected poems of Keats and Osundare. It has been observed that the poems selected for this purpose, are pre-occupied with items on landscape, items from the seasons, flora, fauna and the poets background. The use of literary devices like imagery, symbols and metaphor akin to the poets' natural environment has helped us to appreciate their innate creativity, experiences

and influences as young budding poets. All these factors are profoundly reflected in their poetic output. The natural environment has no doubt, provided them with store houses of nature related vocabulary for their poems. Their family background, experiences, geographical and social settings are foundations for distinct images and metaphors on which universal themes like landscape, flora, fauna; death, life, harvest and draught are built.

Notes on Chapter Three

1. Olosunta and Oroole rocks remained the spiritual and material symbol of preservation and corporate existence of the Ikere-Ekiti people before commercial-gold diggers defiled their bellies for economic gain.
2. The wanton exploitation of the natural environment has reduced its prominence and physical value: for “how dig the gold without breaking the rock?” and the mutual co-existence between the people and their natural environment.
3. “When he gradually sank into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept” - Joseph Severn on Keats.
John Keats died in Rome on 23 February 1821 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery, Rome. His last request was to be placed under a tombstone bearing no name or date, only the words, "Here lies One whose Name was writ in Water." Severn and Brown erected the stone, which under a relief of a Lyre with broken strings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical Applications: Literary Devices and the Natural Environment in Keats and Osundare's Poetry

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines literary conventions and personal creativity in the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare and considers how Keats and Osundare de-emphasized technique and convention for individual creativity. We also explore how images in their poems are constructed as ends and ornaments of beauty in themselves rather than mere instrument of expression.

This chapter is also preoccupied with the use of poetic forms, techniques, settings and literary devices like metaphor, simile, imagery, allusions, personification, and symbols. Proverbs, dirges and discourse on mythology with natural environmental relevance are also considered in this chapter. The chapter analyzes relevant poems of Keats and poems from Osundare's "The Eye of the Earth" "*Horses of Memory*"(1998), *Midlife and Moonsongs* and examines the effective use of poetic language and sensual imagery as tools for precise pictures of the natural environment.

French aestheticism developed the doctrine that art is the supreme value among the works of man because it is self-sufficient; i.e. arts lack any extrinsic value, especially to human society, and have no aim beyond its own existence. The end of a work of art is, to this school of thought, simply to exist in its formal perfection. This became a rallying cry of aestheticism with the emergence of the phrase "L'art pour L'art" or "art for art sake" or "life for art's sake" and the consequent emergence of "the religion of beauty".

These doctrines of exquisite sensations, his concept of the supreme value of beauty were introduced into England by Walter Pater, with his emphasis on artifice and stylistic subtlety. Keats adapted some of these in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale". But the absolute conception that art is solely for art sake and that it lacks any societal value is what Keats *and* Osundare consciously or unconsciously try to disprove in most of their poems, especially in the poems of Osundare. There is a clear indication in their nature poems that their art are largely for life and they focus especially on the natural environment. The

collections in *Moonsongs(1998)* and *Horses of Memory(1998)* for instance portray poetry as the soul and spirit of the African culture especially the Yoruba and its environment. In *Moonsongs* (xv) for example, he conjured the picture of folklore, songs and recitation of poetry under the moonlight:

Poro poro poro poro
Osupa olomi rooro
To ba di role a besu lori

The moon pounds her yam
In the apron of the night
Time to sing time to sleep
Time for the supple-white grub of the sweating sky (26).

Keats and Osundare identify themselves with some elements in nature through the use of literary devices like personification, metaphor, allusions and juxtapositions in poems like ‘*The Dream, the Dream, Is a Moon(Moonsongs)*, *Rock Song* and *What the River Said: (Midlife)*. ‘*Bright Star*’, *On The Sea, Melancholy*, From the background of our review of literature, literary critics, nature-focused theorists and literary artists conclude that Keats’s and Osundare’s creative instinct were spurred to overflowing by arts: ballads in case of Keats, oral poetry and tradition in the case of Osundare and the beauty of the natural environments. What marks out Keats’ poems is his attempt to make something new.

At their best, the poems have the quality of being absolute creations in their own right. This is typified in his Odes. The world of “Ode to a Nightingale” for example did not exist before he wrote it, and it now exists for ever. The main theme in Keats’s poetry is the conflict between the everyday world and eternity: the everyday world of suffering, death and decay, and the timeless beauty and lasting truth of poetry and the human imagination. His admiration for the middle ages allows him to make use of ballad form and to explore aspects of the irrational, unconscious and supernatural world. 1818 to 1820 saw an intensely creative period of Keats’s life, it was during this same period that he wrote the Odes in which the rich and sensuous variety of human experience is set against the transience of human life. The Odes explore fundamental tensions and contradictions. For example in “Ode on Melancholy” Keats contrasts depression and delight, pleasure and pain. He contrasts dreams and reality, the imagination and the actual, the tangible and the intangible. He celebrates beauty but at the same time he knows that all things of beauty must fade and die. He experiences love and death with equal intensity, knowing that they are closely connected. He is of the opinion that suffering is necessary for an understanding of the world and that great poetry grows from

deep suffering and tragedy: “do you not see how necessary a world of pains and trouble is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?” (Letters).

The Odes are a complex poetic form, and Keats is generally regarded as one of the masters of the form. He developed a poetic language that suits both this form and the nature of his themes. Keats language gives his themes on the Natural, a precise landscape-experience, giving apt pictures in the minds eyes and appropriate words to conjure images of the senses:

O, for a draught of vintage! That hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth (LL. 11-12).

In this poem, he was not only able to appeal to sight, colour, movement, sound, and heat, his focus is on the vegetation, “of flora and the country green”.

“Ode on a Nightingale” ambitiously attempts to achieve a mastery of a wider subject than *Fancy*. This time, instead of making references to the birds and their foraging activities, the poem uses the song of a bird, the Nightingale, to comment on a philosophical issue. The Nightingale, as we have observed in the Ode on a Grecian Urn, symbolizes permanence. It contrasts the transience of man’s life with the permanent beauty of the Nightingale’s song. The Nightingale’s world is free from the tribulations of the human world.

What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan
Where youth grow pale... thin...and die...
(LL. 20-26).

Here, the poet identifies himself with the bird: “already with thee!” There is a sensitizing of what he imagines to be the Nightingale’s world:

Moonsongs (xv), for example, is a sort of Ode to the moon. With the use of chorus songs accompanied by persistent sound of pestle in mortar, supplying a rhythm to the poem, the poem comes to life in typical Nigerian festival, only this time; it’s a sort of festivity in the sky, of heavenly bodies with the moon as motif.

The moon has a prominent place in Yoruba folklore. While the sun is the ruler of the day, the moon rules over the night, thus the moon is a symbol of events that unfolds in the night sky. Osundare makes use of an unconventional form, the ‘strand’ form to comment on the perception of the Yoruba on the nature of the moon:

Some say
You moon
Are the
Ashes
Of the
Sun bath
Ing
(*Moonsongs* 23).

He introduces the story using ‘chorus device’ for poetic effect, thus effectively introducing the Yoruba mode of music, songs and poetic recitation into the English poetic mode:

Spread the sky like a generous mat
Tell dozing rivers to stir their tongues
Unhinge the hills
Unwind the winds
The moon and I will sing tonight

Kiriji kiriji kiriji pepelupe....

Oh moon, matron, master, eternal maiden,
The bounce of your bosom
The miracle of your cheeks
Your smile which ripens the forests
Your frown which wrinkles the dusk....

Kiriji kiriji kiriji pepelupe... (2).

Fresh, fresh does the moon appear in the sky
Agbamurere

New moon is beautiful like a fairy
Agbamurere

Bring yams, bring kolanuts, lets go and marry her
Agbamurere

Before we get up there she has gone with Time
Agbamurere (4).

In the same vein, John Keats in line 36 and 67 of *Ode to a Nightingale* personifies the moon as queen mother:

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays (LL.36-37);

The moon and her ‘children’ (“starry fays”) brighten the night sky with ‘light’ melody, twinkling around the brightness of the moon. When we compare Osundare’s poem with John Keats “Bright Star”, we shall find a marked cultural difference.

Keats's approach in this sonnet is meditative and solemn in tone. The star is represented as passive, immortal entity devoid of any natural link with man. An object to be admired and even envied for its immortal nature:

Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art-
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart (Gittings, 113).

Osundare's poem on the other hand takes a festive form. In a typical night in rural African setting celebration, with the accompaniment of poetry, songs, story telling, eating and drinking under the moonlight. The moon represents the heavenly bodies participating in the activities of man. The moon is presented as having all the attributes of man and even power to see and partake in the activities taking place on earth. The moon, as it were, has the ability to 'remember'. In the second part, allusion is made to the activities of man during festivals and harvest ceremonies where there is plenty to eat and drink. Osundare combined juxtaposition with metaphor to allude to this merriment:

The stars will eat
With their restless eyes
A galaxy of teeth
Awaits the steaming skies (*Moonsongs* 30).

While Keats and Osundare used extensively, literarily devices as ornaments to project their themes, they do not lose sight of the extrinsic value of literary arts and the unique roles they play in culture and society.

Metaphor is a figure of speech. It has been viewed as the most significant of the five principal tropes, the others being simile, metonymy, personification and synecdoche. It associates or equates two distinct things without using a connective word to link the vehicle and a tenor. The image used to qualify the subject or figure is the vehicle while the subject of reference is the tenor. The identification of vehicle and tenor can provide both linguistic punch and enhance meaning in this study. Metaphor may be classified as direct or implied. Direct metaphor expressly identifies both tenor and vehicle while implied metaphor, by contrast, specifies only the vehicle, leaving the tenor to be inferred from the context of the sentence or passage. A mixed metaphor exists when multiple, very different vehicles are used to represent the same tenor (Ray and Murfin). John Keats and Osundare used these types of metaphor extensively in their nature poems.

4.2. Metaphor

The persona watching the sky and the tallest rain forest trees blend, the persona in Osundare's "Forest Echoes" could only see "the sky as tree high". From where the persona was standing, the rays of the sun was coming in through the leaves presents a multiple reflection of the sun rays into "compound suns":

To this forest of a thousand wonders
a green desire for this petalled umbrella
of simple stars and compound suns
the sky is tree high. ("Forest Echoes" 3).

There are some trees that have their branches interlocking with that of other trees and thus giving a picture of wrestlers with their hands interlocked in a wrestling posture. This is alluded to in "Bouncing boughs interlock overhead/ like wristwrestlers straining muscularly/ on a canvas of leaves"(3). Through metaphor the sensory imagery asserts itself:

I tread, soft-soled, the compost carpet
Of darkling jungles
My nose one charmed universe
Of budding herbs and ripening roots(3).

Sensory imagery of touch in "soft-soled", sight in "darkling jungles", olfactory or sense of smell in "my nose one charmed universe" and "budding herbs" quite revealing when we realise that the persona is in the midst of tropical vegetation where the scent of herbs, flowers, roots and the sight of the awesomeness of the deep dark forest are pronounced. In these four lines, the sensory metaphor asserts itself. When we compare this with Keats imaginative flight into the imaginative world of the nightingale's song in "Ode to a Nightingale"(LL.41-44), the imagery of the sense of smell is the same: while the atmosphere of the natural environment are the same, the settings are different. The moods of the poems are different. Both are based on love for the natural environment. Though Keats in this poem could only see with his imaginative eyes, "what flowers are at my feet/ nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs" he could in his imagination "guess each sweet" that the environment endows. In "Forest Echoes" there is an example of synecdoche where the throat of a bird represents the bird itself:

In the deep belly of woods
Its memory ticking songfully
In elulu's sleepless throat
Mauled the minutes, harried the hours(4).

“elulu” is a kind of bird which hoots at regular hours of the day and our focus here is on the throat of this bird. Metaphorization emerged by the combined use of personification and synecdoche. By the use of personification, the bird’s throat is animated with life and ability to “maul the minutes” and to “harry the hours”. This poem is similar to Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” where the reference is to the songs of the nightingale:

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Sings of summer in full-throated ease (LL.7-10).

Metaphor of contrast is found on line 9, 11 and 12 in “The Rocks Rose to Meet Me” III:

The rocks rose to meet me
eloquent in their deafening silence.
The rocks rose
their shadows a robe
of ungatherable hems (16).

The combination of the words “eloquent”, “deafening” and “silence” in line 9 appealed to our sense of hearing by poetic yoking of unlike words. Lines 11 and 12 compare the “shadows” of the rocks to that of human “robes”. While “shadows” is the tenor, “robes” is the vehicle in this poem. Osundare’s “Risky Metaphors” in *Horses of Memory* (1998) is based on three words: “thoughts”, “Words” and “birds”:

Thoughts are
Birds in flight
Seeking trees
Of words (53).

“Thoughts are birds” is a direct metaphor. It expressly identifies both tenor and vehicle. “Thought” is the tenor while “birds” is the vehicle. The last two lines: “seeking trees of words” is an implied metaphor. It specifies only the vehicle, leaving the tenor to be inferred from the context of the poem.

Osundare’s “Let Earth’s Pain be Soothed” employed ‘dust’ as metaphor of neglect. Dust is a natural phenomenon which he alluded to as he satirises the social-cultural situation in Nigeria:

Dust
Dust in brewing kitchens
Dust in eating halls
Dust in scheming boardrooms
Dust in retrenching factories
Dust in power brothels (27-28).

This poem is a political statement. “Dust in brewing kitchens” and “eating halls” allude to government policies cooked up by decree or constitutional backing for personal benefits. ‘Brewing’ presents to the mind’s eye a picture of intoxicants which was the result of such policies. Civil servants are corrupt and intoxicated with political power. Instead of providing good leadership and service by example, they boss it over the people. “Dust in scheming boardrooms” emphasises the problem of corruption. Board rooms are where political decisions are taken for constructive purposes but have instead become places where bribery, corruption and political rigging takes place. “Dust in retrenching factories” and “power brothels” literally alludes to idleness and crime as absence of raw materials and government protection forced factories to close down. The Nigerian Railway transport was for instance a cheap means of transportation, especially for the rural community where farm products are transported by rail road to towns and cities like Ibadan, Lagos Enugu and Kaduna.

Osundare’s poem “XV” *Moon songs* (1998) is a good example of where Mixed metaphor combines two or more diverse metaphoric vehicles.

The moon pounds her yam
In the apron of the night

Osupa olomi rooro
To ba di role a besu lori (29).

The chorus that follows in Yoruba is an allusion and extended imagery of the moon as woman preparing pounded-yam supper. Through a sustained use of personification and allusions to items in the natural environment, Osundare constructs landscape images:

Her pestle is iroko
Her mortar a cratered depth
In Oroole’s bosom. The yam, when pounded,
Is the clay rump of Agidimo mountain (29).

A picture is painted of the moon pounding yam with iroko tree as pestle. Her mortar as the depression of a Oroole crater and the yam pounded is the “the clay rump of Agidimo mountain”. This image is further heightened by the picture of the sea and fishes representing her pot of soup with the shrubs as her spiced vegetable:

Her soup is the sea
With a teeming tribe of simmering fishes
Her spice is the loyal shrub
Which tickles the nose of lofty hills (29).

These snap shots of items from the natural environment form a montage – the imagery of cooking a meal through mixed metaphorization.

The forest trees and their place according to their status and quality present a vivid picture of kingship and subjects. The human community and social stratification is alluded to in regard to the various trees:

Iroko wears the crown of the forest,
Town's rafter, roof of the forest
Ironwood against the termites of time
Iroko wears the crown of the forest
Its baobab foot rooted against
A thousand storms (5).

Describing the physical strength of the iroko tree, this poem is rendered in praise form. The same way royal singers or traditional poets praise reigning human kings.

The Oganwo tree is not as hard as the iroko tree and because it is “Incapable of the hardy majesty of iroko”, the Oganwo wears the surrogate crown of heights and depths” (6). In contrast, ayunre is the weakest of these three and this is why it is cut down for fire-wood:

Oh ayunre!
Feather tree of the forest
Willing wick of the blazing hearth (6).

The palm tree is in a class of its own. Though the iroko is king of the forest, the palm tree is socially and economically precious to humanity. From it, palm-wine is produced and palm kernel is used to produce palm oil and shear-butter (*ori* in Yoruba translation). “The palm is mother of nuts and kernels,/precious like the sculptor's wood/ the bearer of wine and life” (6).

Metaphor in poetic usage often appears in concrete or in abstract forms. Understanding poetry in physical terms are common but as soon as one gets away from concrete physical experience and starts talking about abstractions or emotions, metaphorical understanding is the norm.

4.3. Simile

Simile is a figure of speech that compares two distinct things by using words such as ‘like’ or ‘as’ to link the vehicle and the tenor. A good example of simile in nature poems could be found in one of Keats' letters. Describing the landscape of The Ambleside waterfall and its environs after a tour of this place, Keats wrote in a letter to Thomas Keats, 27th June 1818:

At the same time the different falls have different characters; the first darting down the slate-rock like an arrow; the second spreading out like a fan-the third dashed into

a mist-and the one on the other side of the rock a sort of mixture of all these”
(Gittings: 53).

Simile is used to describe the landscape. One of the water-falls darts down the rock like an arrow. The second one spread itself out like a fan and the third one dashed into a mist giving a combined appearance of an arrow and a fan. In John Keats’s “Bright Star”, the persona compares himself with the star: “Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art”(L.1). He again compares the star’s constancy to an Eremite or Hermit: “Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night/and watching, with eternal lids apart/ like nature’s patient, sleepless Eremite (LL.2-4). Keats’s poem “When I Have Fears” compares his writing ambition, compilation of poetry with granaries where grains are stored. His fear that he may not be able to accomplish this before his death was the theme of this poem:

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean’d my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact’ry,
Hold like rich garnerers the full-ripen’d grain (LL.1-4).

In Osundare’s poem “The Rocks Rose Meet Me” rocks are personified. These rocks are endowed with human limbs and the picture is further made vivid by kinetic images:

The rocks rose to meet me
Their legs lithesome sith lithic lore.
At every step the earth shook
like an ancient deck (17).

by the use of simile the earth is compared to an old “ancient” deck: “like an ancient deck” cracking under the feet of the rocks. They seem to move closer to the persona as he draws closer to them. The rocks seemed to wear “ankle-bells of ‘ploding pods/ and seed scattered like a million beads” and singing songs. These rocks are also presented through simile as having the qualities of gods and ancient in disposition. Their presence is intimidating: “At every step the earth shook/ like an ancient deck/ trees tremble from roof to root(17).the poem “Back to the Future” in Osundare’s *Moonsongs* (1998) is a poem which combined simile and abstraction in its poetic discourse:

And the sky coils up
Like a wounded foil
With silver scars

Ah shadows!
Falling back like robes of airy emperors,
Falling forth like pythons of skyjungles (68).

The first stanza of the above poem with the use of ‘like’ compares the sky coiling up like a wounded snake. The second stanza and particularly two words in the last line – “pythons” and “skyjungles” confirmed the comparison. The poems in Osundare’s *Moonsongs* are good examples of how abstract ideas are concretized into images of nature. “They provide dense, sometimes surreal, lyrical profiles of relentless seasons. The moon is a complex of masks; a versatile shuttle between night and day, sea and sky” (Osundare: 1998). The use of simile makes it possible to compare and associate the nature of the sky with that of a reptile by a poetic yoking of two unlike words like “skyjungle”, “wounded foil” and abstract words like “sky coils”, “silver scars” and “airy emperors”.

4.4. Imagery

Imagery is a term used to refer to the corpus of images or text; it is the language used to convey a visual picture or represent any sensory experience and it is the use of figurative languages like simile, personification and metonymy, often used to express abstract ideas in a vivid and innovative way. Imagery is a central component of almost all imaginative literature. It is considered to be the chief element in poetry. Imagery helps to establish the atmosphere described in nature poems. Literal imagery is purely descriptive, representing an object or event with words that draw on or appeal to the kinds of experiences gained through the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell). Figurative imagery may call sensory experience to mind but does so as a way of describing something else. Often some abstract idea cannot be depicted literally or directly, for example John Keats’s poem “Fancy”:

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home
At a touch sweet pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander(LL.1-5).

Whether literal or figurative, however, imagery is generally intended to make whatever the poet is describing concrete in the reader’s mind, to give it some tangible and real existence rather than a purely intellectual one. Imagery has a specific relation to symbolism. All symbols depend on images, often repeated to give the symbol cogency and depth. According to Ray Supryia (2009, 238), some critics have suggested that the key to unlocking the meaning of a work lies in identifying its image patterns and understanding how they work together to suggest or symbolize larger meanings or themes.

These critics believe that the pattern of imagery in a work reveals its meaning than an author's, persona's or poet's assertions. The New Critics, in particular, examined and analysed the interrelation among images and their relevance to interpretation. Images are visual, physical representation of something or mental picture of some visible thing or things. Images can involve senses other than sight and sensations such as movement and pressure. Abstract images can be represented in the sound of musical chords, the smell of flowers and freshly cut grass. Images often denote descriptive terms or figurative languages used to produce mental impressions in the mind of the reader as well as the impressions themselves. Images may also be used to mean "idea" or "vision"(236) as could be seen in "Ode to a Grecian Urn" where the urn symbolize truth and beauty in the realm of art and aesthetic:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude!
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 Beauty is truth, truth beauty (LL.41-49).

The fifth stanza of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" demonstrates that images can involve a wide range of sensory perceptions and sensations:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
 Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves (LL.41-50).

These lines give a chain of sensuous images with deep leaning towards the natural environment. Osundare intends the images of destruction of the environment and its restoration by all as a vision and ideology for a better earth : "ours to save not destroy", "who lynched", "home call".

Keats odes and some of the longer poems like 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and 'Lamia' have greater concentration of imagery. Keats's use of figurative images distinguished him from his contemporaries. In "Eve of St. Agnes" for example, images of cold winter season dominates the opening of the first stanza:

St. Agnes' Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold (LL. 1-4).

We see a concrete picture of the natural environment during the time of winter which was also when St. Agnes was celebrated. The images are that of fauna – the owl, the hare and the flock. The impact of the severe cold on this animal appeals to our sense of touch and sight. We can imagine the owl silent and still in the tree, the hare limping through the grasses with cold and the flock huddle together and silent with cold.

In Keats "Fancy", abstract objects take the form of concrete attributes, making the lines vibrate with life:

Ever let the fancy roam,
Then let winged fancy wander
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar (LL 1-8, 91).

The attribute 'winged fancy' is an attempt to animate Fancy and endow it with power of mobility. The compounding of concrete and abstract images 'winged fancy' gives fancy an attribute of a birth. Secondly, we have images of the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter endowed with human attributes. They are vividly represented as "summers joy", "Autumn's red-lip'd fruitage blushing" and "spirit of a winter's night".

O sweet fancy! Let her loose,
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the spring
Fades as does its blossoming,
Autumn's red-lip'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: what do then?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night (LL.9-18).

Through the creative capacity of the human mind, the imagination can evoke vivid pictures of what obtains in the four seasons. From the deadness of winter to the warmth of summer:

When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled.
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost
She will bring thee, all together,

All delights of summer weather (LL. 19-32)

Visual and tactile images express here the differences between winter and summer. Images that appeal to the auditory sense intensifies liveliness of summer festivities as they contrast the ‘soundless earth’ and coldness of winter:

Thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear,
Rustle of the reaped corn,
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment – hark!
‘Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw (LL. 39-46).

We have here the auditory sense contrasted with former lines: winter’s “soundless earth” contrasted with “distant harvest”, “muffled” contrasted with “carols clear”, “shuffle” contrasted with “rustle”. The visual imagery is further intensified as winter gradually gives way to spring, and animals coming out of their hibernation to warmth:

Thou shalt see the field mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep,
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin,
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn – tree,
When the hen-bird’s wings doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest.

Imagery of the five senses is also pictorially expressed in “Ode of a Nightingale”:

The imagination in a setting of darkness, helped to bring into our mind’s eye pictures of flora in summer, in the persona’s environment:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet,
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild,
White hawthorne, and the pastoral eglantine,
Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves (LL. 41-50).

This night-world serves as a perfect arena for the imagination to enact the world of the nightingale. Through visual images, “the grass”, “the thicket”, “the pastoral eglantine” are covered in leaves. Through the senses of taste, (as in “each sweet... and dewy wine”); sense

of hearing (as in “murmurous haunt of flies”); sense of smell (as in “soft incense”, “embalmed darkness” “muskrose” and “dewy-wine”) and sense of touch (as in “violets covered up in leaves”), the imagination achieves intensity and completeness in the fanciful world of the Nightingale. The image of rejuvenation is also presented as new lives emerge from old ones: the new season endows’ the plants with flowers, scents and nectar, now leaves cover up “fading” ones. These attracted “murmurous” insects. The activities of autumn season in “To Autumn” is vividly expressed by the use of images of fullness and roundness:

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
 To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees (LL. 2-9).

Imagery around gender issues is apparent in Osundare’s *Moonsongs* “IV”. By personification the moon is portrayed as wife of the sun: “Oh moon oh moon/ Wife of the sun”(8). in the same vein, Keats pictured the moon as “Queen-moon” on her throne surrounded by stars, alluding to her subjects and children:

...tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-moon is on her throne,
 Cluster’d around by all her starry fays’
 (LL 35-37).

In the imaginative world of the Nightingale, there is a conspicuously imaginative brightness in comparison to the dull, ‘embalmed darkness’ of Keats’ world. There is the vivid description of the “starred sky” as a regal court of fairies attending the “Queen-moon.” Images in Keats’ sonnets are sometimes ends and ornaments in themselves rather than mere instruments of expression. By the use of appropriate diction which conveys instant pictures he evokes sequences of images in the mind’s eye. In his sonnet “On first looking Into Chapman’s Homer”, Keats uses three major images to allude to the theme of the discovery of a new kingdom, (i.e. the poetic works of Homer). The three main references to the images of “travel”, “rulership”, and “realms” are aesthetically employed. Keats starts by alluding to the number of kingdoms he visited, the number of literary works he read:

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdom seen,
 Round many western islands have I been ...

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I had Chapman speak out loud and bold...

Expressing the impact of this discovery on him he employs two principal images – the image of an astrologer studying the ‘blue sky’ and that of a voyager exploring the blue sea of the Pacific Ocean:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken,
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific...

Keats here combines simile and metaphor to express his feelings on the discovery. He felt like a ‘watcher of the skies’ who has just discovered a new planet through his telescope. “Skies” and “Pacific” are functionally similar here. The sky and the ocean, symbols of the unlimited, represent depth and the common colour element of ‘blue’ which also evokes their limitless nature. Keats has just metaphorically discovered what is contained in these poetic deeps. One other sonnet which bears a striking similarity to “On first looking into Chapman’s Homer” is “To Homer”. In this poem, Keats sees himself as “standing aloof in giant ignorance” and wishes to visit Homer’s kingdom, to visit dolphin – coral in deep seas...”. He evokes the picture of “dolphin” and a “coral island”. The use of the word dolphin here shows Keats’ literary distance from Homer’s works. Metaphorically, Keats sees Homer’s literary works as of another element, which he represents as dolphin (dolphin lives in water while Keats lives on land). He wishes to visit the dolphin-coral in the deep seas in order to discover a new “untrodden green”. This wish is realized in William Chapman’s translation of Homer’s works into English. The consequent result of this translation is Keats’ poem “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer”.

Keats’ poem, “When I Have Fears” is a sonnet in which Keats depicts a natural environment as a desolate shore, in anticipation his early death at 25. In this poem, he uses simile and allusions to express forcefully a theme of fear of early death that threaten his becoming a famous poet, his disappointment and loneliness:

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain (LL.1-2).

These lines introduce us to what is regarded as a prophecy of his early death and the fear that this might come about before his pen has gathered all the ideas from his saturated, “teeming

brain”, into printed words, formed into “high piled books”; he compares this compilation of his poetic achievements to a “granary” stored with grain after harvest: “Like rich garners the full-ripen’d grain”. Where “garners” stood for the “books,” and the “ripen’d grains” his poetry. With this analogy, two clear pictures emerged: “high piled books” and “granary with full-ripen’d grains.” In order to reinforce these images of poetry and harvest and how they are linked to his inevitable fate he laments:

When I behold, upon the night’s starr’d face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance (LL 5-8).

Setting is a very important element in poetry. It is the background on which poetry is built. Without setting, it is like a building without a foundation. It will be at best abstract poetry which is outside our area of study. When John Keats and Niyi Osundare engage in abstract poetry at all, it is in order to bring to reality abstract concepts like beauty and fancy (*Moonsongs*: 8 & 39 & 40). Personification and metaphor are the medium of expressing this. Temporal Setting is the combination of place, historical time and social milieu that provides the general background for the personae and discourse in poetry. The general setting of a poem differs from the specific setting of an individual scene or event, though specific settings contribute to the overall setting. They focus on specific scenery, parts of the natural environment like landscape, rivers, mountains etc. The settings we are concerned with in this study refer to the natural environment, the physical backdrop of the poem, that is, the scenery, mood and atmosphere. The atmosphere in poetry is the general feeling created for the reader or audience by a poem. Setting and imagery are thus crucial in determining the atmosphere in the poem.

Settings in the poems of Keats and Osundare deal with place, time and atmosphere in which events occur. Poetic setting can be sub-divided into types. Each type has a specific important bearing on the particular poem. We have geographical setting, which deals with the actual geographical location of the poem, its topographical set-up, its scenery and all that surround the place where the poem is set. Occupational setting involves the manner of the daily living of the people, whether rural-located or urban-located. And a period in which a poem takes place or to which reference is being made is Time Setting. It is important to the overall happenings in the poem. The poem might take place during the rainy, harmattan, cloudy, bright day or night. Keats and Osundare adopted largely geographical and time settings in their poems. In Keats’s poems “Ode to a Nightingale” there is reference to an agrarian

setting: “tasting of flora and the country green”(L.13). Ruth is referred to as standing in a corn field:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn (LL. 65-67).

The home setting in John Keats’ sonnet “To my Brothers” carry a meditative tone and an atmosphere of peace and quietude as they sat by the fire side:

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,
And their faint cracklings o’er our silence creep
Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o’er fraternal souls (LL. 1-4).

Though Keats was in the room with his brothers by the fire place, with the faint crackling rhymes of burning wood and coal, his mind was miles away from home: the natural environment asserts itself on Keats’s creative mind. His mind wandered “in poetic sleep”(L.6): “for rhymes, I search around the poles” (L.5).

‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ is made up of multiple settings. The first setting is geographical, situated on an imaginary field on the Urn but in actuality, it is situated “In Tempe or the dales of Arcady”(L.7). While “Tempe” is in reference to a valley in Thessaly, “Arcady” is Arcadia, a district of Greece. (Gittings, 188). The second setting is on stanza two, line 15: “Fair youth, beneath the trees”(L.15). Their activity is that of sensual imagery of hearing and sight: “thou canst not leave/Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare”(L.16). Stanza 4 alone has two settings – “green altar” and “little town by river or sea shore” (LL.31 and 35):

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel (LL.31-36).

The setting in ‘bright star is dual. One is situated in the sky and the other on the earth by the sea side: “lone splendour hung aloft the night” (L.2) and “earth’s human shores” (L.6):

Bright star! Would I were steadfast as thou art -
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature’s patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores,

Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors (LL.1-8).

The first setting is in the sky. A lone star in the sky “hung aloft the sky” watching the activities taking place on the earth surface. “Watching” is the linking word between the two settings. The star is “gazing” and “watching” the landscape below with passive sleepless “lids apart”. In contrast, the second setting is kinetic and active. The star watched “the moving waters at their priest like task round earth’s human shores” and “the new soft fallen mask of snow”. There are two sub settings: setting of season –winter: “Of snow upon the mountains and the moors”(L.8), and on the bosom of persona’s lover: “Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast” (LL.9-10). The poem in all gives a vivid view of a landscape. It gives a picture of the natural environment viewed from the sky.

“Forest echoes” in Osundare’s *The Eye of the Earth* is located in the rain forest of Western Nigeria. It is rainy season and “the rains have kept their time this year” (3). This poem gives snap shots of dense vegetation:

This forest of a thousand wonders
A green desire for this petalled umbrella
The sky is tree-high
Bouncing boughs interlock overhead
I tread, soft-soled, the compost carpet
Of darkling jungles.
This is Oke Ubo Abusoro (3).

In this forest setting called ‘Oke Ubo Abusoro’ are farmsteads or settlements called ‘Iyanfoworogi’, ‘Oke Eniju’ and ‘Ogbese Odo’ (“Harvestcall” 5, 18-19). In this forest we have assorted flora and fauna of all kinds akin to this region: “The Iroko tree wears the crown of the forest/ironwood against the termite of time/ its baobab foot rooted against a thousand storms” (5), “Oganwo wears the surrogate crown of heights and depths”; “ayunre! Feather tree of the forest” and the palm tree: “evergreen conqueror of rainless seasons” (6). Among the fauna enumerated in “Forest Echoes” are “a bevy of birds”, “a barrack of beasts/ a school of truant antelopes”(7); “the partridge”, “the weaverbird”, “the squirrel” and the “chameleon”(8). “Millipede”, “scorpion”, “snail”, “praying mantis”, “hyena” “elephant”, “termites”, “snakes”, “monkeys” and the “gazelle”(10-12).

Osundare’s poem “For The One Who Departed” is a poem written in honour of a departed soul. Not only are all things in nature personified, they all express sorrow and mourn the

passing away of a farmer. The effect of mourning is felt by all things of nature. There are three main settings in this poem. The first one is located in the sky:

The moon moans in the closet of the sky
Stars wring their hands in sparkles grief
The noonward sun strikes a gong from the tower of
Clouds (LL.1-5).

The second acts of mourning took place on the landscape and the roadside where:

There is a frown on the brow of every river
The lake wears a shawl of ash and adamantine mist
The roadside grass still dew-laden
The grass heard the news from the lips
Of absent feet (LL. 3-15).

The third location is the home, “hut” or dwelling place of the bereaved. The poem took the form of lamentation, a dirge of unanswered questions:

This is the hut
Where is the tenant?
This is the nest
Where is the bird?
There is a mudden sadness
In the fireplace
Walls part their bosom
For prying gecko (8).

The abstract word “silence” is further used to heighten the atmosphere of mourning concretized by none living object like drums:

Silence now in the house of the drum:
Bata wept all night,
Omele could not sail the sea of wailing waters,
Ibembe broke down like an orphan,
The stick crouched like a shrivelled twig (16).

And the general mood of the environment is that of “silence in the belly of stone”,/silence in thronging forests/ and grasslands of leaping leopards/ silence of brooding rivers/ and distant mountains. There is silence in Oke Ubo – the name of Osundare’s father’s farm; the Osun river and brooks like “Amegboogudu” and “Okeerekekegbeyinamu”(18).

Osundare’s *Moonsongs* has a setting under the African sky. In this collection, poems like “Phase II” gives us a picture of the moon as a mask dancing in the sky:

The moon is a mask dancing
And in the milky grove
Between the cloudmountains
The moon’s tropical eyes

Are chameleons of silver forests (5).

The words “mask”, “grove”, “cloud”, “mountains”, “tropical”, “chameleons” and “forests” are words that help to conjure an African setting. The words cloud and mountain are used as one word “cloudmountain” in line three. This gives us a vivid picture of the moon situated between the clouds and the mountains thus giving us a setting of a mountainous tropical sky. The moon as a dancing mask is synecdoche, that is, there is the use of a part of masquerade (mask) to represent the whole concept called masquerade. The picture we have of the last two lines is that of juxtaposition of two images in colours symbolized by the chameleon. The colours of the moon as we see it in the tropics are as forests of silver or “chameleons of silver forests”. These pictorial metaphors are aptly used for poetic effect. The combination of silver colour from the moon filtering through the forests of other colours from the mountains and the clouds are together seen as “the moon’s tropical eyes”.

Myths are etiological narratives employing immortal protagonists - gods, divine nature and immortal figures to explain the operation and purpose of the cosmos. They are epics or prose narratives concerning deeper truths. They express collective attitudes of existence and are set in the remote past. Myths always have cultural heroes, deities and animals whose activities are set in an earlier world when the earth was different from what it is today like the sky and underworld. According to Akporobaro (2001), “They are significant in that they rectify social customs and explain the origins of the human and natural phenomena of a given cultural group”. He goes on ahead to divide myths into “rationalist” and “romantic” versions. Rationalist versions are made up and so are unreliable, as beliefs and stories (mythical). Romantic myths are a superior intuitive mode of cosmic understanding (mythic). In the literary sphere the romantic version generally prevails. The mythic source of romance and celebration of the natural environment will be our area of focus in this study.

In classical Greek, ‘mythos’ signifies any story or plot, whether true or false. In its central modern significance, a myth is one story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which serve to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, as well as to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for breaking the rules by which people conduct their lives.

Most myths involve rituals – prescribed forms of sacred ceremonies. If the protagonist is a person rather than a supernatural being, the story is usually not called a myth but a legend; if

the story concerns supernatural beings, but is not part of a systematic mythology, it is usually classified as a folktale. A mythology, we can say, is any religion in which we no longer believe. Poets, however, long after having ceased to believe in them, have persisted in using the myths of Jupiter, Venus, Prometheus for their plots, episodes, or allusions. The German Romantic writers, F.W.J Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel, proposed that “to write great literature, modern poets must develop a new unifying mythology which will synthesize the insights of the myths of the western past with the new discoveries of philosophy and physical science”. In the same period in England, William Blake who felt: “I must create a system or be enslaved by another man’s”, incorporated in his poems a system of mythology he had himself created by fusing hereditary myths and biblical history as well as prophecy with his own intuitions and visions.

A number of modern writers have also asserted that an integrative mythology, whether inherited or inverted, is essential to literature. T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) and Masizi Kunene’s epic *Anthem of the Decades* (1981), are good examples. John Keats in his narrative poem “Lamia” weaves myth with personal creative imagination with images vividly represented thus giving the poem a mythic setting, an environment haunted and enchanted. Lamia is a long and elaborate poem which tells of how a young Corinthian philosopher, Lycius, falls in love with the magical creature,

Lamia, a snake granted human form. In classical mythology Lamia was a monster, half woman and half serpent, who lured strangers (especially children) into her clutches and then devoured them. Keats discovered the story on which this poem is based in Book 111 of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, where Burton referred to the Pythagorean philosophy, Apollonius (first century AD), whose wisdom was reputedly able to overcome witchcraft. ‘Lamia’ is in effect an extended version of the story “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, a story telling of how a man “met a lady in the meads/ full beautiful- a faery’s child” (LL.13-14), and falls prey to the charms of the beautiful, supernatural creature but, after a brief period of bliss, their love ends unhappily. In this poem Keats returns to the classical world of myth and legend; the setting is exotic and the sensuous richness of the “palace of sweet sin” in Part II almost overwhelming in its luxuriance. (Jeffares: 1996, 60-61). The setting of this poem is that of an atmosphere charmed by the ‘faery child. A field by a lake side where harvest has been done and ‘the squirrel’s granary is full’. The air is haunted as ‘no birds sing’, the knight is alone and pale, the sedge and the rose withered and faded, and the moist and dew on the

lily anguished and feverish, the mention of flora is in the form of premonition. A pending evil or danger lurking at the corner:

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.
So haggard and so woe-begone?
I see a lilly on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy checks a fading rose
Fast withereth too (115).

The affairs and concerns of the gods and its impact on the natural environment should be noted in “Lamia”. The serpent’s transformation on bed of flora is significant too. The natural environment serves as background setting for the opening of the poem. Hermes, the messenger of the gods of Olympus, leaves his golden throne at Olympus for a forest on shores of Crete. On this Island lives a Nymph, a beauty which “all hoofed Satyrs worship with peals”. Her beauty so moved Hermes’ that he left high Olympus in search of her. After searching from valley to valley, wood to wood in vein, and has ‘wound with many a river to its head’ without success he rests in disappointment. It was while he takes rest from this search that he found Lamia. Lamia has the solution to Hermie’s problem and Hermies also has solution to Lamia’s problem. The gods grant each other’s wish. Now, Lamia desires to change from serpent into a beautiful lady so that he can entice Lycious into loving her. This process of transformation has an effect on the grasses and the meadow around her:

Left to herself, the serpent now began
to change, her elfin blood in madness ran,
her mouth foamed, and the grass, there with besprent,
withered at dew so sweet and virulent,
and, as the lava ravished the mead,
spoil all her silver mail, and golden brede (130).

Here, the grass withered and the lava ravished the meadow. On meeting her dream lover, the issue of setting comes up. They needed a geographical space for their romance and the natural environment is not pure enough. Lamia lied to him that she cannot live on earth where there is no happiness:

If I should stay,
Said Lamia, here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To drill the nice remembrance of my home.
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam

Over these hills and vales, where no joy is (138).

The place of myth and the natural environment in the African context and Yoruba beliefs system in particular is more communal than individualistic. The environment and community life revolve around beliefs in mythology to explain phenomena around them. The traditional poem “The ‘Fulani Creation Story” (Senanu and Vincent 2003) is a poem based on the Fulani beliefs and Masizi Kunene’s *Anthem of the Decades* (1981), a South African Zulu epic, are examples of textual representations of African mythology and of legendary heroes. There is in these poems clear representation of the natural environment as occupying prominent place of importance in the African belief system and cosmology.

In Osundare’s poem, the Yoruba cosmology, the relationship between man and his environment and his allusions to African wisdom is a product of the influence of his African natural environment and the beliefs attached to the land. Osundare in his poem “Earth” refers to the earth as “the spouse of the roving sky/virgin of a thousand offsprings”. The Yoruba people have an emotional attachment to the earth and their natural habitat. The earth is perceived as feminine and lovingly called ‘mother earth’: “Earth was ours, and we earth’s” *The Eye of The Earth* (1986 ix).

In ‘The Rocks Rose to Meet Me’, the persona declares:

Earth is where we stand
Earth is where we strive
Behold, cornfields flourish around your foot
Elephant grass follows the land
For unborn harvests.
Swell the grain
With living water from your rocky arteries,
Fatten the tuber (14).

There is here the interrelationship between the earth and its living dependants.

In the Yoruba cosmology, there is no clear cut separation or demarcation in nature of man and the world around him. Everything in creation is interrelated and has a common link. Myth and reality, life and death interweave. “The Rocks Rose to Meet Me” according to Osundare is a journey back into “a receding past”, a past filled with longing and nostalgic memories of his childhood in the midst of nature. The rocks welcomed him with the words “You have been long, very long, and far”. Their presence represent the mythic past of the persona’s home town. It reminds him of their natural qualities of permanence and through the use of metaphor and praise, he conjures the ever present posture of the rocks:

Their peaks cradled in ageless mists
Olosunta spoke first
His belly still battle ground of god and gold.
Oroole came next
His ancient voice tremulous
In the morning air
You who rob your head to pay your foot (15).

It celebrates the rocks ‘Olosunta’, ‘Oroole’ the “siblings of ‘Esidale’ (xi) “These rocks have a mystical dimension, they occupy a central place in the cosmic consciousness of Ikere people. They were worshiped and frequently appeased with rare gifts, thunderous drumming and dancing” Preface to the *Eye of the Earth* (xi). Traditionally, the Ikere people perceived rocks as guardians of the harvest spirit. In this volume, these rocks are “dramatized as a creative, material essence, lasting monuments of time and space. Its harvest spirit is abundantly celebrated in “Harvest call” I&II:

Here where yam wore the crown
In the reign of swollen roots
Amid a retinue of vines and royal leaves;
Between insistent sky and yielding earth.
Once here in May
The sky was a riot of pollen grains
And when June had finally grabbed the year
By her narrow waist
Corn cobs flourish their milky teeth
In disrobing kitchens (18-19).

Mythic elements, especially the versions having romantic leanings, remained very important and prominent as source influence in the nature poems of Keats and Osundare. They help to find a common ground for their affinity with their environment and humanity in general. This chapter has examined and reviewed the common ground and poetic interest on which Keats and Osundare based their poetic creativity. Through literary devices like metaphor, simile, imagery and poetic settings, they have been able to de-mystify literary decorum and poetic convention. Although from distinct innate creativities and mythic backgrounds, they foregrounded a common poetic ingenuity, in the area of eco-poetics.

One obvious distinction in Keats’s and Osundare’s poems on the natural environment is their choice of words for poetic discourse. While Keats celebrates the beauty inherent in the natural environment; relating it to beauty of art, the immortality of the elementals and the obvious state of humanity and mortals. Osundare on the other hand draws attention to the current sorry state of the natural environment. His poetry, in essence, warned humanity

against the destructive consequences on the ecosystem and humanity. On the other hand, Keats' poetry lacked the minatory perspective as we have in Osundare's. The explanation for this is that: there are more environmental challenges in the contemporary world than Keats'. Consequently, environment related words and terms that were absent in the days of Keats are emerging are prominent in Osundare's poems, thus, inter-textually, Osundare has the singular advantage of acquiring and adopting a wider poetic horizon than Keats.

Notes on Chapter Four

1. Built environment: “the ceiling of chandeliers” is contrasted with the Nigerian rural setting of the natural environment where “the moon is a mask dancing”.

CHAPTER FIVE

Universal, Specifics and Spacio-Temporal Divide

5.1. Discussion of Findings

This study analysed the subject of the natural environment as observed from the perspectives of two poets - John Keats and Niyi Osundare. This is an in-depth discussion on our findings which are based on an eco-critical study of the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare. In comparing their poems, the issue of language and culture emerged as background influence to their poetic creativity and a pointer to literary consideration across cultural and linguistic divide. We have studied the literary relation of these poets and their natural environment, England and Nigeria.

There were no apparent linguistic barriers because while for Keats, English was a first language, Osundare reasons and conceives ideas in his indigenous language, eventhough he has a high degree of competence in English, the language in which the poems examined are written. These poets are from distinct cultural backgrounds, time and century, and they are regarded as passionate nature-poets of their times. Osundare inter-textually connects with the poetic vision of Keats' view of the environment. This inter-textual relationship initiated a dialogue between the past and the present on the environment. Their major pre-occupation centred on the celebration of the beauty of nature in arts and life on one hand, and a concern for the preservation of the natural environment on the other.

Nigerian written-poetry spans about six decades from its inception, and has been a medium of engagement, decrying colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic oppression and political tyranny. To most writers, there is a direct relationship between literature and social institutions. The principal function of literature is to criticise these institutions and eventually bring about desirable changes in the society. Most recently however, eco-poetics has come to the fore. The mode of poetic enterprise, called resistance poetics, which was popular among Nigerian poets is gradually taking the secondary seat. Thanks to current national awareness and consciousness of the realities of ecological imperialism in the Delta region of Nigeria, the question of environmental degradation which has brought this region to the attention of the world is fore grounded through eco-critical poetics.

Osundare is considered as the most prolific nature-poet from this area of Nigeria. By extrapolation, Osundare's activist artistic enterprise and his nature poems find ample expression in using poetry for resistance dialectics, which culminates in environmentalism and cultural reaffirmation. His eco-poetry is a testament to this artistic commitment. This paper looked at some elements of nature as expressed in some nativity poems written by Keats and Osundare derived from folk or traditional ballads and praise poetry. Traditionally, a ballad like Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" is a poem that tells a story of exciting, heroic or even supernatural events. Originally, ballads like praise poetry in Osundare's "Forest Echoes" or "For the one who departed" were sung or recited to an audience and the story moved rapidly through action and dialogue. Typically, the popular ballad is dramatic and impersonal.

Although, the ballad and the African oral poetry have had enormous influence on the form and style of poetry of Keats and Osundare, especially since Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads and Okigbo's rhythmic verses respectively.

Individual poetic creativity and creativity distinct from imitation and convention were built on this. John Keats was one of the most richly talented of all English poets, a fact made all the more remarkable by the difficulties of his short life. His poetry speaks of romantic worlds in far off places and geographical settings though he was a city person. Conversely, Osundare has a passionate attachment to his rural agrarian home, his Yoruba tradition, immediate and past experiences. Born in London on 31 October 1795, Keats from 1803 to 1810 attended the school of Rev. John Clarke in Enfield, where he received a broad education and became acquainted with Greek, Latin and French literature. Apprenticed as a surgeon in 1810 and licensed to practise as an apothecary, he soon abandoned a medical career in favour of poetry. "I find I cannot exist without poetry" (p.9). His first published poem appeared in 1816 and the next two years saw the production of virtually all his poetic output. Obviously Keats and Osundare had different academic training backgrounds, they were acquainted with literature and both of them are mutually poetry enthusiasts, especially eco-poetry.

Keats's letters are also poetic. They reveal an extraordinary intelligent and sensitive nature. In his letter to 'To John Taylor, 27th February 1818, we can see his love for the natural environment when he compared poetry to a leaf. He contended that "If poetry comes not as naturally as a leaf to a tree it had better not come at all" (Gittings, p.46). Sadly, his life was beset with personal tragedy: His father died when he was eight, his mother died of tuberculosis when he was fourteen, his younger brother Tom died also at age nineteen and at the age of twenty five, Keats and his siblings had to live with their grandmother. There was

an echo of this traumatic phase of Keats's childhood in some of his odes and sonnets like "When I have fears" and "To my Brothers". "When I have fears" is comment on the fear that he may not be able to be an accomplished poet before he died. He compared the compilation of his poems with rich granary full of grains after harvest. Keats became reticent and deeply affected and particularly, his later relationships with women were difficult or even painful. And it is possible to see reflections of these experiences of loss and insecurity of his childhood and early adolescence as sources of some of the dominant themes of Keats's poetry. A poem like "Ode to a Grecian Urn" refers to the impermanence of beauty and the fragility of happiness under the constant threat of parting, illness or of death. Conversely, Osundare studied British literature and modern African literature which was taught along with modernist poets like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats and courses on Shakespeare. His formative years as a poet were spent in Ibadan in the 1970s.

With a rural agrarian background and a home surrounded by activities in Yoruba oral tradition, the foundation and direction for a unique poetic adventure was set. Osundare's attachment to his natural environment in Ikere and his socialist Marxist orientation as an undergraduate in the University of Ibadan gave vent to most of his environment-protest poems. Poems like "Ours to Plough, not to plunder", "Our Earth will not die" and "What the Earth Said" are direct affront to the destruction of the beauty of the natural environment. Preface to 'The Eye of the Earth' takes us to the early days of Osundare's life as a child, his rural home at Ikere Ekiti and the influence of the agrarian culture, its rocky landscape, the coming of western culture, his school days and their impact on his young mind and adult literary creativity. This simple rustic rural life and the closeness to nature were to give the poet a pastoral foundation and cultural depth in his poetics. This period was followed by the influence of western culture on the rural community.

The yoking of these cultures, the impact of its consequences and the poetic persona cut by Christopher Okigbo, the musicality, and word play of his poetry fascinated Osundare. One can see Osundare's interest in poetic musicality in the forms of chant-like rhythms and the use of figures of sound, especially alliterations and repetition. For example, his admiring the later poetry of Christopher Okigbo makes Osundare musical as we have in "The Moon too is a Dream" in *Moonsongs*. His love for concrete and sensuous images rather than obscure and difficult poetry made him write what he considers to be accessible to the generality of poetry readers. Keats and Osundare produced poetry that present the natural environment with greater intensity of feeling. They will rather celebrate, visualize, feel and touch nature than

just mention it in passing. Keats said in his letter to Severn, that he “particularly would look into some beautiful scenery for poetic purposes” (Gittings, 9). They both thought and wrote with boundless interest in poetry and literary composition.

5.2. The Therapeutic Significance of the Natural Environment in the Poems of Keats and Osundare

Keats and Osundare expressed sensitivity to the way the natural environment affects bodily health. Basing his nature poems on his medical training, Keats pointed out the therapeutic or pharmaceutical importance of nature to the body and soul. In Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy”, he warned against the misuse of natural herbs as intoxicants warning emphatically: “No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist wolf’s-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine” (L.1-2). He also described in his “Sleep and poetry” the healing power of nature, showing that nature does not serve merely as an element of creation and source for aesthetic and poetry but could also serve a medical purpose: “The breeze were ethereal, and pure,/ And crept through half closed lattices to cure/That languid sick; it cool’d their fever’d sleep, /And soothed them into slumbers full and deep./ Soon they awoke cleared eyed” (L.221-226).

Similarly, Osundare in a lyrical tone of expectation of rain, a symbol of healing after draught, sees ‘dust’ caused by lack of rain as ‘poison’ and rain therefore as symbolizing ‘healing’ for both man and vegetation. In his ‘Let the Earth’s Pain be Soothed’ (*The Eye of the Earth* 1986:27-29, he says: “Let it rain/ that earth may heal her silence/ let it rain today/ that corn leaves may clothe the hills/and through her liberated pores/ our earth breathes again”. Niyi Osundare’s poems are effective because he presented the environment of modern Nigerian poetry in terms of craft. He combined in his artistic rendition African oral poetry and foreign poetic elements. His poetic craft are fresh and innovative and so can be classified as modern Nigerian poetry. Osundare uses oral poetic artistry, social experience, foreign poetic elements, craft and innovation to project and promote the course of the natural environment and justify his concern for it.

5.3. The Natural Environment and Art in the Poems of Keats and Osundare

Both Keats and Osundare are inspired by art. Keats's innate creativity was spurred by arts from the classic period. His poems remind one of Claude, Poussin, John Martins and the like, whose works were largely of Greek origin. Keats interest in Grecian life, especially of paintings of landscapes and seascapes, are also manifest in the paintings and sculptures of ancient Greece which came to him in their original forms or in form of reproduction. Thus, two basic worlds of imagination inspired him: the world of classical antiquity as recreated by the Neo-classical painters and the world of the Middle Ages as recreated by the antiquaries and romance writers and artists of the 18th century. We have writers and artists like Charles James Fox, Benjamin West, Samuel Rogers, Fanny Burney and Hazlitt Williams who had, like Keats, the opportunity to travel out of England to France and Italy. Keats got his inspirations from such mental and visual paintings, coupled with an innate imaginative power, an ability to make use of apt visual images of what he sets his eyes and mind upon.

The natural environment is vividly expressed in Keats's poems, especially his odes and sonnets. This is made possible by life experiences and an innate creative ability. Niyi Osundare on the other hand, has a different base, the natural sublime in his poetry is based on Yoruba cosmology, the concept of life and death, the place of man in the scheme of things; the earth, the mountains, rivers, forest plants, and trees are all parts of a whole, in the Yoruba culture. The natural environment are in Osundare's work centred on the Yoruba cosmology, the concept of life and death, the place of man in the scheme of things; the earth, the mountains, rivers, forest plants, and trees; and other beast-kinds are all parts of a whole, in the Yoruba culture. There was already in place a well-established tradition, folklore, myth and ritual ceremonies long before the advent of foreign intervention.

Keats is referred to as a poet of beauty. No doubt, Keats is a poet that combines the three aspects of nature's aesthetic qualities: sublime and beautiful and ugliness. He did not only appreciate beauty, he derives poetic pleasures from the boundless magnitude of the sublime in nature, and he is not timid in life's inevitable ugliness – the pains and the escapes. It is from these examples of beauty, sublime and ugliness that Keats' creative imagination finds poetic expressions like the ones found in "Ode to a Nightingale". One other source of Keats'

nature-poetry concerns his atonement with and love for natural scenery and landscapes. In one of his letters to Severn in 1816, he explicitly expresses his desires “to look into some beautiful scenery for poetic purposes” (Gittings 1978: 85). In the 20th century Africa, in the spirit of Neo-Romanticism, Osundare’s emotional attachment to his people and culture, the landscape of his home town, his memory of the rural-farm cultural background all serve as a resource for thematic exploits in his poetry. He spoke with such nostalgic zeal in every word.

In the Preface to his *The eye of the earth*, he poetically narrated how the exploitation of the land and the erosion of cultural values and how the desertification of African identity left a deep gauge of bitterness and pent up emotion. The passion he has for the land, his people and culture and the wanton destruction of this beauty by colonization and neo colonialists are clearly portrayed in his poems. Osundare’s “Forest Echoes” for example bore a thematic similarity with Keats’ poems like “Fancy” in the way it explores the natural habitat of the animal world. It compared the peculiarities of Keats’ temperate region with that of Osundare’s tropical region. A poem like “Bright Star” tried to present Keats’ views on the inevitable fate of humanity. Human beings being mortals must live within the confines of reality as perceived by human society and also learn to live with it. “Bright Star” thus, stands as a symbol of permanence and perfection, free from the decay and trials of life. Osundare in the same vein remained hopeful, despite the destructive tendencies of commercial exploiters of the natural environment.

Keats and Osundare did not only admire the beauty and the awesomeness of nature, they saw natural sceneries as objects of admiration, poetically inspiring, and the landscapes, seascapes and the firmaments as sources of creative inspiration and nature as a teacher. Keats was conscious of poetic expression as an aesthetic process rather than as a final achievement. His poetry is largely organic, growing naturally into a full concept just as a cell would, from a nucleus. His nature-consciousness lends credence to his appreciation of “nature from this organicist viewpoint.” Nature therefore plays a vital role in the understanding of his aesthetic ambitions and achievements.

Osundare’s poems largely reflected his concern for environmental devastation. Through this primary aim he demystified poetry and made it accessible to the ordinary person. Through the medium of poetry he chastised his society and urged moral and social change. His diction was generally simple, with generous doses of indigenous words and phrases. His imagery and settings are for the most part rural. He drew freely from Yoruba tradition, proverbs, wisdom and oral poetry drawn from images of the natural environment. His verses were lyrical and

craft sophisticated. Though both poets had emotional attachment to the natural environment, Keats deeply celebrated its beauty largely because of his love for art and poetry in particular. He discovered the treasures of creative genius in the natural environment and accordingly infused most of his poetry with comments on nature's creative qualities and aesthetic creativity. There is in him that self-conscious use of imagery to project important philosophical remarks on things connected to nature. Because there is in both poets ingenuity in the use of poetic tools like imagery and metaphor, they wrote and paint nature pictures in words. This is why images of the natural environment are effortlessly animated in our minds' eyes. Both of them live in their poems, that is to say they are not just admirers of the natural environment; they embrace the touch of nature with their very being.

Keats and Osundare's poems tend to be celebratory and minatory in tone, in their writings on nature though Osundare's poems tend to lean more towards the latter. Osundare sought to warn us of environmental threats emanating from governments, industrial, commercial, and Neo-colonial forces as is vividly expressed in his poem "Our Earth will not die". They both celebrate and revere the natural environment as a life giver. In the light of this, one could see that the approach of the two poets to the question of the natural environment is distinct as it is similar. While Keats celebrates the beauty of the natural environment and uses same as object for creative imagination and poetic inspiration, Osundare not only celebrates nature, he laments its destruction.

While Keats' poems romanticise and celebrate the natural environment as he sees it, still largely untouched by British industrial revolution of the 18th century, Osundare's poems, especially the ones in his *The Eye of The Earth* (1986) describe many of the choice trees, insects, birds, monkeys, antelopes and other animals for which this forest is a natural canopy. His overriding interest is to bring us to the awful reality of the present degraded state to which we have pushed our planet – animals hunted down for food or sport, bushes slashed and burnt for farming, rivers gradually being turned into industrial sewers; the forests giving way to cattle ranching, commercial logging, highways, oil drilling and mining. In different parts of the poem, the poet points attention to abundant biodiversities and the self-generating, self-sustaining capacities of this biosphere. We are taken to view animals of various species for whom the forest is a perfect natural habitat, a playground and indeed a paradise.

Osundare's "Our earth will not die" (50) painted a gory picture of the state and condition of the landscape, plants and animals. It drew attention to the way the environment, human beings, animals and vegetation are being destroyed through exploitation and pollution of the

atmosphere by industrial waste and deforestation, the evil of imperialism wrought via gas flaring and oil leaks in the Niger Delta of Nigeria for example. His overriding interest is to bring us to the awful reality of the present degraded state to which we have pushed our planet. Osundare's poems, especially, the collections in *The Eye of the Earth* promote environment consciousness, and provoke ecologically sensitivity to the plights of the fauna and flora of the Nigerian setting. While Keats' poems romanticise and celebrates the natural environment as he sees it, still largely untouched by British industrial revolution of the 18th century. Osundare's poems, especially the ones in his *The Eye of the Earth* (1986), described many of the choice flora and fauna for which this forest is a natural habitat. In Osundare's "The Eye of the Earth" there is detailed listing of the items of the natural environment but in the poems of Keats these details are relatively fewer. There are no elaborate concentrations of praise of plants or animal as we have in Osundare. Keats instead focused on specific items described. He used concentrated imagery and pictorial description of choice fauna, flora and landscape as we have in poems like "Ode on a Nightingale", "Bright Star" and "Cricket and the Grasshopper".

Keats's "On the Sea" dwells extensively on the theme of landscape and the seascape around Shanklin and Carisbrooke.

This poem is a product of Keats experience with the natural environment in these areas. As in Keats "Bright star" where we are presented with a view of a landscape by the seaside, there is also in Osundare's "Forest Echoes" a cinematographic picture of palm trees along the river Osun. The setting is that of a river confluence. Snap shots of rocks, hills and waterfalls descending on lower rocks with the youthful clatter. The effect of erosion is vividly represented as luggage of sand and rock slice the hills as it tunnelled through caves. This panoramic view can be compared to what we have in Keats' "Bright Star". The poems of Keats and Osundare celebrate the natural environment. They are beautiful views of nature before the current lamentable state of landscapes as we have in Osundare's "Our Earth Will not Die".

5.4. Keats's Odes and Osundare's Praise Poetry¹

"The rocks rose to Meet Me" in the *The Eye of The Earth* (1986) focuses on the topography of Ikere Ekiti, Osundare's home town. Its landscape; especially, Olosunta and Oroole rocks (14-15) and river Osun are good examples. The poems are metaphorically represented as waiting to welcome the persona back home. Typical of Yoruba poetic praise-form, the poet

sang a list of the physical, economic and spiritual qualities of the rock. Keats in “Ode to a Grecian Urn” reflected physical desolation of the natural environment. This is symbolized in the poem by the physical topography. The setting of a city that is empty of its folks. This poem is unlike Osundare’s poem “The Rocks Rose to Meet Me”, a poem celebrating a home coming of a son by the communal spirit symbolized by the rocks ‘Olosunta’, ‘Oroole’ and ‘Esidale’

John Keats’s odes and sonnets largely conform to the poetic rules and mode of writing of the Elizabethan and Romantic Revival period, but Osundare introduced African free verse mode which is free from decorum. Through innovations and creativity Osundare introduced into his poems incantatory modes like repetition and praise poetry, panegyric poetry and proverbs. In the poems of Keats there are no such poetic modes. There are references to songs but there were no songs in any of his poems. For instance, in “Ode to Nightingale”: line10 and “Ode on a Grecian Urn”: lines 10-12. According to Osundare, in an interview conducted by ‘Poetry International on the Web: 2, April 2010, he said: “Undoubtedly my poetry is influenced by incantatory mode, hence my constant use of repetition”. The odes of Keats are closest to Osundare’s praise poetry. Odes like “Ode to Nightingale” and “Ode on Melancholy” only made references to their subjects and personae but no direct praise are made to these subjects as we have in Osundare’s “Forest Echoes”. There are element of praise poetry in Osundare’s poems which are absent in Keats’ poems. The closest form to praise poetry is the odes. In the “Ode to a Grecian Urn” and “Ode to Melancholy”, Keats’ creativity as a poet of nature and beauty are vividly represented. While there are no proverbs at all in the poems of John Keats, Osundare’s praise poetry and proverbs could be found in “Forest Echoes”, “Mooncantation”(24-25) and (I&II, 5) in *Moonsongs(1998)* and “New Dream” (60-61) and “What the River Said” 26: *Midlife*.

There is in the poems of Keats and Osundare contrasts of the seasons. Winter and summer which Keats made reference to in his poems are western concepts associated with the seasons. They belong to the four seasonal circles of autumn, winter, spring and summer. In contrast, harmattan and rainy seasons are African concepts associated with African tropical seasons, on which Osundare dwelt extensively. Harmattan for example is a climatic phenomenon noticeable between the months of September and February in Nigeria. The air is often dry and windy and can be compared with winter and autumn which Keats referred to in his “To Autumn”. The rainy season can be compared with summer. It is a period of rain and green plants springing into life again. These seasons are adequately represented in

Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* (1986): "Let Earth's Pain Be Soothed" (27-29), "First Rain" (29), "Raindrum" (32) and "Who says that drought was here?" (34). These poems are regional contrast to Keats temperate settings where poems like "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" (27), "To Autumn" (157) and "Fancy" bear themes on seasons but are distinct temperate seasons.

Despite these regional differences there are terms that are universal and so appear in their poems. Concepts and words like water-fall, sunshine, rainfall, rocks, rivers, harvest, birds, corn, earth, sky, night and day. In Keats's "Bright Star" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" there are landscapes of "moving waters" (L.5), "soft fallen mask of snow upon the mountains" (LL.7-8) and "little town by the river or sea shore/or mountain-built with peaceful citadel" (LL.35-36). Similarly, in Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth* (1986), poems like "The rocks rose to meet me", "Forest Echoes", and "Our Earth will not die", are similar to Keats's landscape images: "The rocks rose to meet me/ their peaks cradled in ageless mists"(LL.13), River "Osun parted somewhere below the mountains/ her luggage of sand and rock/ slicing the hills/ tunnelling through caves/throbbing with fishlets and tadpoles"(LL.124-136). Through these diverse but universal concepts individual creative talent emerged built from distinct individual world view and traditional consciousness.

Keats and Osundare used the natural environment as a workshop for their raw materials and to showcase their poetic artistry. Keats for example sees everything in nature as beautiful and what the casual eyes perceive as repulsive in nature are to him materials for poetic expression. His poem "The Cricket and the Grasshopper" symbolizes life and activity. For him "The poetry of the earth is ceasing never/ the grasshopper takes the lead in summer luxury/ the cricket sing, in warmth increasing ever" (LL.1-12). Osundare's "Who says that drought was here?" can be compared to Keats "The Cricket and the Grasshopper" in the activities of fauna in the natural environment, "The rain has robbed the earth/ with these green guests around/ who says that drought was here/ and anthills throw open their million gates/butterflies court the fragrant company of flowers/and weaverbirds pick up the chorus" (*The Eye of the Earth* 1986: 34-35).

We can also contrast Keats's "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" with Osundare's "Let Earth's Pain be Soothed". While "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket" celebrates life, "Let Earth's Pain be soothed" laments the impact of drought during and the dryness of harmattan. The poem "The moon too is a dream", in Osundare's *Moonsongs* (1998) is similar to Keats's

‘On the Grasshopper and the Cricket’. This time, it is the cricket and the nightbird’s songs during the night that are the focus: “Let the cricket slit night’s silence/ with the scalpel of it’s throat/ let nightbirds coo and cuddle/ in the swinging Eden of their nests (LL. 29-32). The landscape, flora, fauna are also vividly personified as they, disinterestedly acted out their inbuilt nature: “Prostrate like famished horses/ brown hills cast vacant looks/ at balded plains/the seeds noiseless in the dormitory of the soil” (27-28).

In “Ode to Melancholy” Keats warns against the use of poison herbs like “wolfs-bane” as a means of escape from trials and depression. Osundare in his “Forest Echoes” celebrates the economic and social values of herbs and the flora in general. Keats’s poem is more psychological and this was why Keats did not address his subject ‘melancholy’ directly but made a plea to the sufferer: the poem opens with a warning and emphatic command: “No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist/ wolf’s-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine (LL.1-2). To the contrary, Osundare made a direct reference to his subjects, enumerating their endless virtues through praise mode:

“Iroko wears the crown of the forest/ogonwo wears the surrogate crown/ let no tree challenge the palm” (LL.95-108). “Ode to Melancholy” is a comment on the belief, in Keats’ time, that trials and depressions are a necessary part of the progress of the soul. They must be tolerated. Use of herbs as a means for escape from them must be avoided. Osundare recognize and appreciate flora and herbs as having unique economic roles and social functions.

Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” contrasts the permanence of art with the world of natural beauty. Though the images of nature on the ‘Urn’ are physically dead and imaginary, Keats made them to radiate life and tactile warmth metaphorically but Osundare’s description of the natural environment in his “Forest Echoes” are vivid descriptions of the thickness of the actual rain forest region of sub-Saharan Africa. While Keats described the beauty of nature through the medium of art, Osundare deified the natural environment with awesome reverence: “the rain forest, terrifyingly green/ a baffling baptism of Nature”(x). While Keats in “Ode to a Grecian Urn” described an imaginary or artificial natural environment through the medium of art, Osundare described a true and real life natural environment based largely on life experience as a child. While he expressed beauty of the natural environment through apt nature images, Osundare presents a profound knowledge of the flora, fauna and the topography of his agrarian nativity. He called each species by their local names and enumerated their natural disposition and socio-cultural values.

Keats celebrates and admires the natural environment for aesthetic and poetic end. While Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" contrasts the realities of human life and death with the ideal world of natural beauty, typified by the nightingale's song, thus the paradox in line 61: "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!". Osundare was more practical; he lamented the attempt by human kind to subdue the natural environment through wanton exploitation and eco-trafficking. He commented on the need for environmental sustainability that is close to that of Keats's time. The use of literary devices like imagery, symbols and metaphor akin to the poets' natural environment has helped us to appreciate their similarities and dissimilarities, their innate creativity, experiences and influences as young budding poets. All these factors are profoundly reflected in their poetic output. The natural environment has no doubt, provided them with store houses of nature related vocabulary for their poems. Their family background, experiences, geographical and social settings are foundations for distinct images and metaphors on which universal themes like landscape, flora, fauna; death, life, harvest and draught are built.

Mythic elements, especially the versions having romantic leanings, remained very important and prominent as source influence in the nature poems of Keats and Osundare. They help to find a common ground for their affinity with their environment and humanity in general. This chapter has examined and reviewed the common ground and poetic interest on which Keats and Osundare based their poetic creativity.

Notes on Chapter Five

1. Environmental peculiarities could be seen also in Keats and Osundare's poetic forms: Keats' 'Odes' and 'ballad' represent Osundare's 'Praise poetry' and 'folk poetry' respectively.

CHAPTER SIX

Eco-poetics and Eco-wheels: Converting Paper into Products

6.1. Conclusion

This study has helped to bring a fresh insight into the value of literature outside the classroom context. It has served to further evaluate the extrinsic value of literature in the context of eco-critical study. As our environment and humanity become gravely endangered, the study of literature and the environment has become more necessary than ever before. Comparing Keats and Osundare has helped us to appreciate the universality of the creative intelligence common in humanity, irrespective of race or cultural background. This study has confirmed the universality of poetry though they may be expressed differently because of variation in world views. It is a proof that there is in every human kind that innate capability to create and to express his or her perception of the world. The value of art for art sake and art for life sake are clearly projected in each poem examined, and the unique poetic creativity in each poet is profound. Other areas of our findings included comparing the natural environment, built environment and natural architecture; converting papers into tangible products; contribution to scholarship, the future of research and recommendation for further studies.

6.2. Wildernesses or Sublime Focused Environment

This setting focuses on the natural environment that is still largely untouched by mankind. An environment noted for woods, forests, waterfalls, mountain-ranges, rivers and lakes. The Kaluli music of Papua New Guinea for example is a poetic reconstruction of the natural environment through sensory imagery of sound. Kaluli song ceremony is interlocked with the sounds of the rain forest itself – the sound of birds, frogs, rain, sea, wind and insects are imitated when making music. Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" for example speaks of winter and its impact on the fauna and flora using sensory imagery of touch, kinetic and sound:

St. Agnes' Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold (LL.1-4).

And Keats description of the Landscape in the Isle of Wight and Devonshire are snap shots of: “Mountains in the clouds: One of the waterfalls darting down the slate rock like an arrow, the second spreading like a fan, the third dashed into a mist” (Finch, 27).

Example of Wildernesses/Sublime and Art focused are the uninhabited continents, forests, mountain ranges, cliffs, waterfalls and lakes. In Keats ode to a nightingale:

“Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird...
And with thee fade away into the forest dim”

Keats also wrote of “mountain in the cloud:

“One of the waterfalls darting down the slate rock
like an arrow, the second spreading like a fan,
The third dashed into a mist”.

In Osundare’s “The rock rose to meet me” we have

“The haunting sound and silence
Of this sweet and sour forest
Dig deep channels to the sea of
memory...”.

6.3. Countryside: Art and the Natural Environment

This model type of poetics constructed the natural environment by introducing built structures without any significant alteration of the existing natural environment. This could be referred to as ‘duologue poetry’ or ‘hybrid poetry’. Materials used are 100% from the natural environment. Nature-poetry is artistically translated into architectural designs. The landscape architect translates on ground the poet’s impression of the natural environment. This could be constructed with living flora without destroying the original features of the landscape or the natural environment. The closest example of countryside environment is found in Osundare’s “Forest Echoes” in *The Eye of the Earth* (1986):

Bouncing boughs interlock overhead
Like wristwrestlers straining muscularly
On a canvas of leaves
I tread, soft-sole, the compost carpet
Of darkling jungles (LL.16-21).

And Countryside with hills, fields and wood are in Keats “Ode on a Grecian Urn”:

Ah, happy, happy bough! That cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
Beauty is truth, truth beauty".

The artistry in Osundare's poems could also be seen in "Risky Metaphors" in *Horses of Memory* (1998) where he defines 'thought':

Thoughts are
Birds in flight
Seeking trees
Of words.

Another of Keats poem that explore art and the natural environment is "When I Have fears". It tells us of his fear that he may not be able to be an accomplished poet before he dies. He alludes to the natural environment here:

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain.
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain".

Osundare also in his "Let the Earth's Pain be Soothed" in anticipation of rain, a symbol of healing balm after drought

Said:

"Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
Let it rain today
That corn leaves may cloth the hills
That through her liberated pores
Our earth breathes again".

6.4. Built or Domesticated Environment¹

In a domesticated environment, human activities on the natural environment are proportionately higher than those on the natural environment. Built-dominate environment emphasizes how built or domesticated environment coexists with the natural environment disproportionately. Structures like bridges and natural scenery like rivers are constructed and consequently alter the landscape. It gives a picture of a domesticated environment with

houses, schools and institutions, parks and gardens and natural scenery but without emphases on sustainability and preservation of the natural environment over built environment - 20% built and 80% natural environment.

Keats in his "Ode to Grecian Urn" referred to built environment as the "little town by river or sea shore/ or mountain-built with peaceful citadel" (LL.35-36). And Osundare's "Memory Street" (25-28) *Horses of Memory* (1998): "The road crosses the river/ the river crosses the road./ Ears of steel, eyes of mortar,/ the Bridge is the god/ who looks back by looking forward". This study thus looks into these three models in order to construct a creativity zone where literature and the environment meet, paper converted into tangible product and conflicting interests on land use between human beings is resolved. This study, seeks a type of collaboration between Department of Languages in The School of Human Development and Department of Architecture in The School of Environmental Studies. A model 'Nature and Culture' scheme should emerge from this study. It could take off on a given acres of land. It should commence operation with preservation of the natural environment and organic farming as focus. Organic culture should take 80% of the land and built culture 20%. Under this scheme, we shall have choice native natural vegetation belonging to same environment preserved. This project should look into areas like orchard, ranching, natural fish pond and organic farming. One positive thing about the current global 'economic downturn' is its impact on organically propelled vehicles. BBC news bulletin of May 28th 2010 stated that as Sweden closes her American General Motors (GM) Motor production, her intent was to focus, instead on eco-friendly cars, for the health of her populace. Under this Eco-scheme, eco-friendly equipments that generate solar energy and battery or electricity propelled gadgets should be the emphasis over fossil fuels.

6.5. Built Environment, Natural Architecture and the Natural Environment

At the global level, Adeyeri (2009: 13) contends that built environment in each country is estimated to account for about 25-40% of the energy construction; 30-40% of the material resource consumption; 30-40% of the waste production and 30-40% of the greenhouse gas release. For most African countries, he further stated, the figures are mainly at the lower end of the intervals given above. Based on this statistics, it is safe to adduce that the Nigerian natural environment that is still largely untouched by the construction industry and the built environmental structures need protection and preservation. While infrastructure is very

important for industrial development, it must be built to make development sustainable and the environment life sustaining. The infrastructure affects the environment just as the environment can affect the infrastructure. Thus, the impact of climate change on the infrastructure and the impact of industries on the environment must be considered in the location, design and use of the system.

The government needs to recognize the importance of protecting and conserving the environment during construction and after construction of infrastructure projects. According to Adeyeri (2009), “Environmental Impact Assessment should be mandatory before undertaking implementation of all project to ensure that the activities carried out do not impact negatively on the environment”. There is thus the need to consider some activities which when properly harnessed can positively impact the natural environment. These are sustainable designs and constructions like energy and water efficient design and incorporating pollution prevention measures during construction; Renewable energy technology – for example solar, wind and earth-energy technologies; Waste management and recycling facilities; Flood risk management like sustainable drainage systems, river rehabilitation schemes, Protection and enhancing biodiversity by incorporating natural habitats as part of project design and Connectivity with public transport - i.e., providing cycle ways, footpaths, and vehicle free zones in some business centres.

Most of our utilities have a negative impact on the appearance of the landscape. Power lines and NITEL telephone lines go through many unplanned community settlements and these are sources of danger during rain storms. In order to help retain the natural beauty of landscape and protect lives, an enabling law should be enacted which would require that public-utility power lines for telephone, telegraph, and electricity be placed underground. Also some public utilities have destructive effects on the environment. Utilities such as sewage-disposal systems are directly connected to the rapidly increasing pollution of air, land, and water throughout the world. There is also the exporting or dumping of industrial waste into the waterways of some African countries or even the emptying of toxic waste directly into sea. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in recent times continues to be a source of concern to governments of that region and those whose livelihoods depended on that environment. Critiques from the sciences testified to this concern.

J.B. Adeyeri (2009), contends that “Civil Engineering plays a critical role in determining how our environment looks and functions, it includes the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of structures and site topography to suit human needs” (2). Though this action is

beneficial to man, the continuous quarrying of the natural environment for example gives rise to natural disasters. Where geological balance is tampered with, natural disaster is always the result: as we have in Katse Dame, Lesotho where the weight of the water diverted into this reservoir by the Katse Dam of Lesotho caused minor earthquakes and damaged houses in surrounding villages. The dam, which is 182 meters high, represents the first phase of the Lesotho Highland Water Project. Despite environmental concerns and allegations that several companies competing for projects contracts violated international policies, the Highland Water Project is scheduled for completion in 2015 (Encarta 2009).

Aize Obayan (2009) in response to Adeyeri's lecture (2009), titled "Physical Development for Sustainable National Development" said we cannot focus our emphases on built environment to the detriment of our natural environment, "We cannot only meet human needs, there is also the need to sustain what prevents extinction". Sustainable growth calls for a development strategy that does not compromise the balance of our ecosystem and welfare of future generations. Humanity and Nigerian government in particular need to discourage all activities that deplete our natural resources, with the consequent degradation of ecological systems. Environmental management and economic development are closely interrelated. The natural environment consists of complex ecological system: the flora for example, not only provides fuel and fodder, they build also soil fertility, prevent erosion, provide wild life habitats for the fauna and ameliorate climate changes. These intricate systems are central to human welfare and survival and also very valuable as ready-made raw materials for imaginative literature and literary arts as seen in the case of Keats and Osundare. They are invaluable sources of inspiration for nature poets. Consequently, these systems need to be preserved and well managed for the general good.

Because the preservation of the natural environment is paramount to a sustainable earth, there is need to start a study, collection and compilation and immediate use of eco-friendly and sustaining words that are not exploitative in current world usage.² This endeavour will be a sort of 'eco-language word-pool', which will reorient us in the use of words that help to achieve the shift in attitude and behaviour favourable to a sustainable natural environment.

Debate and discussion should be encouraged so that alternatives to the language of exploitation can be proposed and adopted. We can begin by doing this within our own networks, and then introduce the results into other networks. The issue should be brought to the attention of teachers, who can raise it in their classes and encourage the use of non-exploitative language. A compilation of these words could be started by an individual or

groups. At the end a glossary or dictionary of environment friendly words and phrases should emerge.

6.6. Eco-Wheels: Converting Paper into Products

This study has enumerated how the poets have succeeded in raising awareness on the need to preserve and maintain the natural environment. Using the Covenant University example, this study has evolved an interdisciplinary, natural environmental centred project to be called Grapho-Poetics. Despite challenges to a sustainable environment, Covenant University is developing into a model Total Community in Nigeria. Her focus is to build a harmonious, ideal community where the natural environment is sustained and preserved. Leading by examples, Covenant University prepares leaders for a healthy nation. In this dispensation nature poets should work with landscape architects, gardeners, urban and rural landscape planners with the natural environment as laboratory under the physical planning sectors of government agencies.

They will experiment with model landscapes for an ideal environment. The benefit of this study to Covenant University lies in its area of emphasis – nature poetry. This is an area of interest for architecture and nature-poets or garden poetry. Poetry is relatively subjective in nature; architecture is not wholly objective either. Both enact the exterior or the interior landscapes of nature’s opulence and rhythms. While architecture is ‘frozen poetry’ poetry is the soul of architecture. It gives rhythm to architecture. This study thus, attempted to harmonize these unique qualities by redefining the relationship between nature poetry and natural architecture, built environment and the natural environment. From our findings, architects and nature poets should interpret and enact concrete nature images on canvas and landscape designs. This montage is to be labelled Grapho-poetics. Other areas to be considered under Grapho-poetics are ‘painting and poetry’ where painting or drawings are used to construct and interpret nature images in poems. This would particularly help to enhance poetry learning in pre-primary schools. Other collaboration is in photography and poetry. Pictures of the natural environment are reduced to poetry and these are published in the form of nature pictures and nature poems. The second arm of eco-wheels is labelled eco-friendly word-pool and is a collection and compilation of eco-friendly words and phrases that are not pejoratives. These words would be useful in literary constructions and in nature-poems especially.

6.7. Reconnecting to the Natural Environment

The natural environment still manages to fill us with a sense of awe and amazement. Despite the amount of scientific knowledge mankind has gathered, nature still holds great mysteries that we may never be able to unravel. This complexity has continuously daunted man. In frustration, we try to control nature by enforcing order. As a result, we have distanced ourselves from the earth, even though our survival is completely dependent on it. We are now trying to regain our close connection to nature. Consequently, this study explores mankind's desire to reconnect to the natural environment. We aim to create a new, more harmonious relationship among man, natural environment and built environment. It explores how our environment can be reconstructed through exploring imagery in nature-poems. These images are interpreted on ground by architects, civil engineers, gardeners with the earth sustainability in mind. This study is thus an attempt to reconnect to the earth and a search for harmony between built environment and the natural environment. Based on the findings in the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare, we could subdivide our work models into three divisions: a): Wildernesses or Sublime focused environment, (b): Countryside: Art and natural environment focused and (c) Human culture: Built or domesticated environment.

6.8. The Future of Research in Eco-poetics and Eco-wheels

We have seen how persons like Humphry Repton have applied picturesque theory to the practice of landscape design. Picturesque theory posits that designed landscapes should be composed like landscape paintings with a foreground, a middle ground and a background. The middle ground should have a parkland character and the background should have a wild and 'natural' character. In the same way, we could adapt our model environment to combine natural scenery with architectural design with nature preservation as focus. Today, the picturesque idea continues to have a profound influence on the environment – preservation of original plants found in the environment, side by side with built environments like garden design, planting design and architectural design combined; an architectural design like a home built on a waterfall or by a seashore.

The Covenant University environment and the landscape of Land Mark University are good examples in this regard. There is need to evolve imaginative and relevant sign modes, innovated or created to help educate communities to appreciate the need for proper disposal of waste, healthy living, preservation of native plants and animals from extinction. Signs,

symbols and even proverbs which communicate clear pictures of mutual interrelationship between human, built and natural environment should be introduced. These resources would serve as decoding and enlightenment devices for the educated and unlettered. Further study would need to follow in the area of proper land use by Nigerians based on nature preservation and sustenance.

This study indicated that there is a continuum, a concern or affinity with nature as a concept that cuts across cultures, time and setting. John Keats and Niyi Osundare attempted to come to terms with their prevailing realities and cosmology by applying poetic tools like forms and techniques current in their time and culture. This study unfolded how both poets encoded the concept of The Natural Environment through various poetic forms and technique embedded in creative imagination, literary craft and from personal experience. The study explored how these poets in question manipulated language at their disposal to promote nature related themes. The significance of this study is that it provides a shift from a wholly human-focused perspective to an all-embracing nature-focused one. The Natural Environment is thus seen as both object-preserved and subject-preserver.

We have seen how persons like Humphry Repton have applied picturesque theory to the practice of landscape design. Picturesque theory claims that designed landscapes should be composed like landscape paintings with a foreground, a middle ground and a background, that the middle ground should have a parkland character, that the background should have a wild and 'natural' character. In the same vein, we could adapt our model environment to combine natural scenery with architectural design with nature preservation behind our mind. Today, the picturesque idea continues to have a profound influence on environment – preservation of original plants found in the environment, side by side with built environments like garden design, planting design and architectural design combined. Relevant sign modes would need to be innovated or created to help communities to look into better ways of using signs which are drawn from the culture or community where these sign and symbols are relevant. Further study would need to follow in the area of proper land use by Nigerians based on nature preservation and sustenance.

Through a critical reading of the poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare it has been demonstrated how the poets' time-space realities determined their delineations of the natural environment. This study indicated that there is a continuum in affinity with nature that cuts across cultures and times. John Keats and Niyi Osundare attempted to come to terms with

their prevailing realities and cosmology by applying poetic tools current in their time and culture. Keats used the images of nature to express and construct specifics and peculiarities of his temperate environment. We have examples of this in “On the Grasshopper and the Cricket”, “To Autumn” and “Fancy”. Osundare, on the other hand uses the images of the rainy season and harmattan to construct the peculiarities of his agrarian tropical environment as we have in “Let Earth’s Pain be Soothed”, “First Rain”, “Raindrum” and “Who Says That Drought Was Here?”. Despite these regional differences there are terms that are universal and general in their poems. Words like rivers, mountains, sky, waterfall, sunshine, rainfall, rocks, harvest, birds, corn, earth, night and day are common in their poems.

The peculiarities of their times and latitude influenced how they represent the natural environment in their poems. On the one hand, Keats, a simple nature poet, is detached but at home with nature. He takes nature for granted and uses nature for poetic ends because the natural environment is always there in its wilderness and rural form, largely untouched by man. Keats’ self-conscious use of nature imagery and maturing creative mind benefited immensely from natural landscape more than from institutionalised learning. On the other hand, Osundare, the sentimental nature poet, sees man as a part of nature and thus, preserving nature is preserving man and his culture. He expresses in his poems intensity of feeling attached to something we can no longer take for granted. Consequently, Osundare’s collection offers a sustained, very intimate relationship with nature. There is here a succession, a move from Keats’ simple poet’s worldview to Osundare’s sentimental poet’s world view. This distinction in their worldviews provides a useful approach to African nature poetry of the 21st century and Osundare’s nature poems in particular.

The poetic vision, style and technique of the poets helped to lend a voice in the ‘Save the Earth’ crusade. While Keats’ poems presented vivid pictures of what the natural environment looked like during his time, i.e. the early years of the Industrial Revolution, Osundare’s poems represented the current and dire consequences of the Revolution on the natural environment. Keats writing on the countryside of Ambleside waterfall, alluded to the beauty, the tone, the colouring, the slate, the stone, the moss, the rock-weed, the intellect, the countenance of such places, the space, the magnitude of mountains and waterfalls which are well imagined before one sees them; and of “peaceful citadel” in “Ode to Grecian Urn”. Osundare, in contrast wrote of acid rain, lake killed by the arsenic urine, profit factories, poisoned stream, sickly sea, balding forests, septic daggers and lake killed by the arsenic urine. This inter-textual reading revealed that there are more environmental challenges in the

contemporary world than Keats's. Words like acid rain, green-house, climatic change, gas fleer are non existent in Keats time. These findings would help eco-friendly bodies like 'Earthshare', 'Greenpeace', 'Save the earth' in their efforts and crusade against wanton exploitation and endangerment of the natural environment.

Osundare, a self-proclaimed 'practitioner of the poetry of performance' adapted performance poetry in his enlightenment drive to promote the course of the natural environment. In poems like "Forest Echoes", "The rocks rose to meet me" and "Harvest call" musical instruments like: flute and heavy drums, 'agba' drum and 'bata' music are to accompany their reading. The Yoruba oral tradition is shared community experience and poetry is music, performance, edification, entertainment. All these are rolled into one in Osundare's nature poems. His performance poetry did not only distinguish Osundare's style and vision from Keats', it supports the Yoruba tradition which regards a poem as incomplete until it is performed. Osundare's effort is an invaluable asset to the 'save the earth' programme.

Therefore, Keats and Osundare manipulated the language at their disposal to promote nature-related themes. By comparing the poems of these periods we came to the conclusion that there are areas of convergence and divergence in their approach to the issue of the natural environment. The use of literary devices like imagery, symbols and metaphor akin to the poets' natural environment has helped us to appreciate their innate creativity, experiences and influences as poets. The natural environment provided them with store-houses of nature related vocabulary for their poems. Their family background, experiences, geographical and social settings are foundations for distinct images and metaphors on which universal themes like landscape, flora, fauna; death, life, harvest and draught are built.

From all indications, the use of eco-critical theory has achieved its object. Through eco-criticism we examined the place and significance of the environment in literature and the poetic creativity of Keats and Osundare. The theory reveals the challenges of the environment and the impact of man on its sustenance or destruction. It shows the peculiarity and the universal of the natural environment as they cut across space and time. It reveals the natural environment as a paradox: a subject that preserves and an object that must be preserved for continuous existence of life on earth. From eco-critical theory we arrived at two propositions, the reading and practice labelled eco-poetics and eco-wheels. Eco-poetics is derived from our findings and eco-wheels is the converting of these findings into literary products or practice.

Eco-wheels is subdivided into two: Grapho-poetics and Eco-friendly word-pool. Grapho-poetics is a literary interdisciplinary venture: painting/poetry, photography/poetry and architecture/poetry. Eco-friendly word-pool is a collection and compilation of eco-friendly words and phrases that are not pejorative. They are words and phrases like 'principal tree species' for 'weed', 'climatic dislocation' or 'human induced' for 'green-house', 'humus on forest floor' for 'trash', 'conservation reserves' or 'national parks' for 'locked up land' and 'old or ancient tree' for 'aged trees' or 'degenerate trees'. Eco-friendly word-pool is invaluable to literature and nature poems in particular. Through a comparative literary approach we appreciated the significance of comparison: the particular and the universal, similarities and dissimilarities in time, space and peculiarities of the poets' natural environments. It is from this approach that the study proposed a distinct mode of interdisciplinary practice labelled Grapho-poetics.

The readings of Keats's and Osundare's nature poems have further broadened our poetic horizon on eco-critical studies, environmental issues and concerns. Through inter-textuality, we have explored the creative capability and poetic ingenuity of the poets in question. We have also seen how humanity was nudged to pause and look beyond her immediate economic needs and their attending consequences. There is a redirection from the insipid exploitative tendencies to an environment focused endeavour. This study has added a poetic voice to the stream of universal voices like 'Earth Share', Green Peace', 'Operation Save the Desert' and Nigeria Conservation Foundation etc. These are environment concerned bodies that kept reminding humanity that planet earth is our only habitable home in the community of planets. By conscious promotion for now and preservation of the natural environment, we should build an enduring environment-friendly tomorrow, leaving behind footprints of a healthy and sustaining earth.

Notes on Chapter Six

1. Built or Domesticated Environment: 'Fallingwater House' is a house standing on a waterfall: a symbolic representation of man's domination of the natural environment, a yoked coexistence.
2. Beth Schultz observed in his paper "Language and the Natural Environment" that the impact of pejoratives is not restricted to only man's attempt to dominate other men through the use of language that down grade or debase the person. This tendency is largely common among commercial users of the natural environment as well.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview with Niyi Osundare

1.1 Mobil Phone Interview: 28th December, 2008. 13.18hrs.

On Professor Osundare's arrival to Nigeria from the US, December, 2008, I called him on his mobile phone and requested for an interview based on my topic: The Natural Environment in Selected Poems of John Keats and Niyi Osundare: An Eco-critical Perspective. On this short phone interview he said that though he was presently engaged with recording sessions, he nevertheless considered "the topic very intriguing".

1.2

An extract from an interview with Niyi Osundare: World Literature Today, Sept-Oct, 2007 by David Shook: Arts Publications: osundare60fete@gmail.com, Osundare_at60@yahoo.com :

Osundare's numerous travels have influenced him, but it is Nigeria, with its linguistic and cultural diversity, that has most shaped his writing. In his poetry, Osundare draws from the oral tradition of Yoruba, one of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria. Because the Yoruba oral tradition is a shared community experience, Osundare emphasizes drama and performance in his own poetry, often reading aloud with audience participation. Though Yoruba is not endangered, the bulk of its literature, like most endangered languages in Africa and elsewhere is oral. Osundare's eloquent discussion of how that oral tradition has affected his written poetry provides an insightful first-person account of the power of oral literature. We hope it will serve as a glimpse of what speakers and listeners of endangered stories from around the world might also experience.

Shook: The Yoruba culture has a significant oral tradition. How were you introduced to that tradition, and how does that tradition influence your writing?

Osundare: Without any doubt, Yoruba/African oral tradition has a strong influence on my works. It is for me both a source and an inspiration. I was not really "introduced" to Yoruba culture; I was born into it, and I grew up in it. Both my parents were artistically oriented. Though my father was a farmer, he was also a drummer, singer, and song-composer. My mother was a cloth-weaver, a cloth-dyer, and a singer. From the professions of both parents, I developed a sense of rhythm and a sense of patterns and proportion pretty early. Beyond the

immediate family circle was the larger Yoruba community with its variety of festivals and ceremonies, all of them rich in rituals, religious, and secular performance. My first encounter with what I later learned at the university as “total theatre” came to me through the Egungun (masquerades), with their elaborate costuming, makeup, masking, voice alteration, music, dance, mime, and movement. I loved the Egungun, and the Egungun season was one of my favourites in the Yoruba cultural calendar. Of course, the Egungun Festival was a massive theatre of the street: the Egungun were the actors, the entire town/community the audience. By the time formal school confronted me with Western education, I already had my cultural template intact and in place in a manner of speaking. Western drama offered me something different and interesting, but hardly something unheard of or unencountered before. In its intricate stylization and measured movement, Asian, especially Japanese, theatre reminded me very much of what I had seen before while growing up in Yoruba culture. In the infinitely rich spectrum that is the Yoruba pantheon, each Orisha was a character on her/his own; each had her/his own dramatic panoply; each had her/his own techniques of communication. The celebration of these gods and goddesses (Osun, Ogun, Sango, Yemoja, Oya, Olokun, Sonponno, Oba, Esu, Obatala, et al). And the festivals that provided both the cloth as well as the backcloth for the ceremonies were nothing short of robust drama. In these deities resides the core of Yoruba worldview and heavenview.

The Yoruba also have a deep fascination, no, fascination is a weak word, an abiding respect for and interest in the word (ohun/oro). Words are not just the building blocks of language; they are its core, essence, and enabler. Without words, no language; without language no society. This is why the Yoruba consider words as delicate/fragile/sacred. A popular Yoruba saying, “Eyin loun or eyin loro,” provided the title, *The Word Is an Egg*, for my volume of poetry published in 2000. Although my study of and familiarization with literatures from many other parts of the world have influenced my love for the word tremendously, there is no doubt that my mother tongue and mother culture have shaped my attitude to the word and opened my eyes to its infinite possibilities. I like words, their music; the way that music informs their meanings; the way words make things happen or not-happen; the bridges they build and the gulfs they impose; their love-and-hate relationship with silence.

Shook: You’re known for the energy of your poetry readings. Do your inspiring performances reflect the spirit of the Yoruba oral tradition?

Osundare: very much so, in addition, of course, to my contact with other cultures/languages all over the world. In Yoruba, poetry is music, performance, edification, entertainment all

rolled into one. The drums have an important role to play. The audience is a vital factor. This explains why musical accompaniment forms an important part of my poetic performance, and why some of my poems require the call-and-response mode. There is a Yoruba saying that when you only talk to yourself, it means you are inflicted with a certain measure of psychosis. Sharing the song, sharing the story, putting the audience in the picture, these are some of the performance techniques I experienced in the drama of the village square. Giving the audience a role in the act is an important part of my performance poetics. without the magic of the drum and some kindred sound in the background, the poem is abstract, anemic, and etiolated like a hapless leaf in the harmattan.

Appendix 2. Pictures

Keats' Home and Final Resting Place (7 May 2013 en.wikipedia.org)



Fig. 2: Wentworth Place, now the Keats House museum (left), Ten Keats Grove (right) Where Keats' works are treasured as he prophetically said in "When I Have Fears" LL.1-4.



Fig. 3: Keats's House in Rome

These buildings symbolically juxtaposed immortality/mortality, the work of art/death of Keats respectively, as represented in "Ode to a Grecian Urn" (LL.11-14, 46-49)



Fig. 4: Keats's gravestone in Rome

Keats' last request was to be placed under a tombstone bearing no name or date, only the words, "Here lies One whose Name was writ in Water." A name in water is a symbol of instability as in mortality. The tombstone stands as a symbol of constancy and permanency: the paradox that marks the life of Keats.

Nigerian Landscape, Flora and Fauna



Fig. 5. Ikogosi - Ekiti Warm Spring in Western Nigeria. <http://www.ehow.com/info>

“The fire in the tail of the parrot” (*Midlife*, 1993:26)



Fig. 6: Parrot (above) and Frog (below) Representing Fauna: “Forest Echoes” (*The Eye of the Earth*, 1998:7-12). Animal Adaptations in Biome of the Tropical Rainforest (Wikipedia) olx.com.ng retrieved on 27 April 2013 from <http://www.ehow.com/info>

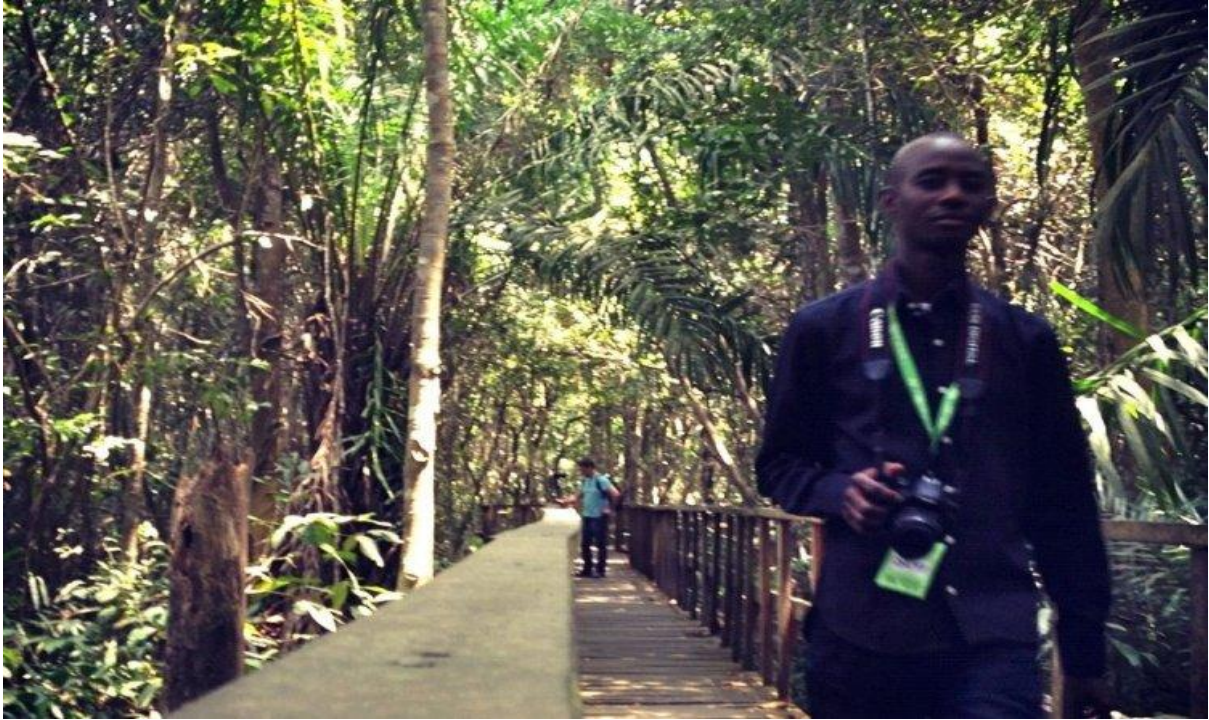


Fig. 7: Nigeria Conservation Center, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria
(Wildlife Conservation Society. NewYork.bbb.org)



Fig. 8: The seascape, cloudy sky, canoes and boat in Lagos: A countryside, where the blue sky meets the blue sea.



Fig. 9: Domesticated Environment: A bridge, a canoe and the landscape. This is a salt extraction site in Ouidah, Benin Republic, West Africa. Represents “What the River Said” (*Midlife*, 1993:22-23)

British Landscape, Flora and Fauna



Fig. 10: British Fauna (Emperor Penguin by Paul Nicklen).
Symbolic representation of fauna in “To Autumn” (LL.23-33)



Fig. 11: British Flora. Web, 10 May 2013 <http://britishflora.wikipedia.org>
Symbolic representation of flora in “Ode to a Grecian Urn” (LL.21-22) & ‘Spring’ in “To Autumn” (L.26)



Fig. 12: John Keats, Listening to a Nightingale on Hampstead Heath by Joseph Severn.
Web. 17 June 2012 <http://keats.wikipedia.org> "Ode to a Nightingale".



Fig. 13: The Amazon River: Wilderness Natural Environment. <http://rivers.org>



‘La tonnelle’ by Gilles Bruni and Marc Babarit, 1996



‘Running in circles’ willow and maple saplings, Patrick dougherty, 1996.



‘Weldendom’ by Sanfte Strukturen, 2001



‘Toad hall’ by Patrick Dougherty, 2004

Fig.14: Art, Natural Architecture and the Natural Environment. <http://naturalarchitecture.org>

Built Environment in John Keats' 19th century Britain

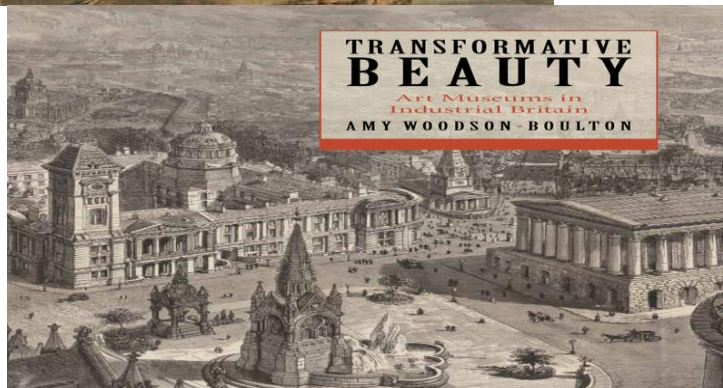


Fig.15: Built Environment in John Keats 19th century Britain
Cotton mills Manchester industrial revolution <http://industrialbritain.org>

Environmental Pollution in the 20th/21st Century Britain



Fig.16: The Great Smog of 1952 in London. (Wikipedia, Web: July 11, 2013)



Fig. 17: Environmental pollution in the 21st Century Britain. Wikipedia, Web: July 11, 2013.
(Poor air quality is linked to respiratory disease, a major killer. By Daily Mail Reporter)

Built Environment in Niyi Osundare's 20th/21st century Nigeria



Fig. 18: Built Environment, Onitsha by Olympus Optical



Fig. 19: Built Environment: Covenant University, Ota and Kano gate to Gidan Rumfa
<http://covenantuniversity.edu.ng> , <http://builtenvironment.wikipedia.org>



Fig. 20: Built Environment in Enugu by Olympus Optical

Fallingwater House: A graphic example of built or domesticated natural environment²



Fig. 21: 'Fallingwater House' This house is standing on a waterfall and appears to emerge from the landscape surrounding it. Designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the house was built of reinforced concrete and stone in the 1930s in Bear Run, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Encarta 2009).

Flooding: Conflict between Built/Domesticated and the Natural Environment³
Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria (ERA/FOEN)



Fig.22: Flood Environments in Edo, 26 September 2012 by siteadmin Obayanju, Iyke and Uwaka



Fig.23: Flood Environment in Ahoada, River State by siteadmin Obayanju, Iyke and Uwaka



Fig.24: Rescue Team during the Benue River Flood September, 2012 by siteadmin Obayanju, Iyke and Uwaka