

ECO-CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, RESOLUTION AND PREVENTION IN ECO-POETICS: AN INTERFACE BETWEEN THE NATURAL AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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“I saw the proud iroko, once tree, now log,/ lying without a name.” - Niyi Osundare -

Abstract

The interplay and the dynamics of human interest: ideology, idiosyncrasy, belief, ethnicity, social stratification, race and language are key factors in the promotion of human conflicts. Conflict management and resolution has often been human-focused while studies that concerns eco-conflict between the natural and the built environment are far between.

This paper intends to explore eco-conflict management, resolution and prevention through selected nature-poems with specific reference to Niyi Osundare’s use of metaphor and imagery in “The Road crosses the River” and other related nature poems. The paper combines the eco-criticism theory, a critical approach which attempts to find a meeting point between literature and the environment and the theory of conflict management which contends that conflict is a state of incompatibility among values.

We deduced from our findings that man has largely defrauded the natural environment through wanton exploitation, domestication of the natural environment and the consequent depletion of the eco-system in particular. The eco-conflict management, resolution, prevention, the dialectics of sustainability of the natural and the built environments are succinctly resolved through the literary dynamics of eco-poetics.

Key words: “The Road crosses the River”, Nature-poems, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Eco-Conflict Management and Eco-Conflict Resolution.

Introduction

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, man tries to control natural environment by enforcing dominion and order through building and domesticating the environment and its resultant catastrophic human induced environmental disasters. This paper through poetry examines how man exploits the natural environment without replenishment and the consequent repercussion of this eco-conflict.

The management and resolution of eco-conflict is constructed in this paper by a symbolic

representation of natural and built environment enacted in Niyi Osundare's "The River Crosses the Road". This eco-dramatic poem provides a literary platform for the symbolic enactment of the poetic dialogue between nature (river) and built (road). This paper intends to poetically represent the challenges confronting our environment and offer solutions by exploring a viable point of interaction that is mutually beneficial to the healthy coexistence and sustainability of the environment on one hand and help humanity regain his close connection to nature again. This discourse is thus a pro-active attempt at harmonizing the activities of the natural and the built environment for the singular purpose of re-greening the earth.

Discourse and research in conflict management and resolution has largely been human-focused. Little is being said in the area of management of conflict that arises between human kind and his natural environment. This paper explores through eco-poetry how human specie has wantonly exploited his natural environment and the consequent repercussion of this domestication on the landscape and the eco-system in particular. We will examine some nature poems that metaphorically examines this conflict and how this was literarily resolved in Osundare's poem "The Road Crosses the River". Secondly, we will also examine some eco-conflicts, the Nigerian experience and attempt to proffer probable solutions to challenges and disasters like erosion and flooding of our landscape, climatic change on our landscape, which are direct or induced by human negative activities.

Eco-Criticism, Theory of Conflict Management, Resolution and Prevention

Eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment. It refers to an emergent movement and denotes a critical approach which began in USA in the late 1980s and in UK in the early 1990s respectively. Cheryll Glotfeltry is considered to be the founder of this academic movement. Glotfeltry 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).

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 and to give special canonical emphasis to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter. This includes writers like the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics like Jonnathan Bate, John Clare and Thomas Hardy. They extend the range of literary-critical practice by placing a new emphasis on relevant 'factual' topographical writings in their essays, travel writing and regional literature. These writers emphasis "ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves" (Fortress, 2013: 32-34). Jonnathan Bate, the British Romantics makes a distinction between 'light Green' and 'dark Green'. 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 believes we can 'save' the planet by more responsibility forms of consummations and production while 'dark Green' or 'deep ecologists' take a more radical stance. They opine that technology is the problem and therefore cannot be the solution and so man has to 'get back to nature'. The school 'dark Green' dislikes 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. Recently, anthropologists, geographers and environmental managers, historians and literary critics have shifted focus from these broad areas to relationships between neo-colonial and eco-centered interests. 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. Eco-critical theory celebrates the purity and the sustenance of the natural environment on the one hand, and addresses man-made natural disasters on the other. The latter is the concern in this paper because they are deeply problematic issues which conflict with the disinterested nature of our environment. These problems are desertification, deforestation, land degradation, air and water pollution, waste mismanagement, 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. 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 paper in its proper literary perspective, we need to examine how literary concepts gradually grew from nature conscious individuals into organized literary groups which have today come to be associated with Eco-criticism studies.

While traditional theory defines conflict as disagreement between individuals which can vary from a mild disagreement to a win-or-lose, emotion-packed confrontation. Contemporary theory however recognizes that conflicts between human beings are unavoidable, emerging as a natural result of change which can be beneficial to human organization if managed efficiently. Kirchoff and Adams however consider innovation and new ideas as a mechanism for bringing together various ideas and viewpoints into a new and different fusion. Innovation, no doubt can harmonize the natural environment and the built environment when well managed (Wikipedia; June 17, 2014).

The second theory in this paper is the conflict management theory which has helped us to align the issue of literature, environment and eco-conflict management. ALDC (2014) contends that Coser (1956) considers conflict as the struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values but to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals (3). ALDC (2014), opines that conflict is a state of incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realized only at the expense of some other values. Conflict may arise within single organisms pursuing multiple goals as well as between organisms striving at incompatible goals. Conflicts found in and between the human specie include: Intra-personal conflict, inter-personal conflict, intra-group conflict, inter-group conflict, intra-communal conflict, inter-communal, national conflict and international conflict. The concept of transformation is an integrative approach to conflict resolution that focuses on how human perceptions, communication and structural problems producing conflict situation can be positively altered. This is a long-term development agenda targeting the following key areas like: causing a change in the entire context of conflict; causing a change in the conflict parties' relationship; or causing a change for example, though empowerment, in the individuals involved in the conflict(3). While the human

conflict types may not be directly relevant to this paper, it may not need to directly apply this in the context of eco-conflict, the concept of transformation which focuses on how structural and attitudinal change in the way we consider economic profit above the unmitigated destruction of other aspect of natural resources like the water ways and management of industrial waste will go a long way in bringing desired positive change in the wellbeing of our natural environment and by implication humanity.

Vayrynen (1991) contends that there are five ways in which conflict transformation takes place: through context transformation (where every conflict is embedded in a specific context) which must be taken into deep consideration when seeking how to end the problem; embedded in every conflict are some structures (actors, relationships, issues and goals) that must be carefully understood if any sustainable solution is to be found to the conflict. In the human sphere and culture, an ethnic or religious group that had been oppressed for a long time might take up arms not necessarily to defend an ethnic or religious agenda per se, but simply to reject oppression etc. When this position is transferred into environmental dialectics, the natural environment also has its own way of reacting to unwholesome interference with its harmonious existence. These reactions are commonly summed up as natural disasters like flooding, desertification and draught; climatic change's related backlashes which are the consequences of man's unmitigated activities on the natural environment. Just as we have in human conflict, four basic causative theories could also be adduced to eco-conflict: Human needs theory, i.e. man's insatiable exploitation of the natural environment for economic ends without replenishing the earth in return results in backlash that is detrimental to mutual eco-coexistence.

Relational theory which focuses on the interdependence of flora and fauna in the balance of eco-system; Political theory is often determined by government economic and social policies like unplanned structures, industrial wastes and carbon emission which encourage eco-cides; policies which impact negatively or positively and aggravates the conflict and serve to deter meaningful preservation of the natural environment. Transformative theory in eco-conflict takes a more radical stance. Scholars of eco-transformative approach, like the 'deep' theorists believe that man must take a stand on exploiters of the natural environment for the common good. They believe humanity must not only contain or reduce violence or destructive effects of mans activities on the natural environment but that policies must be put on ground to bring to book all Cartels and violators, users of chemicals that destroy aquatic lives, vegetation, animal habitats etc.

Transformative eco-conflict thus focuses on the process of preventive eco-conflict, rather than eco-conflict management; it addresses the structural reality of human attitude to his/her natural environmental that leads to extinction of rare flora and fauna and finding a sustainable solution: finding a proportionate percentage that is harmoniously healthy between natural environment and built environment. This will prevent conflict of interest with resultant encroachment of unmitigated human culture into nature culture. Intra fauna-conflict and resolution has also being studied in non-humans, like dogs, cats, monkeys, snakes, elephants, and primates. Aggression is more common among relatives and within a group than between groups. Instead of creating a distance between the individuals, however, the primates were more intimate in the period after the aggressive incident.

Although peaceful post-conflict behavior had been documented going back to the 1960s, it wasn't until 1993 that Rowell made the first explicit mention of reconciliation in feral sheep. Reconciliation has since been documented in spotted hyenas, lions, dolphins, dwarf mongoose, domestic goats, domestic dogs, and, very recently, in red-necked wallabies (Wikipedia, Retrieved: June 17, 2014). While intra reconciliation seems to be possible in animals and in human, eco-conflict between the natural environment and built environment may be difficult because of socio-cultural and economic imperatives embedded in industrialization. The economic gains in subjugating the wildernesses and countryside and political expediency which tend to override the interest of protecting and sustaining the other group: fauna, flora and landscape - largely disinterested and powerless against a mindless inordinate economic driven exploitation promoted by built or domesticated environment. This explains the need for a concerted attitudinal change on the part of humanity and built environmentalists in particular. In this conflict in question, eco-friendly attitude cannot be over emphasized. Total annihilation of rare vegetation, animal and human kind can be prevented when man recognizes that the natural environment is subject preserver and object to be preserved.

Nature-Poetry and the Interfacing of the Natural and the Built Environment

The wilderness 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. Example of Wildernesses/Sublime and Art focused are the uninhabited continents, forests, mountain ranges, cliffs, waterfalls 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).

Keats talking of the wilderness 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".

And: 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).

Also 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..."

This are poetic expressions of the beauty of the worlds wildernesses yet untouched by man's
crave for eco-domination.

Therapeutic Qualities of the Natural Environment

In the poems of Keats and Osundare, the natural environment creates a medium for literature and
medicine. The natural environment does not only serve as a source of aesthetics, its herbs serve
medical purposes. In Keats' "Sleep and Poetry" we have:

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 awake cleared eyed.

In Osundare's "Let the Earth's Pain be Soothed", rain brings relief and healing after drought:

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.

Natural herbs and the seasons create in these poems a mix between literature and the natural
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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”.

Natural Environment and Built Environment in Literature

Through dramatic narrative poem, Osundare constructs a poetic conflict of power and supremacy between the road and the river. The road and the river symbolize the built or domesticated environment and the natural environment respectively. When road is built across a river, there is friction due to wear and tear caused by erosion on the road and other activities of man like damming of the river for agriculture and hydroelectricity and eco-unfriendly activities like dumping of industrial wastes into the water ways. The union of the road and the river may remain apparently stable until time and space apply internal and external forces weaken and break down this unnatural union with consequent eco-conflict. Through the use of literary devices like imagery, symbols and personification, the conflict between the road and the river: two environmental elements that symbolize built and natural elements of the environment respectfully are juxtaposed for eco-poetic discourse:

The Road crosses the River
The River crosses the Road (25).

The road built across a river in the lines above symbolizes eco-conflict: built environment against the natural environment. The road and the river crossing one another is the reason for the eco-conflict management, resolution and prevention in eco-critical dialectics. In this poem in question, it is the road that calls the river to a dwell or combat of words. The Road speaks first:

Meet me at the crossroads
where the road wears trousers
of uncountable legs

Meet me at the crossroads
where raging fire breaks the teeth of iron
before joining steel to steel
in spiderworks of urgent flares

Meet me at the crossroads
where strand crossing strand
yields a barn of rapid looms (23).

In the first stanza, the Road employs the psychological weapon by inviting the River to observe its physical ability to display labyrinth of feeder roads and lanes from its junction. The Road boasts that the River, by its nature, cannot break into tributaries from its confluence.

In stanza two, the Road also boasts of the stuff it is made of which is incomparable to the River's fluid nature. He observes what effort it takes the 'raging' natural element 'fire' to break the teeth of iron in the attempt of melting iron into steel.

The third stanza alludes to the ingenuity of the creator and builder who builds the loom that converts strands of cotton into cloth by the weaver's rapid motion in artistry that surpasses the rapid flow of the rivers early stage in creating waterfalls. Images of the 'loom' and 'rapid' as represented in this stanza helps in conjuring a vivid picture of early industrialization and the

natural environment.

The third stanza also makes allusion to the loom, an early form of weaving industry which is a relatively healthy occupation and an environment friendly endeavor.

The road did not only invite the river to a dwell, it employs the use of provocative and offensive statements:

bristling with lengthy rage,
the road said to the river:
"see, you boneless serpent,
see what you have done
to my supple frame"(25).

Provoked by this accusation, the River replies in rapid retort:

You saddle without a hill
You hoofmat for pissing brats
Never deem me the pain
In your broken joint
I am the sea which predates the hill,
The slender honey in the eye of the gods (25).

The language of the river is dictated by words imbedded in its nature and cosmology. It observes the unnaturalness of the road: to ride a horse without a saddle is not royal etiquette. The combined use of the words 'hoof' and 'mat' helps us to appreciate the poverty of the Road as it were a symbolizes of servitude – 'hoof' as vehicle for conveying the horse and its master and 'mat' for the floor, the feet and even 'pissing brats'. In contrast, the River not only claims to "predate the hills", it eschews the values and virtues of its constituent innate makeup, the Rivers kingship with the 'sea', its ancient place of esteem before the creation of man as a deity of worship and an object as sweet as "honey in the eyes of the gods."

The landscape bearing the 'river' was created before 'vegetation' followed by 'moving creatures' and then Adam or 'man' (Gen.1:27, KJV) who domesticated the environment by building roads etc. In the light of this, 'Road' which is human built is five removes from 'River' and six removes from the landscape on which the River flows. This analyses is based on Plato's postulation in his *The Republic* book III&X (Dorseh, 1982:10-11) on the God's creation which is 'absolute' against mans creation which imitation of the absolute.in the light of Plato's position, the 'Road' or built environment which is a creation of human beings is three removes from the 'River' or natural environment which is a creation of the absolute. Consequently, the River is naturally older than the Road and the latter being a creation of man is a symbol of imitation of the river, an intruder in the harmonious flow and balance of the eco-system.

In order to resolve this conflict between the River and the Road, both parties agreed to call mediators to intervene in this war of words. They invited the Earth and the Sky, two elements that represent the natural environment on one hand and human Sages to represent humanity and built environment on the other: "They call the Earth, they call the Sky/They ask each sage their season of birth" (26): "To speak first is Earth,/ Her fingers still quick with clay; She who is earth, earth her memory." As far as the memory of the earth can go, the road and the river are part of her being; thus, the earth's speech directed to the Road was paradoxical:

You Road are older than the River
You Road are younger than the River
You are as old as the dust in the wind
You were born after the River
You were born before the River (26).

The Sky spoke next, his speech directed to the river. He dramatically laced every statement with the experience of ancient wisdom, paradox and irony:

You River, you are older than the Road
You River, you are younger than the Road
You were born after the Road
You were born before the Road (26).

In the above lines, the earth and the sky do not want to offend either party. All efforts made by the mediators to manage and diffuse the tension brewing between the two contending parties meet further with confusion and dissatisfaction, so, “the Road and River rage on in a cloud of doubt”(27). They turned to fauna: the eagle, the hawk and the vulture with the same question but no satisfactory answers from these birds. But because of their searching question and the desire for reconciliation their experience in prevention of discord was sharpened:

The more they ask, the older they grow
They ask till their questions ripen into answers
They ask till their answers re-form into questions (27).

As the road and the river matured with age and experience, they grew wiser and were individually able to see out side the box. Together they consulted a child of the ‘Road’: the ‘bridge’ - built of steel and concrete, an improvement in road construction across the river.

They ask
And the Bridge answers
In strategems of steel
Tongues of steaming mortar
Incantations of fire stone

The Road and the River realized that the bridge is distinct in built from its parent-road. While the bed spread of the Road is of pure earth – tar and clay, the length-frame of the bridge is built of iron and concrete: its foundation of layers of pillars of steel rests beneath the river bed:

The Bridge, ah the bridge
The Road takes off his cloths
Upon your iron bed (27).

The conflict is thus resolved by mutual understanding of the individual differences, in character and natural composition and cosmology, their distinct nature in the scheme of things, especially as far as the built environment impacts the natural environment and vice vasa. Though the natural environment and built environment impacts one another, there is need for a mutual co-existence that will not destroy the other because of gains to the detriment of the survival and sustainability of living things in our eco-system. Reconciliation demands respect of opinion and

culture difference, thus, when “When the road looks down upon the River/Once upon a lofty platform./Let it not forget the stream waiting noiselessly/behind the hills/Far, far below the belt of the forest() recognizing the natural environment as a subject preserver and an object to be preserved for the common good. The natural environment also must appreciate and respect the value of the built environment in improving the quality of life that comes through positive advancement in science and technology and knowledge that is all embracing. The natural environment should see the road/the bridge as symbol of “the god who looks back by looking forward” (28).

The Natural Architecture: Reconciling the Natural and the Built Environment

Natural architects build structures on the landscapes of the countryside with materials from the natural environment without any significant alteration of the existing natural environment. This could be referred to as ‘duologue poetry’ or ‘hybrid poetry’. Materials used by architects in this part of the natural environment are 100% from the natural environment. Nature poems of the countryside are artistically translated into architectural designs. The landscape architect translates on ground the poet’s impression of the natural environment of the countryside using living/dead natural materials. This is natural architecture. It is constructed with living flora without destroying the original features of the landscape or the natural environment. Examples of this are found in ‘Natural Architectural’ designs like ‘La tonnelle’ by Gilles Bruni & Marc Babarit (1996); ‘Running in circles’ willow and maple saplings by Patrick Dougherty (1996); ‘Weldenom’ by Sanfte Strukturen (2001); ‘Toad hall’ by Patrick Dougherty (2004) Fortress, 2013:170.

Built or domesticated environment reflects an intense human colonization of the natural environment. Man’s activities are disproportionately higher than those of the wilderness and countryside environments. Built environment emphasizes the clearing of the landscape and its vegetation in order to make way for human occupation and built structures like bridges, institutions, parks and gardens, roads, buildings, crude oil prospecting and processing sites, rivers are dammed for purposes of electricity generation and farm irrigation. These activities alter the face of the landscape and give a picture of a domesticated environment without much consideration for sustainability and preservation of the natural environment. The poem “*Memory Street*” in *Horses of Memory* (1998) aptly represent this scenerio: “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”.

Eco-conflict Management, Resolution and Prevention

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 projects 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 centers.

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), further 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 in response to Adeyeri’s lecture (2009), contends that 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 change. These intricate systems are central to human welfare and survival and also very valuable as ready-made raw materials for eco-critical studies and invaluable sources of inspiration for nature poets.

Consequences of Domesticating the Natural Environment: The Nigerian Experience

Due to migration from the rural areas into most cities in Nigeria, individuals, federal and state governments build physical structures like residential buildings and schools etc. in order to meet the ever increasing rural-urban drift. Physical infrastructures are built at the expense of the natural environment which is cleared to make way for structures like bridges, roads, canals and dams across our water ways. These challenges are compounded by increase in population explosion concerns in urban cities like Lagos, Kano and Port-Harcourt and the consequent dumping of refuse in the canals, felling of trees and loggings for commercial and domestics purposes. These factors also account for desert encroachment in the northern parts of Nigeria, dearth of vegetation cover and removal of top soil for building roads and farming in the southern rain forest with the resultant gully erosion and flooding as experienced some parts of Nigeria in 20 . These human activities also help to expose larger part of northern Nigeria like Borno state and Kano state to draught and desertification encouraged further by the natural elements like the dry north-east trade winds.

Conclusion

While intra or inter eco-conflicts between flora and fauna may arise due to survival and preservation instinct, eco-conflict that involves human revolves around the desire to satisfy the passion of his palate, thus, they not only reduce plants like ‘buttercup’ to extinction and ancient trees into commercial logging; animals like ‘bonobos’ monkeys are killed as ‘bush meat’ and the gorilla species are at the brink of extinction. This unrestrained and destructive tendencies of man against the fauna and flora has recently resulted in the dreaded Ebola virus that is confirmed to be contracted from the eating of monkeys and bats meat. Vegetation like the trees does not only provide food for man and animals, they generate oxygen as by product which sustain animal and human life. Animals and human on the other hand exhale carbon dioxide as waste which is what plants required to produce their food. This interrelationship of give and take is a proof that plant and animals need and are valuable to one another in order to sustain live on earth, but man’s population growth, commercial activities and urban expansion is directly breaking this circle of life and consequently creating eco-conflict with the resultant eco-disasters.

We have seen how human activities and built environment have impacted negatively on the natural environment through a symbolic and metaphoric conflict represented in the ‘Road’ and the ‘River’. The natural environment – fauna and flora especially have embedded in their systems inbuilt dynamic mechanism which is self sustaining and replenish-able of its environment or habitat distinct from human neighbor whose activities deplete and are inimical to the survival of the natural environment and humanity. Man remains a destructive subject and malevolent object of the world’s eco-system. Vegetation remains a valuable source of food healing-herbs for generations. Animals are also trusted friends and servants of human beings: horses as companion in war, donkeys as beast of burden: dogs as pets and for hunting. Camels for the desert journeys and cattle for its hides, beef and milk, etc. The irony remains that the

natural environment remains disinterestedly helplessly and at the receiving end of human onslaught - the wanton unmitigated exploitation and annihilation of the natural environment and the destruction of mankind on earth. By saving, caring and sustaining our environment, we are indirectly saving ourselves.

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