

The Natural Environment as the Panacea for Tranquility: A Comparative Study of Selected Poems of John Keats and Gabriel Okara

Chinonso Okolo

Department of English, University of Uyo, Uyo

and

Joy Eyisi Jnr

Covenant University, Otta

Abstract

The natural environment is a vital part of humans. Humans cannot do without their natural environment. Environmental issues are as important as economic and political issues. This is because every activity in which humans engage in for survival stem up from the environment. The concerns for the environment is not limited to scientists alone; poets like Keats and Okara are meaningfully committed to the environment. It is against this background that this paper is based. This paper restricts itself to the poetic-environmental focus of the poets. These poets are studied in this paper because they are environmentally conscious poets; thus, there are some unique environmental issues inherent in their poems. They have 'the Green thinking'. The thematic focus of the selected poets is based on the fact that the ecocritical settings of their poems function simply as background; thus, playing active role in the poems. Moreover, the natural environment is held at high esteem in their poems thereby affecting the thinking of the poets as environmental entities. Their poems raise environmentally conscious questions about human interactions with nature. Their poems direct readers' interest to nature; raising the readers' awareness of the natural world and their connections to it. Identifying these natural inclinations of the poets form the pivot of this paper.

Keywords: Environment, Keats, nature, Okara, poetry, tranquility

Introduction

There are many more beautiful landscapes in the world, but none, I think, that can shape man's spirit in so sovereign a way... The desert is bare and clean and knows no compromise. It sweeps out of the heart of man all the lovely fantasies that could be used as a masquerade for wishful thinking, and thus makes him free to surrender himself to an Absolute that has no image: the farthest of all that is far and yet the nearest of all that is near.

Muhammad Asad

The praxis of environmental concerns has expanded beyond the conundrum of the geographers. Literary icons and artists have also taken a path in the appreciation and the call for the preservation of the natural environment. To this end, they strongly prove that the preservation and interpretation of the natural environment is the major solution to the myriads of problems which man encounter on daily basis. These problems are compounded year in year out by the technological advancements as man invents different gadgets in order to ease himself off the burdens in his environment. These practices are, to a large extent, banes of his natural environment. Environmental harm which man does to his environment with impunity is considered in the Freudian dictum as 'displacement' or 'condensation'. That is, the workings of the unconscious; a process of moving emotions that are related to an idea or person to a less important object. This shows that man has

abandoned the riches inherent in nature and clings to worthless activities which are capable of posing dangers to his natural environment.

According to Robert Anderson, 'tranquility' can be defined as a state of being pleasantly calm, quiet and peaceful while 'environment' refers to the surrounding landscape. Thus, environmental tranquility can be broadly delineated as the interaction between man and his environment in relation to absolute peacefulness and calmness. The human-environment relationship includes both the natural environment and the objects that occupy it as well as the psychological process of human perception and cognition. This is the insights of the environmentalists termed 'Light Greens' and 'Dark Greens'. The Dark Greens are the environmentalists who support conservation and limits. They differ from Dark Greens, the deeply committed ecologists who advocate a complete return to nature. This paper foregrounds environmental tranquility in John Keats' Ode (1817) and Gabriel Okara's *The Fisherman's Invocation* (1978) in order to foster the relevance of natural environment as a viable tool for literary analysis of poems that deal with the nature and human divides.

The study underscores how tranquility plays an influential role in the 'being' and 'condition of being' in the natural environment. A sense of understanding and appreciation of natural environment plays a pivotal role in the lives of the individuals in a given environment. Thus, human beings are oblivious of this fact. That is why they go on neglecting and harming their natural environment. In the words of Freud, it is called 'collective unconsciousness'. That is, the inherited experience of the human race that resides at a deep level of the psyche. Its contents come from recurrent life situations that are common to all humans. The undertaking explores how mankind's exploitation of the natural environment has set into motion, dreadful consequences for the environmental dwellers, thus placing a great demand on the poet to examine the prevailing environmental issues. In the natural environmental perspective, Keats and Okara offer a transformative discourse to examine the manifold ills against the natural environment especially in this technologically advanced age, thus demonstrating that the remedy for these environmental degradations lies in the unification, appreciation and demonstration of high regards for the natural environment for it is the source for inner peace.

With regards to the maintenance of environmental tranquility, Onuekwusi (2002:66) maintains that 'Keats is a poet of sense impressions, tactile and sculptural imagery. Keats was opposed to strict observance of rules and subjects in poetry. He detaches himself from the chaotic world to experience the impulse of the natural world.' Onuekwusi goes further to show that Keats wrote in a wide range of forms and a wide range of subjects and made ample use of his fertile imaginations and intuition. On this note, Wilson Knight in Onuekwusi (2002: 60) describes the poetry of Keats as follows:

Keats' poetry is brimful of sensuous richness in tactile and sculptural yet exquisitely living attraction, in rich tones and smooth surface in earthly fecund nature; in warmth and perfume and taste until the mind is all but drowned, fumed, intoxicated by a pleasure just stopping short of cloying sweetness; depicting absolute calmness of mind.

On a similar note, Nachukwu-Agbada et al (2015:252) in describing Okara's poems, vociferously maintain as follows:

Okara's poems are full of rustic imageries that depict the natural life Okara's poetry dwell a lot on cultural identity. Influences of Ijo folklore are also noticeable in his works. The natural environment has a great fascination for the poet. Thus, the poet uses a series of visual and concrete images and metaphors associated with nature to explore his themes.

Keats' and Okara's entire aesthetic philosophy were totally different from that of their contemporaries like Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Okigbo, Brew, Clark etc. While their contemporaries usually did not have any problem applying their works to political or social contexts, Keats and Okara always seemed distant from doing so. On Keats, Kanan (2014:1) states that Keats was more animated about the aesthetic of the work and pursuing an ability to dwell into the calm capability of his own thoughts. Similarly, Senanu and Vincent (1999: 103) show that Okara's native experiences form the material for his rustic lyrics.

Consequently, the titles of the collections *Ode* (1817) and *The Fisherman's Invocations* are symbolic. An ode is a meditative poem which addresses itself to a person or thing in which the good qualities of such a person or object are highlighted and commended. Ode can be described as a meditation and lyrical poetry since it vividly captures the poet's memories and experiences. On the other hand, an invocation is the act of mentioning or referring to someone or something in support of your ideas. In this regard, Kanan (2014:3) submits that such 'collections were recollected in tranquility as the poets were subsumed in the natural world for several hours' composing (as in Keats') or invoking (as in Okara's) the poems. These show their ideological inclinations that the songs represent natural perfection. That is to show that the mode of Okara's poetic expression (invocation) is in the form of ode. Thus, both express their deep emotions about the environment they live in through deep emotions.

Keats and Okara demonstrate great sense of ecocriticism in these collections. They reaffirm to the fact that many of the human problems and chaos come as a result of not having affinity with the natural environment. Both voices echo the feelings about their natural environment. Thus, ~~Keats and Okara are bothered by the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to man's progress that he witnesses every day, escape to the serene and tranquil natural world~~ the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to man's progress that he witnesses every day, escape to the serene and tranquil natural world bother Keats and Okara. In 'Ode to Nightingale' Keats is enthused and enthralled by the peace and satisfaction that the nightingale enjoys. In 'Piano and Drum', Okara is enthused and captured by the natural atmosphere in which the Africans play their 'raw drum'. The environments of the nightingale and that of the rustic Africans are considered ideal environments, which the human beings have not discovered as a remedy to various disorder they experience. The world that captures their attentions is, no doubt, a tranquil world. However, the happiness they derive from listening to the nature in its unadulterated form is transient. After a while, they return to the commotion that is the reality of human life. Keats returns to the real chaotic world where fever 'frets its lustful eyes' while Okara returns to the world of the westerners full of 'complex ways' coupled with their 'wailing piano'. Keats' and Okara's underlying message is that man cannot escape from the exhausting or declining reality around him in shaping his attitude to events, situations and occurrences unless he gains strong companionship with nature. Man is full of troubles; it is only through a close

adherence to his environment that he gets consolations. This fact is well captured in Keats' 'Ode to Nightingale' as follows:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains.
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains. (lines 1 – 3)

Keats shows in these lines, that he is definitely not in a very happy mood and his psychological disorientation makes him compare pain that he is experiencing to the mental and physical devastation that occurs when a person drinks poison (hemlock). The word 'hemlock' which is used in line 2 is a reference to the poison given to the renowned Greek Scholar, Socrates, when he was forced to commit suicide; symbolically, this shows that the aches and pains he is undergoing are life threatening. He continues this morbid imagery of death in 'Ode to Melancholy' where he refers to the river Lethe, which among the ancient Greeks is the river, which the dead crossed to reach the underworld. He does not see this river in a negative sense; he sees it in the sense of tranquility. Thus:

Tis not through envy of thy happy lot
But being too happy in thine happiness -

Keats creates the imagery of an ideal environment; a natural environment where everything appears in its pure and unadulterated state. Keats is simply saying that within the nature, humans will be able to forget the harsh and tortuous realities of life. Plato called the river Lethe, referred to in the poem, the 'river of unmindfulness', which when it is drunk by the souls of people about to be reincarnated, helps them to forget their past. Here, Keats shows empathically, that the embrace with the natural environment brings eternal Peace. He shows this in the depiction and portrayal of the river Lethe as a place where all the worries of man are drowned. This river Lethe is similar to the 'river side' (line 27) where Okara is said to have lost 'in the morning mist' (line 26: Piano and Drum). A strict observance to the lines of Keats' 'Ode to Nightingale' and Okara's 'Piano and Drums' shows that both Keats and Okara are ardent observers of other natural world which enhance the natural environment and make it more blissful. According to Damrosch (2000:1770), 'Keats wrote to show that nothing can bring back the hour of splendour in the grass and glory in humans except the holding on to the grass and glory in the flower'. In his preface to the poem, he stated 'I once thought this a melancholic dream'. On a similar note, Nwachukwu-Agbada et al (2015: 253) show that 'the two musical instruments depicted in Okara's 'Piano and Drum' are used symbolically to represent two different geographical entities. One is simple and natural while the other is sophisticated but complicated'. Following these assertions, Damrosch (2000:142) shows that

Keats prices melancholy as a sensibility that accepts, even relishes, the evanescence of joy, pleasure, and beauty – their imminent flux into their opposites rendering such sensations all the more exquisite.

At the metaphorical level of interpretation, the idea that is being propounded here is that within the ambits of the natural environment, symbolized by the soothing and alluring beauty of the 'grape of Proserpine' (line 4: Keats' 'Ode to Nightingale') and 'jungle drums/bleeding flesh' (lines 4 and 5: Okara's 'Piano and Drums'), the poetic

personas are able to forget the harsh and uninviting realities of life. The aroma and the splendour of the tree/ rustic drums (the elements of the natural environment) are the sources of relief to their accumulated sorrows in the world of man.

As a matter of style, Okara and Keats make extensive use of rustic imagery to depict their poems' spatial settings. The idea of inhabited jungle and ideal world of the nightingale connote a natural environment like that of the village where people go to the stream in the morning to get the clean water; as portrayed by Okara and a fallowed bush where hunters go to hunt for animals; as portrayed by Keats. This is shown in line 1 of 'Piano and Drums' where the poet persona talks about 'break of day at a riverside'. The idea of 'simple paths' in lines 12 and 13, which is rugged from the regular treading of bare foot, also clears the fact that the poem has a great concern in his natural environment. Similarly, there is a portrayal of fauna (animals) and flora (plants) imagery with references to panther and leopard in the wild as well as 'wild flowers' and 'green leaves'. All these imageries show the abundant environmental riches of the natural environment from where the sounds of the drum come.

Keats' similar emotional feelings on his natural environment are replete in Okara's 'One Night at the Beach.' In contrast to Keats, Okara portrays the beach as one which is symbolic of life itself; the river is polluted. Keats shows that the bright star sustains lives while Okara shows that the beach cannot sustain lives because of its pollution by man. There is an indication of its dwindling capacity to sustain life. Now, here lies the problem: that which supports life is literally in the throes of death. Therefore, the continued dependence of life forms hangs in the balance. This is a tragedy.

The poet, being very sensitive to the survival of the environmental creatures, is disturbed by the polluting presence of 'passing washer-words', which adds to the problems of the environment. By calling attention to the environmental problems, Okara invariably plays the role of an environmental lover keen on embracing the environment while Keats plays the role of an environmental observer; keen in appreciating the environmental creatures, the stars. In lines 33 of Okara's 'One Night at the Beach', the imagery of a decimated ecology assumes a profoundly frightening dimension. That is the scenario we witness in Okara's 'One Night at Victoria Beach'. Thus:

Still they pray, the Aladuras pray
With hands pressed against their hearts...
...while dead fishermen long dead with bones rolling
...following four dead cowries

In the lines above, we notice fishes and the fishermen in a life-and-death struggle to survive. As we survey the 'deep sea where fishes sit in ~~judgement~~judgment' (line 23) in the polluted sea, one notices the 'subduing unanimity of the sky' and 'their white bones beneath the sand' (lines 31 - 32).

In contrast to this hue and cry expressed by Okara on how human beings constitute ruins on the environment, Keats greatly shows how he admires the calmness of the 'nature's patient, sleepless eremite' in the star that he desires dearly to live in its world. What the poet is trying to pass across to the reader is that he wants to see the natural beautiful world with 'eternal lid', enjoy a round of good dancing in the midst of unpolluted, unparalleled and unequalled happiness free of all corruption or decay. Here, we see Keats'

passionate love and inclination to the natural environment. Flora symbolizes the natural environment capable of bringing about an atmosphere of 'its soft swell and fall' (line 11); thus, Keats passionately desires to be translated into the world of the stars. He also pursues this natural environmental imagery further by desiring 'to hear her tender-taken breath' (lines 13). Essentially, the poet wants to enjoy the tranquility in the star 'and so live ever – or else swoon to death' (line 14).

In Okara's 'Suddenly the air cracks', we witness a similar preoccupation with the natural environment but with a slight contrast. Keats focuses on the chaos inherent in man's environment and thus wishes to be transmogrified into the world of the fauna. On the other hand, Okara takes his own concern to humans in their environment and thus calls for habitableness. He highlights the problem of environmental pollution, not only from industries but also from everyday human activities. In the poem, a close examination will show that the ~~persona is haunted by the environmental mess around him~~environmental mess around him haunts the persona. In this particular instance, although the poetic experience is inspired by the symbolism of names, the persona cannot but turn his attention to the pollution from 'a thick black smoke/ rises sadly into the sky' (lines 8 - 9). The persona figures out the reason; 'the smoke rises sadly into the sky as the jets/ fly away in gruesome glee – (lines 10 - 11) is to cause 'a babel of emotions' (lines 12). Interestingly, apart from 'the smoke' the persona also speaks of 'bunkers' - a metaphor for oil companies who 'gaze in groups without sadness'. Now, it should be realized that the exploration operations of industries like the airport and the oil companies involve the explosion of dynamites metonymically referred to as the 'cracking striking' and this normally results in the death of animals and fishes and other forms of aquatic lives. This, to the poet, constitutes a huge environmental hazard and is therefore, unacceptable. The aircraft not only pose environmental dangers in the form of air pollution but it is coupled with noise pollution 'above rooftops'. Thus:

Again, suddenly the air cracks
 Above rooftops cracking striking
 Rockets guffawing before stuttering LMGs
 Ack-ck flacks driving jets
 Diving men women dragging children
 Seeking shelter not there breathless
 Hugging gutters walls houses
 Crumbling rumbling thunder
 Bombs hearts thumping heads low
 Under beds moving wordless lips

Furthermore, Keats maintains this contrast in 'When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be'. Here, Keats restates the power of poetry to transport a person beyond this physical, ephemeral environment, despite the fact that the uncoordinated nature of man's brain slows down the thinking process. Thus:

... before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain
 Before high-piled books, in charact'ry
 ... when I behold, upon the night's starred 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;

And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power

The poet is confident of the potency of poetry to reawaken him in his quest for ideal natural environment; the environment characterized by peace and tranquility. This is the natural environment where humans are oblivious of seeing because of their exploitative nature. This is where the poet yearns to live in and where he craves to be as well. Thus, Anderson (1993:710) states:

The facts that Keats' life lend poignancy to the 'fears' expressed here, since his death at the age of twenty-five confirmed them. His aspirations to 'love', as well as to 'fame' (which here should be regarded not as hunger for celebrity but as a hope of fulfilment) would both be frustrated. John Keats would 'cease to be' within three years of writing this poem.

By addressing the natural world 'Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance' in this manner, he is trying to tell it that it should get ready to receive him and give him eternal peace as soon as he leaves this confused environment and retreats into the ideal natural environment to enjoy untainted peace, joy and tranquility. He makes it emphatically clear to the natural environmental elements, of his own desire to come to her own natural environment for he has 'never have relish in the faery power'. With the aid of his poetry, 'high-piled books, in charact'ry', he yearns quickly for the transience. However, he makes it known that his fantasies would not be induced or be changed even as he 'stand alone, and think'. This shows that poetry is capable of empowering the limited ability of the poet's brain to take him to the realm of imagination, a tranquil environment where he is bound to forget the problems of this chaotic environment. The poet goes further in describing the all pervading serenity and beauty that exists in the natural plane where he 'feel fair creature of an hour'. He says with certainty that the night will be a tender one and that even the 'unreflecting love', will give him bliss.

Furthermore, in Okara's 'Moon in the bucket', the poet takes on the problem of human violence and its impact on the environment. In the poem, there is a connection between the persona's disillusionment about life during the war and the environmental hazards that impinge on his consciousness. In all these problems, Nature has not waned. The natural environmental elements 'The moon, dancing to the gentle night wind' (line 8). The human beings go about shedding blood and putting his environment in ruins 'with a million hates' while the moon, an environmental element is 'peace unsoiled by the murk'. It is easy to fathom how this litany of problems affect the environment. One only needs to take a trip to war scene to experience the nauseating stench of human beings littered in the environment. They are what put the environment (this bucket) into pollution of 'dirt'. Put together, these human activities are anti-environmental practices, and this is the message Okara drives home.

In 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', unlike other poems of Keats, he ~~toetoes~~ a different lane. Like Okara, Keats takes time to appreciate the world of man; hence transcending to the world of the fauna poses difficulty. Every other poem in the collection, Ode above is devoted to the description of the gloom and darkness, which are the hall-marks of human existence because man has ceased from seeing the beauty and everlasting calmness

inherent in the natural environment but here, Keats' own eyes are open to see and appreciate nature like ~~Okara~~. Okara. In line 19, the poet paints a picture of man's inability to sense the natural beauty in the natural environment and partake fully in the eternal bliss of the urn because of series of problems they encounter on daily basis.

Just like Keats, Okara engages in similar praises and admiration to the natural environment in his 'The snow flakes sail gently down' and 'The Call of the River Nun'. In 'Snow flakes sail gently down', Okara gives attribute to the power and potential of the snow to preserve and regenerate the natural environment. The poem was written after the poet's first experience of snow during his visit to America. In this poem, the poet eulogizes the snow as a natural environmental element which creates peace and absolute tranquility in human beings and in the generality of the human environment. The first stanza conjures up the atmosphere of winter in which the poet is lulled to sleep by soothing warmth of the heater:

The snow flakes sail gently
Down from misty eye of the sky
And fall lightly on the
Winter-weary elms. And the branches;
Winter-stripped and nude, slowly
With the weight of the weightless snow...(lines 1 - 6)

Thus, the snow influences natural life at all levels and in all climes; the ~~dream which the poet has~~dream, which the poet has, is expressed - a ~~dream which takes him~~dream that takes him back to his native and peaceful African environment:

Then I dreamed a dream
In my dead sleep. But I dreamed
Not of earth dying and elms a vigil
Keeping. I dreamed of birds, black
Birds flying in my inside, nesting
and hatching an oil palms bearing suns

On this particular issue, Okara affirms to the words of Glotfelty and Harold, F (ed). (1996:324) that 'phenomenon ... is well known to the environmentalists'. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers and of lakes team up with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the snow which announces it. Senanu and Vincent's reading of the poem indicate that the poem portrays the calm and peaceful environment as the poet 'wakes; it is still winter, but a change has occurred in the weather' (Senanu and Vincent, 1999:109).

In 'The Call of the River Nun', Okara reflects the images shown by Keats; but in pastoral African environment. Like Keats, he shows clearly, that the environment is a thing of beauty and joy forever. The impression that the river nun creates in him with 'its ceaseless flow' is similar with that created in Keats by the urn. Thus, it makes the Okara's mind remember some environmental beauty he has beheld in the past just as the urn makes Keats affirm that the urn 'must remain in the midst of woe'.

As the urn in Keats' 'Ode to the Grecian Urn,' river makes scenery of impactful beauty. Both Keats and Okara are in solitude and are in need of relieving event, sight or

warmth or affection. The urn and the river serve as emotional relieving agents. Thus, Okara's mind flashes back to the environmental elements, 'the crouching hills' and 'the inborn stars', the source of beauty drives him to hearken to 'My river's calling too!' The poem is reflective and the poet dwells on life and its inevitable end in death. The ceaseless flow of the river is compared to the continuous passage of time. In the insight of Senanu and Vincent (1999:105):

The recalled river is presented as a concrete environmental reality through sensory images. There is unity of nature... The most significant quality of this poem is not the romantic reference to the River Nun which has a great fascination for the poet, but a subtle poetic exploitation of the idea of call which is used euphemistically to refer to the ideal world.

Keats and Okara deploy language that appeals to all the senses. For instance, there is visual imagery in both the first stanzas of Okara's 'One Night at Victoria Beach' and Keats' 'To Autumn' with such words as 'thatched-eyed', 'mossed cottage trees', 'plump the hazel shells', 'rushing from the sea', 'waves curling', 'forces ear' 'flower for the bees', 'the granary floor'. Furthermore, there is olfactory imagery with the smells of 'sweet kernel' 'haggling sellers' and the 'fume of poppies'. Tactile imagery appears with 'clammy cells,' 'fixed hard' 'winnowing wine'; aural imagery with 'music', 'wailful choir' 'treble soft' and 'twitter'. Metaphors are found in the following expressions 'To Autumn', 'the wind comes rushing' 'the sands and recoiling hiss in rage', 'the air is misty' and 'fruits are ripe', 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,' 'close bosom-friend of the maturing sun' etc.

On praising Keats' 'To Autumn' Anderson (1993:723) pointed out that Keats' 'To Autumn' is strikingly different from other odes in the collection because it suggests a new, serene manner in Keats' poetry which seems to predict the kind of poetry he might have explored more fully had he lived longer. 'To Autumn' is remarkable among all the lyric poems written by the Romantics in its air of detachment. It looks backward to the techniques of personification common in eighteenth century poetry. But it looks forward, beyond the Romantic absorption in the self and its emotional turbulence, to a very modern attitude toward nature as something independent of human beings' longings and fantasies. On a similar note, Senanu and Vincent (1999: 112) pointed out that Okara captures vividly, natural spell, observing the scene very closely and remembering to include the reactions of the people, whose ability to make a joke of tragedy underlies the resilience of the human spirit. Kanan (2014) noted that Keats was more animated about the aesthetic of his natural environment; an ability to delve into the positive capability of his own thoughts.

One of the remarkable styles in both poets, Keats and Okara is their double progression through the day and the season. This points to a theme that recurs in many Keats' and Okara's poems, the theme of transience. In 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a nightingale', this theme is treated with anguish and rebellion; in 'To Autumn', the theme is treated with serenity and acceptance to the natural environment. The first stanza tries to prolong summer, yet the sun is qualified by the adjective 'maturing'; hinting that he matures the harvest as well as grows himself. The second stanza pictures autumn as a reaper, harvester of the now-ripened crops; the image of the reaper also calls up death itself. Death, however, is momentarily suspended, found sleeping in a 'half-reaped furrow'. This

is also noticeable in Okara's first stanza of 'The Call of the River Nun', the notion of death and the natural completion of the process. The idea of death and transience is subsumed in the exclamatory statement, 'My river's calling too'. Yet the declining in age and death is near; passing through life like sailing through the river. Death is not to be shunned or feared but accepted as the natural end of life. In the words of Onuekwusi (2002:123), a characteristic of Okara is his amazing ability to develop an idea to its extreme with great intellectual flexibility, and his 'The Call of the River Nun' informs this and content is evidence of this ability.

Conclusion

This paper studied how man's quest for material advancement has created more problems than solutions for nature and its capacity to sustain life. With all the facts stated in this paper, man has ceased from seeing the beauty and everlasting calmness inherent in the natural environment. This paper shows how Okara, a notable Nigerian poet and novelist incorporated all the environmental feelings expressed by Keats in his own poems. Like Keats, much of Okara's poetry is garnished with personal experiences and his vast knowledge of his rustic environment, especially the serene and aquatic Ijaw region where he ~~was born~~ was born and bred. However, from the range of subjects he deals with, it seems Okara is at his best when he writes about the riverside environment of the Niger Delta from where he came just as Keats is very much at home when he writes on the rustic English environment. In this regard, Okara's and Keats' poetry belong to a corpus of works with the natural environments as the centerpiece. The common denominator in the recent writings from the both regions is the interrogation of the environmental problems. The problems which, in broad terms, include ecological destruction, pollution, loss of farming and fishing grounds, the disappearance of migratory birds in the sky and extinction of animal and plant species. There is evidence in Okara's and Keats' poetry to suggest that they take these issues seriously. It is no wonder then that environment-related issues, in terms of the survival of human and nonhuman life in the environmental ecosphere, feature prominently in Okara's and Keats' poems. This is what makes the examination of Okara's and Keats' poetry from an environmental perspective relevant. One cardinal distinguishing feature of imaginative composition on their poetry is the dramatization of the environmental crisis in the environment. It is, therefore, difficult for the poets to turn away from such a pervasive problem.

References

- Akporbaro, F.B.O (2008). Introduction to Poetry. Ikeja: Princeton.
- Anderson, R (1993). Elements of Literature. Great Britain: Holt and Winston Inc.
- Barry, P (2002). Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory, 2nd ed. UK: University Press.
- Beck, C (2005). Literature and the Social Environment. USA: Routledge
- Buell, L (2005). The Future of Environmental Criticism: The Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination. Malden, M.A: Blackwell Publishers.
- _____ (1995). Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the US and Beyond, Cambridge: The Belknap Press.
- Campton-Rickett, A (2009). A History of English Literature. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd
- Clark, J.P (1997). A Lot from Paradise. Ikeja: Malthouse Press Ltd
- Coupe, G.(2000). General Introduction and Glossary. The Green Studies Reader from Romanticism to Ecocriticism. London and New York: Routledge.

- Coup, Wilson (1991). *An Ecocritical Study of Wordsworth's Autumn*. India: CENGAGE Publishing
- Coupe, L (1991). *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge
- Dewall, W. (1995). *Deep Ecology*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith.
- Dobie, A (2002). *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. USA: CENGAGE.
- Dreese, D (2002). *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literature*. New York: Routledge.
- Egudu, R (2007). *The Study of Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press
- Elder, J. (1966). *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Finch, R (2002). *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature*. New York: Norton
- Glotfelty, C and Harold, F (ed). (1996). *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. London: University of Georgia.
- Goring, P. (2010). *Studying Literature*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Hartman, G (2007) 'The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way' in *Romanticism and Consciousness* ed. Harold Bloom, New York: Norton
- Keats, J. (1817). *Ode*. United Kingdom: Penguin Books.
- Kerridge, R. (2006). 'Environmentalism and Ecocriticism' Waugh P. (Ed). *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford University Press.
- McKuick, J. (2000). *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: St. Martins
- Mazrui, A (2007). 'Between Heroic Universalism and Parochial Martyrdom: The Life and Death of Christopher Okigbo'. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA.
- Morton, T (2010). *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, JOJ, Saleh, Kwami and Omobowale, Tunde (2006). *Exam Focus Literature-In- English 2006-2009 for SSCE*. Ibadan: University Press PLC
- Nwachukwu-Agbada, JOJ, Tunde O, Enesi, S, Adebisi, (2015). *Exam Focus Literature-In-English 2006-2009 for SSCE*. Ibadan: University Press
- Okara, G. (1978). *The Fisherman's Invocation*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers LTD
- Wordsworth, W (1807). *Poems in Two Volumes*. Edinburgh: Cambridge University Press